



INTRODUCTION

Twenty-Five Years of Boots Touching Dirt

The technology of today is not only amazing, both for its reach into every aspect of our lives, but also for the immense amount of knowledge and information it can connect us to. How often are we excited and mesmerized by the images we see on the screens of our televisions and computers, not to mention the apps on our tablets and smart phones.

For many people, however, the true wonderment of nature and the natural environment is best experienced by boots touching dirt, pulling down a hat to shield against bright sunshine or biting wind, smelling the moist earth after rain or hearing the melodic song of a bird from some tree along the trail.

These are reasons why those who envisioned and built the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail were excited by the concept of the trail. They are also the reasons why so many use the trail today and of those who maintain it.

"Everywhere is walking distance if you have the time." - Steven Wright.
It's really about taking the time.

There are many kinds of trails. The Oak Ridges Moraine Trail was built primarily for footsteps. There are many other trails for wheels.

This history of the Oak Ridges Trail Association recognizes the vision and efforts and dedication of people who have been instrumental in the popularity of the trail during its first twenty-five years.

It can't be denied that the trail is popular. ORTA members have hiked it in organized groups — sometimes taking friends and family along for the experience — and on their own for a solitary experience. The trail has also garnered the affection and interest of the public in numbers beyond counting.

Being popular with hikers is good, but it's not the whole story. As I said, there are lots of trails, but there is only one Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. This trail was built to "connect" the Oak Ridges Moraine.

In the first decade of this century, I recall how we looked at maps and spoke about the trail being the "spine" of the moraine. Running from east to west (or west to east!) along the height of land that divides watersheds, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail has always had a major geophysical importance.

When the province agreed that the Oak Ridges Moraine needed protection, the trail was seen as key in raising awareness and putting people into physical contact with the moraine. It would also tie the geography, the natural environments, the communities and the moraine's people, together.

Now, more than 25 years since the first ORTA members studied maps and shared ideas, the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail continues to give people pleasure and purpose.

Keep getting those boots dirty!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harold Sellers', with a long, sweeping underline.

Harold Sellers
President 2001 - 2004,
Executive Director 2004 - 2009