

Triathlon's rural bicycle race is derailed by council

By SAL BOMMARITO
The Champion

The organizer of the Milton triathlon said he will consider moving the

event to another community next year after town council rejected a proposed route for the event's bike race Monday night.

"There are communities out there

who would pay us to hold the event," Graham Fraser of TriSport Promotions, the organizer of the annual competition, said following council's rejection.

The rising costs of holding the triathlon at Kelso Conservation Area, along with council's growing opposition to the bike race along local roads, are the two main reasons for considering the move, Mr. Fraser said.

Despite his frustration, Mr. Fraser said Kelso is still his first choice. The triathlon has been held in Milton for the last eight years, with the swimming portion in the lake and the running event nearby.

"It's an excellent facility," Mr. Fraser commented.

Mr. Fraser said the bike race — part of the three-event competition scheduled for Aug. 28th — will have to be held on an approved route in Burlington because council dismissed the Milton course.

TriSport sought approvals to hold the bike race in Burlington after being told by the town that Sixth Line between No. 5 Sideroad and the top of the Niagara Escarpment would be under construction during the event.

When the construction was delayed, Mr. Fraser decided to approach the town with a route for the bike race which included Sixth Line.

Mr. Fraser's proposal, however, met with resistance from councillors who argued the race would conflict with truck and car traffic along the Sixth Line generated by two major businesses located there — a gravel quarry and golf club.

Ward 3 councillor Marion Howard accused Mr. Fraser of ignoring proposals put forth by an ad hoc committee which looked at ways of

holding the race on Milton roads in a safe manner. One of the proposals was to close the bike route to traffic, Ms Howard said.

Ms Howard said the committee also looked at placing police all along the route, not just at corners "to prevent people from straddling the centre line." Ms Howard said the organizers — not taxpayers — should pick up any costs associated with having more police present.

Mr. Fraser argued road closures would only "inconvenience" motorists. He said as an alternative solution it was decided to move the race's start time up to 8 a.m. Mr. Fraser told an angry Ms Howard his reputation depended on his ability to put on a safe event.

"I put on all the major events in the country. I don't know how many events you've seen organized. But my livelihood is on the line to do it professionally," he said.

Mr. Fraser denied having received any correspondence from the town informing him of the ad hoc committee's proposals.

"I'm not aware of those recommendations," he said.

John Mathews, the director of public works, told council the letter was sent to Mr. Fraser in February.

An attempt to have council consider an alternative route for the bike race, which included a start through the back exit of Kelso, was also rejected because of safety and policing concerns. Mr. Fraser said the alternative route wasn't feasible because the back exit of the park is only partially paved and could result in damage to competitors' bikes.

Despite council's rejection of the bike race, some councillors gave the event a vote of confidence for the spinoff benefits it brings to both the community and the park.

"Kelso has encouraged this kind of event because events like mountain biking and triathlons are considerable advertising for the park, some on national television," Ward 1 councillor Brian Penman, who is also chairman of the Halton Region Conservation Authority, said.

"When you have a facility like that, you want to see it put to its best use," added Mr. Penman.

Mr. Fraser said he wasn't happy about having to use the Burlington route. "It's boring to the athletes. It's not the ideal route."

On a conciliatory note, Ms Howard said she would support the proposed route in future years if the race is held on a Sunday.

"Kelso recommended having it on a Saturday because Sundays are a big gate day. Our preference is to have it on a Sunday," Mr. Fraser agreed.



Marion Howard



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