



MRC Pontiac

602 route 301, Campbell's Bay QC J0X 1K0 (819) 648-5689

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**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **ATVs, vandalism, and trash on the PPJ Cyclopark...**

### **An economic problem for the MRC Pontiac**

*Campbell's Bay, September 2, 2008*—The MRC Pontiac invests \$100,000 annually to maintain and promote the Pontiac's 92 km PPJ Cyclopark, but public disregard for the path could eventually increase the taxpayers' bill.

The PPJ Cyclopark supports cyclotourism, an increasingly popular segment of the tourism industry, and of vital importance to the Pontiac's economic growth.

In a 2005 study published by the Québec Ministry of Tourism representing the 617,000 Québécois that practice cyclotourism, beautiful scenery and the quality of the cycling path were stated as the two most important determinants when selecting a cycling destination.

Nestled between the Laurentian Mountains and the Ottawa River, the Pontiac boasts some of the most beautiful landscapes in the province, a feature that the MRC heavily promotes to attract tourists to our region. But what cyclists are more likely to find on the PPJ Cyclopark these days is illegal dumping, vandalized facilities and speeding ATVs and motorbikes.

"Motorized vehicles on the cycling path are an on-going problem," said Scott Wilson, Mayor of Bristol and spokesperson for the MRC's Economic Development Corporation (CDE) whose role is to develop, maintain, and promote the Cyclopark. "We've noticed an increase in the number of complaints, locals and tourists reporting close-calls with ATVs and motorcycles. It's a safety issue that needs to be resolved before we're faced with a serious accident."

So far, signage, warnings, steep fines, and hidden cameras have not deterred ATVs, but the CDE's new strategy just might. This month, the CDE will be installing rock boulders along the cycling path. "Each rock weighs close to a ton and will effectively deter motorized vehicles from the Cyclopark," said Wilson.

However, while the CDE committee was devising strategies to solve the ATV problem, other challenges arose. In the past weeks alone, rest areas have been vandalized, picnic tables destroyed, and a brand new portable toilet stolen. And now, people are dumping their trash on the Cyclopark.

The maintenance crew recently found an entire barn that had been dismantled and dumped along the cycling path in Clarendon. "This is by far the most serious trash issue we've had," said Wilson, "but illegal dumping isn't contained to one municipality."

What offenders may not realize is that disregard for the cycling path could have adverse financial repercussions for every Pontiac resident, and not only from a tourism development perspective. "The money the CDE spends to maintain the Cyclopark comes directly from municipal coffers which are filled with taxpayer dollars. The bigger the maintenance cost for the CDE, the bigger the taxpayer's bill will be."

"The tourism industry is within our grasp," said Wilson, "and the PPJ Cyclopark is of vital importance to that industry. All we ask is that people think about that before perpetrating an act that will compromise it."

Source :

Danielle Belec

Commissaire aux Communications Officer

CLD du Pontiac

819-648-5689 Poste/Ext. 213

[dbelec.cld@mrcpontiac.qc.ca](mailto:dbelec.cld@mrcpontiac.qc.ca)

Media Contact :

Scott Wilson

Mayor of Bristol

819-647-5555

Mobile : 613-447-7613