

March 8, 2018

Council of United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria

15 Township Hall Road, Stonecliffe, Ontario

Subject: Abandoned CP Rail Bed/Algonquin Trail of Renfrew County

In the event I am not available for a one on one meeting with council members on the arranged dates, I would like to submit this for all council members to read as my suggestions and history lesson, for abandoned CP Rail Bed and the now designated trail name "The Algonquin Trail".

Abandoned rail lines/beds are not new to anyone in Ontario and the continued use of the abandoned rail lines was formulated under the catch phrase "Rails to Trails". Is there anyone who has never heard of the phrase "Rails to Trails" and what this entailed and what the intention was? It was simply putting into use something that is already there as a transportation route for trains moving goods from one part of the Province/Country to another, by changing it to a productive means for moving people by various modes. So was the closing of the rail line through Townships of Head, Clara & Maria any different? In total it took nearly 20 years of public discussion and partial temporary closing to reach the final closing.

For Stonecliffe, it should be the celebration of being the hub of the township trails! The opposite of the slow shutting down over the past 50 years of the once thriving hamlets of Mackey, Bissett Creek and Deux Rivieres.

"Some thoughts on routing the trail outside the confines of Stonecliffe with access by feeder trails": Have you driven Hwy. 11 from North Bay to Huntsville before and after it was 4-laned? Do you remember such village names as Sunridge, South River, Novar (and others that are now hard to remember), that you drove through on the 2-lane highway stopping for food, fuel, etc. Huge expensive feeder links with overpasses etc. were installed to not isolate these small hamlets and villages from the travelling public. When was the last time you



got off the new 4-lane bypass of these places to get food, fuel, etc.? The bypassing of Stonecliffe with the Algonquin Trail will have much the same affect.

The snowmobile trail when it was carved out for the first time, besides linking the communities/residents and providing an enjoyable riding experience had three things of priority on its routing: Food/Accommodation, Fuel & Safety. It was purposely routed through Deux Rivieres, Bissett Creek and Stonecliffe with this in mind. The new Algonquin Trail should also have these priorities for its users, both visitors and the local residents. Safety was the highest ranked. Have you ever travelled in strange unoccupied territory, and had something go wrong? Even though help to someone familiar with the area might only be a few kilometers or meters away... to the traveller visiting it is a helpless feeling not knowing which way to go.

What's the vision for the remaining community of Stonecliffe? How about we out do the Province of Ontario and provide two rest stops one at either end of the trail through Stonecliffe, the Westerly one could provide information for those heading East, the Easterly one could provide information for those heading West. Clean comfortable heated washrooms, with picnic tables. Three people at each attending to these spots (1 elder of local knowledge and info, and 2 students to learn the ways of the elders). Solar power, wells, building etc. could be contracted out with the rewards being very visible signage for free advertising. Paid advertising boards. They don't have to operate 12 months of the year, November, December, April are normally "down" months for travel. Do we have any knowledgeable nearly senior persons available, and would any students like to remain in the area for work? It would take several pages to write down all that could be imagined for these locations and they would be the "talk of the trail" to friendliness of communities. And YES it would be intentioned to slow motorized transportation down.

Noise! We had a railway that rumbled by 6-plus times per day with upwards of one hundred cars each, for 12 months of the year each and every year. Did they whistle at each crossing, did windows rattle, and could you feel the vibration? Did they shunt back and forth when connecting and disconnecting? Did they cause

fires? Did they carry nothing but environmentally friendly goods? There is also a highway that runs through each community, have you ever heard “engine assisted braking” in use. Are all those tankers carrying milk? But if the noise of the traffic stopped, what did it mean “the highway was closed”, and surely not that the world had come to an end.

Several times in referring to the communities the word “graveyard” is used. Is that the legacy we want to leave behind for our communities?

The words safety and noise seem to be the demons everyone is afraid of. Safety for both the residents living along the Algonquin Trail, and the users is as important now as it was before. With just a little bit of imagination the trail could be both safe and noise tolerable for everyone. Imagine three sets of gates with narrow 6 ft. wide “L” shaped East/West entrances past the gates to cross road ways and driveway entrance that are clearly brushed for sight line. The trail could have a larger gate for access to and from for heavier equipment such as the groomers. Now let’s use our imagination for signage to slow things down that travel at more than 20 km. per hour. Besides the OPP monitoring noise of after-market exhaust systems which are illegal, do you think they might ponder the idea of using the Algonquin Trail when one of the frequent highway closures happens in the boundaries of Head, Clara & Maria? Just a thought for access, etc. when laying out the Algonquin Trail.

Economic Development is better left to the people who have more imagination than governments. There is that timeless saying “build it and they will come”!

Let’s all try to be “Pro-Active” instead of “Re-active”!

