

The Daily Gleaner  
Fredericton, New-Brunswick. June 27, 2017

## Cross-country ride for 'an incredible woman'

HADEEL IBRAHIM



Edmund Aunger is riding the Trans Canada Trail and advocating for the federal government to establish minimum safety standards and make the trail non-motorized and only on land.

Photo: Hadeel Ibrahim/The Daily Gleaner

Elizabeth Sovis loved cycling but she had one rule: no riding on the road.

She sometimes had to break it when she and her husband, Edmund Aunger, rode the Trans Canada Trail.

Sometimes there was no other way.

On July 14, 2012, she was struck and killed by a drunk driver off the trail in Prince Edward Island.

The impact severed her brain stem and threw her body 150 feet in the air, Aunger said.

Five years later her husband, professor emeritus of political science at the University of Alberta, is riding the Trans Canada Trail and advocating for the federal government to establish minimum safety standards and make the trail non-motorized and only on land, or a greenway.

"I always ride right behind her, very close and very protective. This one time she told me to go ahead," Aunger, 68, said, wiping tears away. "We met when we were 12 years old. It's something people always dream about. She was an incredible woman and it was more that I'd ever hoped for in terms of a loving relationship and I would have given anything for her to live."

Aunger arrived in Fredericton Sunday and will be here until Wednesday - where he will speak at the steps of the provincial legislature before moving on to Charlottetown, P.E.I.

He will have a memorial service there.

"We're going right after the service to the spot where she was killed."

He hired a violinist and will give a eulogy. His three sons will be doing Bible readings.

"I've invited everyone that wants to come because I'm still grieving and my family is, but a lot of people in P.E.I were shattered by that, too."



Edmund Aunger is stopping in Fredericton from Sunday to Wednesday, where he will speak at the steps of the legislature before moving on to Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Photo: Hadeel Ibrahim/The Daily Gleaner

Aunger said before she died at 63, his wife wanted to spend the first years of her retirements working to to get the Trans Canada Trail "done properly, so it's safe."

Aunger has a website, stickers and petition E-957, which he initiated in the House of Commons on March 31. It has so far collected 1,677 signatures.



Edmund Aunger and Elizabeth Sovis in Alberta.  
Photo: Submitted

Victoria Leenders-Cheng, communications advisor for Trans Canada Trail, said the organization is aware of Aunger's campaign.

"We have also spoken to him on a number of occasions. We, in fact, agree with him. We, too, are committed to ensuring that the trail is as safe as possible," she said in an email exchange. "However, the Trans Canada Trail is an enormous project which can only be built and improved upon in phases. The long-term objective of dedicated pathways remains part of the core mission of our organization."

She said the first phase is to connect the trail.

"Yes, there are sections that are on roadway," she said. "When choosing roadways TCT, in consultation with our partners and roadway authorities, considers a range of criteria such as traffic volume, speed limits and shoulder conditions to ensure these routes will be as safe as possible."

Aunger said people say he is being altruistic by campaigning, but this is a personal mission.

"I felt huge guilt. The first thing I can remember is crying and crying and saying, 'I should never have gone ahead, I should have stayed with her,'" he said, touching his wedding band.

"I didn't think I could live and I knew the only way I could keep on going after that was to channel the love that we had and do something for my wife.



On July 14, 2012 Elizabeth Sovis was struck and killed by a drunk driver off the trail in Prince Edward Island. This photo was taken the day before in Sackville.