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Cyclist stops in Uxbridge to promote the Trans Canada Trail

Edmund Aunger's wife Elizabeth Sovis killed in 2012 after
cycling off the trail

By Shane MacDonald



Trans Canada Trail

Shane MacDonald / Metroland

UXBRIDGE -- Edmund Aunger chats with Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor near Centennial Park during his stop in town on August 12, 2016

UXBRIDGE -- Edmund Aunger stopped in Uxbridge while cycling the Trans Canada Trail to advocate making it safer, and more accessible.

Mr. Aunger and his wife Elizabeth Sovis loved the idea of a Trans Canada Trail when it was announced in 1992.

“We were very enthusiastic supporters right from the beginning,” he said.

But as they found when they tried cycling it, the trail is not always as accessible and safe as it should be. Mr. Aunger’s wife resolved that she would advocate for those changes once she retired, but she never got the chance. In 2012 the couple was cycling the trail in Prince Edward Island when Ms. Sovis was hit by a drunk driver after cycling off the trail. She was thrown 50 metres and died at the scene.

Mr. Aunger has carried on her cause, continuing to ride the 24,000-km trail.

On Aug. 12, he was met by members of Uxbridge council and the cycling community at the TCT pavilion in Centennial Park.

“I’m lobbying the federal and provincial governments to get the provinces together and set minimum standards for a national spine trail,” he said, explaining that he thinks an 8,000-km connected trail would be more reasonable than 24,000 kilometres of a maze of trails.

“This is too big a project for volunteers and town councils, you get lots of great regional trails, but no connections.”

His ride across the Durham Region portion of the TCT began at Ajax’s Rotary Park before reaching Uxbridge.

“The trails were awesome,” he said, also praising the various cycling groups that rode with him. “Some go through beautiful forests, there are other trails you can’t find.”

He explained that he carries a voice recorder to document everything he sees, as well as posting to Twitter @ridethetrail4, and his input has been noted by members of the Trans Canada Trail national organization.

“What he’s posting through his Twitter is very informative to us,” said Michael Goodyear, manager of trail development Eastern Canada for the Trans Canada Trail.

Mr. Aunger says the cross-country trail will be celebrated in 2017 as being complete for Canada's 150 birthday, and he takes exception to that.

"It's a lie," he said. "We haven't completed the Trans Canada Trail."

Mr. Goodyear says the work won't end there.

"We're connecting now and that's a milestone, but that's not it," he said. "The trail will be connected in 2017, but that won't be it. We want to see the safest Trans Canada Trail we can."