

## Trailhead Canada 2017

### The Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail Corporation:

In 2001, the Prescott-Russell Recreational Trail Corporation was created as a non-profit organisation responsible for developing and managing the Prescott-Russell Recreation Trail. The role of the Corporation is to assist the United Counties of Prescott-Russell with the development of the trail and to assist with the long-term management of the Trail along with the municipal partners. The Board of Directors is comprised of members, which includes elected municipal officials, member of the Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club, member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, member of the Prescott-Russell Tourism Association and members at large from the community.

### History of the P-R Recreation Trail :

Like many of its counterparts across Canada, the Prescott-Russell recreational trail has returned an abandoned rail corridor in the mid- 1980's, the Montréal-Ottawa line, to its once valuable mission of linking communities. The rail corridor currently owned by Via Rail Canada begins in Rigaud (Québec) and ends west of Mer Bleue in Ottawa-Carleton region. Its surface is gravel, with 4 paved sections of 2 km each. In 2000, a ten-year lease agreement with Via Rail was secured to develop a 72-km recreational trail along the corridor.

In July 2002, the work began on the trail with brush cutting and grading on the first 27 km of trail with stone dust, and the construction of a pavilion at 5 access points including a picnic table, a toilet, an information display and a parking lot. During 2003, the work continued on another 27 km of the trail, and 9 railway bridges were repaired and outfitted with railings and decking. By the end of 2003, 75% of the trail work had been completed on the trail.

On July 4, 2004, we had the grand opening of the first 54 km of trail from Vankleek Hill (east) to Hammond (west). The 72-km of the trail was completed by the end of 2006, with the financial support of provincial and federal grants. The extension of the 23 km link toward Ottawa was completed in 2011, but unfortunately, the P-R Recreation Trail does not link with the trail network of the city and the NCC network trail. The

## Trailhead Canada 2017

Corporation is hoping that the trail will eventually reach the 8 km missing link with Rigaud (Québec), and the trail network in Ottawa.

In 2006, the United Counties of Prescott-Russell took over the administration, the management, and the maintenance of the Prescott-Russell Recreation Trail. There was an actual budget allocated to the trail by the UCPR.

### Lease with Via Rail

The United Counties of Prescott-Russell hold a ten-year lease for the rail corridor with Via Rail Canada ending in 2020. Presently, the UCPR are negotiating the extension of the lease.

### Users of the P-R Recreation trail.

Our recreation trail traverses the middle of United Counties of Prescott and Russell, from east to west offering 72-km of charming countryside interspersed with villages. The permitted trail users are cyclists, walkers, runners and snowmobilers in the winter.

### Partners

The P-R Recreation Trail has numerous partners, which includes the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, the Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club, the Catholic School Board and some schools, le Centre de santé Communautaire de l'Estrie (CSCE) (healthy communities), the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, Boisés-Est (planting trees along the trail), Bird Observation Club, Photography Club, Geocaching Club and Hillcrest Funeral Home ( Garden with Trees in Remembrance).

## Trailhead Canada 2017

The P-R Recreation Trail has partnered with the Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry region (Cornwall) for the completion of a map including a joint connection with its trails and cycle routes.

### Why is the Eastern Ontario Health Unit involved as a partner

Following the announcement of the possible trail closure in August 2016, the EOHU assisted the Trail Corporation with its Public Consultations that took place in May 2017. For the agency, access to recreation is a key priority to improve community health, physical inactivity is a public health issues, and the reduction of chronic disease. Recreation trails can improve public health by increasing physical activity and providing safer transportation routes for pedestrians and cyclist.

(According to an article published in the Journal of Public Health in 2017, the author John Pucher and Ralph Bueler wrote in their new study that the safety of the cyclist increase by 89% when they cycle on a cycle path physically separated from the motorists.)

### Trail users in 2016 and 2017

The Corporation made the acquisition of a portable electronic counter in June 2016, which has been installed at different areas along the trail in order to show an estimate amount of users on the trail.

