



## FROM THE DESK OF OFTR PRESIDENT RICK CURRAH

As most riders in Ontario now know, Northumberland County Council has voted in favour of a near total ban on motorcycling on the forest trail system. That system was without a doubt one of the finest trail systems in the province.

Why the county voted the majority of the trail system closed is a sorry tale of deceit, dirty politics and powerful special interest groups slandering off road motorcyclists. As anyone who has been in a few donnybrooks will tell you, the guy who lands the first blow usually wins. The seeds of misinformation were sown early and we were never able to correct the damage done. After all, if it's in print, it must be true, right?

Secondly, in our individual meetings with the paid staff of the Northumberland Forest Advisory Committee (NFAC), the OFTR was denied equal rights to present our views and question the county's trumped up research condemning us as the enemy of all things green and natural. Basically, OFTR was asked to attend a gunfight but told to arrive with a dull butter knife.

When Ken Hoeverman (OFTR Executive Director) saw through their flimsy research and questioned the validity and origin of the findings, he was branded as disrespectful and ordered not to appear again before them. So much for fair play.

Warren Thaxter, a founder of the OFTR, Northumberland resident and champion of off

road motorcycling, approached as many of the "lower tier" councilors as possible to educate them on just how prejudicial the proceedings were.

County staffs were supposed to simply gather legitimate data and present to council for them to reach an educated decision, although it appears council had an agenda to "manage motorized use to a minimum".

The media was run around with letters to editors (heavily slanted against us) and a public opinion web site was yanked from the internet once the "passive environmentalists" lost their cool and resorted to vicious rants against us.

The FAC relied heavily upon the Oak Ridges Moraine Act, cited as protecting the environment. Anyone who has spent time poring over the act knows it, first and foremost, reserves land for future aggregate extraction. Doesn't that make you all warm and fuzzy?

On the day of the vote, Ken H. spoke first and Warren T. last. Search the OFTR site and read their presentations. It is a credit to our sport to have individuals so well spoken and brimming with common sense but alas, it was too late. The final vote was against the Northumberland Trail Riders system remaining open except for 8km of single track and a few wide roadways. I can hardly contain my excitement.

The full system will be handed over to the equestrians, the mountain bikers and the hikers. It ought to be about a year before they are squabbling over horse dung on Birkenstocks and fillies spooked by pedal bikes. Future trail system maintenance, by those not known for their strong backs, should be hilarious.

Do we say "SCREW YOU!" and ride

Northumberland illegally? It is the unanimous thought of the OFTR Directors that members respect the closure and not antagonize the situation. That is what our opponents want from us. Let's not prove their opinion of us correct.

There has been considerable time and finances spent on the Northumberland issue, even with our limited resource and funding cuts. It was the proper investment. To obsess over the defeat would only sidetrack more positive ventures. Let us all move on to a better future.

Let the county police not ticket or lecture a single OFTR member but go dizzy chasing the very renegades we identified as the true source of the noise complaints, environmental damage and user conflicts.

We have a TRAIL RIDE SERIES with over 10 events annually. Attend the rides or organize smaller outings but use legal riding areas.

Other counties are open to our efforts. We will take the hard lessons of the FAC proceedings and develop airtight user agreements with other regions.

OFTR made a stand to protect riders. No other organization came forward and spoke in defense of us. Think on that when it comes time to pledge allegiance. Where were they? We all knew about this issue, surely they did too. Could it be off road issues are not as easily dealt with or our membership not numerically important to them? Road going issues result in organized rallies, online petitions and protest rides. As far as I know, OFTR wasn't even asked how things were going. No sour grapes intended but confirmation of what we all suspect, we rely on each other and would be truly surprised should a helping hand be extended from outside our clan.

## CANADA'S ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN FUNDS OVER 500 RECREATIONAL TRAIL PROJECTS

OFTR approved for \$949,000, all 19 projects have been approved

Work is set to begin across Canada on hundreds of outdoor trails, which will help to create jobs and enhance the country's national trail system. The Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of State (Sport), and Terry Norman, National Coordinator, National Trails Coalition (NTC) announced that over 500 trail projects will benefit from the Government's \$25 million investment in recreational trails, as part of the Government's Economic Action Plan.

"As part of Canada's Economic Action Plan, Canada is proud to provide the first payment of \$12.5 million to the National Trails Coalition to get construction underway," said Minister of State Lunn. "By partnering with the National Trails Coalition we are boosting local economies, creating jobs, getting shovels in the ground and providing Canadians with better quality trails."

The funds will be used to create, upgrade and sustain recreational trails throughout Canada. The first payment of \$12.5 million is part of the Government of Canada's \$25 million commitment that will be matched by the NTC and their provincial, territorial, municipal or private funding partners for eligible projects.

For more information on the OFTR projects, go to [www.oftr.ca](http://www.oftr.ca).

*The Voice of Off-Road Motorcyclists in Ontario!*