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Cyclist rides to make Trans Canada Trail safer

Tiffany Lewis



Edmund Auger is cycling across the country in memory of his wife.
Photo: Submitted

SAINT JOHN• Edmund Auger is cycling 12,500 km across the country for one person.

“I’m doing this for my wife,” he said, his helmet strapped to his head.

Aunger, a professor emeritus at the University of Alberta, has been fighting to make the Trans Canada Trail safer for cyclists ever since he lost his wife, Elizabeth Sovis, on the trail when she was hit by a drunk driver five years ago while they were on a three week cycling holiday.

“I quit my job 10 days later and I decided to take up her retirement project which was trying to make the Trans Canada Trail safe for

families and children, and get it off roads and highways and make it non-motorized, the way it was promised to be,” he said.

Aunger made a stop in Saint John Friday to promote his "Ride the Trail for Elizabeth" campaign. He then left Sunday from city hall and continued his ride from Victoria, British Columbia to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

The cyclist said the portion of the trail in New Brunswick is unsafe as he is forced to ride on highways at times.

“From [Grand Bay] Westfield to Saint John, it’s some very dangerous highways, some with no shoulders,” he said. “...It’s supposed to be for families and children [but] what family is going to take their children down a highway with no shoulders, or shoulders that are not rideable. Now this is among the worst I’ve seen coming into Saint John and I know it’s going to be very similar leaving Saint John to Hampton.”

Tanya Greer, a spokesperson for the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, stated in an email that the safety of the trail is the department’s priority.

“The safety of everyone using our highways and trails is a priority of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure,” she wrote. “We will be engaging our partner, the New Brunswick Trails Council, to look at ways to make this section of non-motorized trail safer for all users.”

A law recently put into effect in the province makes it mandatory for motorists to give cyclists one metre of room when passing them on roads. Ellen’s Law came into effect as a result of the death of Ellen Watters, a cyclist in Sussex who was killed when she was hit by a vehicle from behind.

“All the studies show that the vast majority of Canadians do not want to ride on the roads anyway. It’s a very small group that does want to ride on the roads. And most car drivers don’t want them on the roads,” Aunger said. “...But there will always be cyclists who want to

ride on the road and so I understand their point of view, let's try to put shoulders on the road, let's try to leave distance. No one can be against that but in New Brunswick... there are no shoulders. They got a two-lane highway. How can motorists, when there's oncoming traffic, leave a metre [to] a metre and a half? There's no room for anybody."

Aunger put out a petition to the federal government with one main goal.

"I'm trying to complete the mission that my wife set up which is to make the Trans Canada Trail safe for families and children as was promised," he said.