\*2016 (June 29-Nov.15) = 11,072 users

\*2016-2017(Dec.-March) = 5,915 snowmobiles \*2017 (March-Nov.16) =17,156 users

### Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club is an important partner with the P-R Recreation Trail

The snowmobile club had 2,306 members last winter season, with a total of 380 km of trails in the Prescott-Russell Counties. The club is affiliated with the District 1 (Kingston-Arnrior-Québec border) of the Ontario Federation Snowmobile Club with an approximately 12,000 members and 31,000 km of trails.

## Trailhead Canada 2017

### Economic impact of the P-R Recreation Trail in our region of Prescott-Russell

According to the Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club, the P-R Recreation Trail is part of the interprovincial trail during the winter. The P-R. Trail reach the Québec province and trails up to Manitoba.

The region of Ottawa, Prescott-Russell, Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry and Kingston is classified as the # 2 region in Ontario for snowmobiling with its 3,900 km.

In May 2017, the province recognized and honored the P-R trail as a Top A (Distinctive Trail of Ontario) and it will be part of a promotion program showing that our region is a tourist destination this coming winter.

According to the Snowmobile Club, the use of snowmobiles in Prescott-Russell creates 12 millions of annual economic impact and a couple hundred full time jobs depend on. In 2016-17 season a total of 725 new and used snowmobiles were sold in P.R. totalling \$8,790,000 in sales. An estimated 95 millions of economic is generated in Eastern Ontario annually with the use of snowmobiles. How can we resolve the problems that the local snowmobile club being partnered with the recreation has not being able to help financially the maintenance of the trail.

- The way funds are distributed from the Ontario Federation Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) to the Eastern Ontario Snowmobile Club (EOSC), prevents the EOSC in entering a funding partnership for the maintenance of our trail.

## Trailhead Canada 2017

### Ontario by Bike

In 2016 the region of Prescott-Russell was certified as a region, and is now part of the Ontario Provincial cycling map for being a region with cycling routes on paved shoulders, recreation trail with the goal to attract tourist in our beautiful region. On the geographic map of our region, you will find certified friendly businesses offering different services for the different users of the trail.

### Ontario's Cycling Tourism Plan

In 2017, the ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports was pleased to introduce the province first plan for cycling tourism. Ontario is home to extensive on and off road cycling networks that stretch across the province, connect our communities and offer unique views of our urban and rural landscape. But without any financial help to maintain the recreation trail already existing in some trails of the in rural parts of the province might not exist in the near future.

- The P-R Recreational Trail and the Cycl-o-route are part of the Provincial Cycling Network Map.

### Challenges for trail survival

The difficulty of maintaining the trail without the help of provincial and federal government and the snowmobile club (as being partners with the trail) once a trail is developed.

After cutting the Trail's budget to zero in 2016, the United Counties of Prescott and Russell re-injected \$40,000 to help for the minimal maintenance in 2017.

The UCPR has spent a good amount of money on the trail for the repairs of bridges, culverts during the past 10 years, without any financial help from Via Rail.

## Trailhead Canada 2017

### Barriers preventing Ontarians from accessing recreation

-There is a lack of accessible programs and services at the local level particularly in smaller or rural communities.

-User fees, transportation and equipment costs are all barriers to being physically active, especially for low-income households

-According to a 2007 survey of Ontario municipalities, nearly two-thirds of municipalities do not have approved policies that deal with access to recreation programs.

We must not forget that its important that a trail system is considered as a valuable asset of the regional recreation infrastructures.

Also Educating elective members about cycling as a whole (type of cyclists, their preference in trails and services,and the economic impact), is also very important.

I would like to end my presentation by asking “Is it in the future strategic plan of our governments to assist with the expenses of maintaining existing trails in the near future? ”

### Population de Prescott-Russell

According to Statistiques Canada, the population of Prescott-Russell is 89,333, with a p of proportion of 69,515 francophones.