

New Health & Safety Initiatives Coming For Snowmobile Trail Operators & Riders

(Barrie, ON – August 11, 2020) – As the voice of organized snowmobiling and a recognized leader for powersports tourism and recreation in this province, the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) is developing new strategies to ensure the health and safety of its volunteers, landowners and riders for the coming snowmobile season.

The OFSC believes these initiatives will deliver the best possible trail riding experiences for snowmobilers, while helping to sustain up to \$3.3 Billion of snowmobiling-related economic activity that is so important to Ontario’s northern and rural communities each winter.

OFSC action on COVID-19 began on March 21st when its board of governors decided to close the OFSC’s 30,000-kilometre, provincial snowmobile trail system. For context, this unprecedented action occurred on the same day the Canada-US border shut down to non-essential travel, following the WHO’s declaration of a worldwide pandemic on March 11 and Ontario announcing a state of emergency on March 17.

Next, the OFSC initiated a series of very successful online “town hall” meetings to engage its 200 member snowmobile clubs. The purpose of this outreach included gathering input for appropriate health and safety measures to cover a variety of possible scenarios for trail operations this Fall and throughout the 2021 snowmobile season.

“Preparing, maintaining and grooming a system of snowmobile trails that comprises almost three times more kilometres than the provincial highway network is a very complex and expensive challenge,” commented OFSC CEO Landon French, “It is for us to act responsibly on behalf of dedicated volunteers who do the work, generous landowners who provide trails on their property, committed riders who purchase permits to fund trail operations, and willing partners who support all of these endeavours.”

Within this context, strategies currently in development by the OFSC for the 2021 snowmobiling season include:

- Ramping up the OFSC Rider Advantage benefits to offer additional incentives and savings for snowmobilers.
- Working with public health agencies to develop training tools for trail operations and trail riding protocols for snowmobilers.
- Connecting with local, regional and provincial governments to facilitate delivering the best possible snowmobiling experiences for Ontarians this winter.
- Engaging other stakeholders like tourism agencies, police, communities, hospitality operators, snowmobile manufacturers and dealers to share OFSC initiatives.
- Enhancing online systems & communications platforms for more effective sharing of real-time news, info and updates with all stakeholders.
- Re-evaluating OFSC participation in snowmobiling events, meetings and gatherings for the foreseeable future.

According to OFSC President Paul Murray, the Federation has already made the difficult decision to go online with its Annual General Meeting this September. “As one of the largest snowmobiling conventions in North America, taking this event virtual is a major undertaking,” he concluded, “but one we believe is necessary so that our club volunteers and participating partners don’t have to travel from all over Ontario for a multi-day, in-person meeting.”

Further announcements about these and other strategies to ensure the continued well-being of OFSC volunteers, landowners, riders and partners will be forthcoming as details are finalized.

The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs (OFSC) is a volunteer led, not-for-profit association that acts as the voice for organized snowmobiling in the Province of Ontario.

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