

# Developer promises to preserve Dobson Trail

Dec 16/03 HF - Development  
■ Proposed development won't have 'serious impact' on trail: committee

By RHONDA WHITTAKER  
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

The developer who recently purchased two parcels of land on the Dobson Trail is promising to work with the trail committee to preserve Albert County's unique outdoor attraction.

The purchase could mean a change in the trail's entrance, but members of the trail committee say they believe it won't have a serious impact.

In October, Greater Moncton Developments purchased two plots of land — one 80 acres, the other 40 — from the Dobson Estate. One lot currently hosts the first three-quarters of the trail, including one of the trail's two parking lots off Pine Glen Road. The trail travels diagonally across the parcel.

David Radford of Greater Moncton Developments said his company is considering residential development for the area, and proximity to the trail makes those parcels attractive — which is why he'll work to help preserve it.

"There is a guarantee we will cooperate with the trail association fully," Radford said.

No concrete plans have yet been drawn up, he said. The lots' current zoning as open space might prevent any development from happening right away. At the earliest, some kind of construction would begin in spring of 2004.

Trailmaster Edwin Melanson said the Dobson Estate land has always been for sale. The trail committee was invited to buy a portion some time ago, but the non-profit volunteer group didn't have the cash to claim it.

He said three-quarters of the ground that hosts the 58-kilometre (36.7 mile) trail is Crown land; the remaining quarter is divided up among approximately 15 landowners, all of whom have allowed the trail to exist on their properties.

Luckily, trail developers had the foresight to create a second parking lot off Pine Glen Road and next to Mill Creek. Like the first lot, it has a capacity of about 40 cars. When the land is developed and the trail entrance re-jigged to the perimeter of the creek, Melanson said, users will still have a place to

## Quick facts

Trailmaster Edwin Melanson wants to encourage residents to use the Dobson Trail for snowshoeing. The trail's entrance is located in Riverview off the Pine Glen Road.

A two-kilometre snowshoe trail has been created by cutting tree branches at the 12-foot level so snowshoers have a clear path when they walk over tall snowbanks. The trail prohibits snowmobiling and all-terrain vehicles, so it's safe for winter exercise.

Melanson has 10 pairs of snowshoes, including some children's sizes, that he can loan out for those wanting to give it a try.

For more information about winter activities on the trail, he can be contacted at 855-5089.

park.

"We believe there will be no changes whatsoever to the operation of the trail," he said.

The trail's founder, Dr. Art Dobson, said he had only second-hand knowledge about the land sale. When such things happen, he said, the trail is relocated and its users make do. He said the association devoted a lot of time to the first 1.5 kilometres (0.9 miles), including the installation of a guide wire for blind hikers and improvement of the trail surface for those with physical disabilities.

"It's a shame to lose the first part — the boys put a lot of work into that section," Dobson said.

Like Melanson, however, trail association president Jim DeWolfe was more optimistic about the sale.

"It's just reality coming to bloom — we knew this was going to happen," DeWolfe said.

He added that the trail executive owes a debt of gratitude to all the past and present property owners who support it: "We've got nothing but thanks and praise for the Dobson Estate."

DeWolfe was asked if he feared losing more property to developers in the future.

"It's possible, but not probable," he said.

"As we move along further from the highway, there's less access, so there's less interest from a developer's point of view."

In the early 1960s, Dobson and a team of volunteers cut the trail through the woods from Riverview to the edge of Fundy National Park.