

Intrepid Snowmobiler: user-pay system helps trails

by Craig Nicholson

Our local snowmobile trails are a small part of the network of snow highways linking communities throughout Ontario. In fact, an astonishing 35,000 kms of groomed snowmobile trails are available for us to ride this winter!

Operated by 280 local clubs who are members of the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC), these incredible winter roads cost millions of dollars to maintain to the high standard snowmobilers and safety standards demand. So where does the money come from?

The simple answer is: from the collective efforts of those who use the trails. The OFSC has developed a user-pay system of funding whereby one trail permit, good for the entire season anywhere in Ontario, must be displayed on each sled using the trails. The cost this winter is \$65 if purchased by Dec. 15, and \$80 thereafter. If you are caught on the trail without a permit, it may cost you \$100. A good incentive to buy early!

When you compare how many times you can buy movie tickets or golf rounds, or maybe even take a trip to

Toronto for a Jays game, the permits are truly a good value.

In fact, Ontario's user pay system is so successful that several other provinces are copying us. Even Quebec is moving to the permit per sled system, but at \$100 each! So Ontario is still the best deal in



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town if you buy early.

But there are increasing demands on our user pay revenues. One is the recent \$20.8 million partnership between the provincial government and the OFSC to develop and build the new Trans-Ontario Provincial (TOP) Trail network. The plan is to have clubs come up with \$6.8 million to match the province's \$14 million investment.

Our share will be money well spent, but we must generate it ourselves. And remember, none of these Sno-Trac millions are good for ongoing

maintenance trail expenditures that give us good groomed trails each week. And as the trails expand, those maintenance costs will grow. So your trail permit purchase is needed now more than ever!

Moreover, snowmobiling is already Canada's fastest growing winter recreation. This translates to more trail traffic with more grooming expenses. Did you know that a new piece of grooming machinery often costs more than \$100,000?

More traffic also means more freeloaders—abusers who haven't paid their own small share for the trails they use. These trespassers cost thousands of dollars in damaged trails that the rest of us have to pay for. So the next time you hit a jaw-jarring mogul trail, remember these freeloading bandits.

Most snowmobilers are content simply to buy a permit and ride for the season. But what if each of us could make another important contribution at the same time with almost no effort?

Consider the financial

impact if collectively, we acted on these simple suggestions:

•*Buy where you ride:* Ask yourself where do you do most of your snowmobiling. This is where you want your grooming dollar spent. You can only

make this happen by buying your trail permit from the club whose trails you ride most often. Buying where you ride dramatically impacts on your club's cash flow and makes

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IN MEMORIAM

ZAYETTE - In loving memory of my mother, Nellie Zayette, who was taken to heaven by our Great Lord on December 2, 1989.

My mother's love was like the sun,
Constant, always there,
It was warm and freely given
As a breath of soft spring air.
Many times I think of you
As lonely hours go by,
Things we used to say and do
Just you and I
I can't hold you
But I feel your hand upon my back,
Guiding me in my life.
You are gone,
But I know you never left me,
Until we meet again,
Mom, know that I love you
Very sadly missed by daughter Marlene & son-in-law Stan.