

TRANSPORT ACTION NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

ONTARIO



New cars, new service
Page 3

ALBERTA



Moving out from prehistoric
times ?
Page 3

EASTERN SHORES



Time to send it back to UK ?
Page 4

Algoma Central Railway LAST HOPE ? NO way !

MARIE PRICE | CO-CHAIR, COALITION FOR ALGOMA PASSENGER TRAINS (CAPT)

As you have probably heard or read, a string of remote communities, tourism businesses and property owners will be left with no transportation if Transport Canada's decision to stop funding the Algoma Central Railway (ACR) as of March 31, 2014 is not reversed.

CN has indicated service will subsequently cease a month later, on April 29, 2014. We understand the challenge the Canadian Government faces as it tries to balance its books, but we believe that Transport Canada officials were probably not sensitized to the unique and crucial concerns inherent with discontinued passenger railway service on the line.

Of critical importance, there are no publicly maintained roads into most of the over 56 stops on the 476 km rail line from Sault Ste. Marie to Hearst. A quick review of an official Ontario roadmap will attest to that. In addition, ending the ACR passenger service would take away the livelihoods of many tourist operators whose customers can only travel to their lodges by train; trappers who manage their trap lines by train; and fishing, canoeing, rock and ice-climbing outfitters who bring their customers into the area by train.

The \$2.2 million of federal funding under the Regional and Remote Passenger Rail Services Class Contribution Program (RRPRSCP) to

CN for the line's continued operation is a very small amount compared to the many millions of dollars in economic impacts that result from it. Cindy Lebrun of Tatnall Camp, is extremely concerned. "Our family's 40 year business, accessible only by the ACR train, would be inoperable with only 2 months notice." She adds, "(that) cancelling the Algoma passenger train will be calamitous for all of the tourism



LINDA SAVORY GORDON AND AL ERRINGTON, CAPT MEMBERS

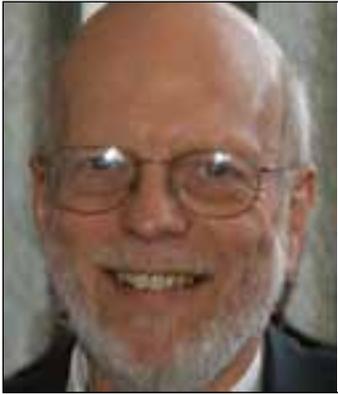
businesses, cottagers, communities, recreationists, trappers and commuters that depend on this service, especially given the extremely short notice."

Ending the passenger train will dramatically and adversely affect the efforts of First Nations and municipalities to expand their tourism industries. The Algoma Central Railway (ACR), a functioning rail line since 1899, with links to the Ontario Northland, Canadian National and

Continue on page 2

After more than 39 years

ROSS CAPON STEPS DOWN FROM NARP BOARD



The National Association of Railroad Passengers announced on late February that Ross Capon will be transitioning from his 39-year career with the organization. Dr. Larry Scott will take over as Acting President.

Capon has worked for NARP since 1975, becoming Executive Director in 1976. He has been a tireless advocate for national passenger rail system that provides

America's passengers with a safe, reliable, convenient travel choice.

"Ross has served America's passengers with great distinction during his 39-year tenure," said NARP Chairman Bob Stewart. "During Ross's time at NARP, the Association's recognition and influence significantly increased. That's reflected not only in the recognition he has received in the industry, but in the growth of passenger rail across the nation."

"I am confident that the top-notch staff I have assembled will continue to strengthen the Association's ability to press for the improvement and growth of our nation's passenger train network and to grow membership," said Capon. "I will be working closely with Acting President Larry Scott, and I am pleased to be able to assist Larry in ensuring the smoothest possible transition in leadership and the continued growth of NARP."

For his longstanding support of trains, Capon has been recognized with the Robert K. Pattison Partnership Award from the Intermodal Passenger Institute in 2000, and the W. Graham Claytor Jr. Award for Distinguished Service to Passenger Transportation from Railway Age Magazine in 2007. In addition, Capon received NARP's own Golden Spike Award in 1985.

That's quite an Espresso!

Since last November, you can enjoy Starbucks' famous coffee creations while on the move in Switzerland.

As part of a pilot run, two restaurant cars have been transformed into Starbucks cafés on wheels. This first double-decker Starbucks already runs twice daily between Geneva/Fribourg and St. Gallen. A second carriage is set to launch on the same route in spring 2014.



From page 1

Canadian Pacific railways. This is the rail line used by the Group of Seven artists to create some of their most significant and celebrated work—a real draw for the expanding market of cultural tourists.

We strongly urge Transport Minister Lisa Raitt and the Government of Canada to reverse its decision to cut funding to CN for the line's continued passenger service until appropriate assessments and options have been explored and documented.

Besides the obvious loss of millions of dollars in revenue, tourist and lost employment opportunities, a discontinued passenger rail service will inflict a devastating blow to the culture, life and appeal of the internationally known Algoma Central Railway operating

through one of the world's most charming and virtually unspoiled natural areas.

The Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) is a not-for-profit organization comprised of individuals, businesses, First Nations, municipalities and other interests who recognize the significant economic, social, cultural, historical and environmental value of passenger rail servicing and interconnecting the people, businesses and communities of Northern Ontario's Algoma District to each other, Ontario, Canada and the rest of the world. To accomplish this goal, CAPT has been working with local groups to organize events in the community that utilize the railway as a means of advertising and demonstrating its usefulness in the area.

ACR - SUPPORT FROM SOUTH OF THE BORDER

The National Association of Railroad Passengers sent a concerned letter to the Honourable Gary Albert Doer, Canada's Ambassador to the United States, in response to the latest announcement that Sault Ste. Marie-Hearst service will end March 31.

Under current plans, this passenger train will make its final run on March 31, 2014. After this date the government subsidy which had directly funded its operation will end. The decision to discontinue the train was a result of Transport Canada redefining the term "remote community" and determining that the route between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst no longer qualified as such.

According to NARP President Ross Capon, "a decision to kill this service was made absent consultation with the affected communities. The adverse economic impact on those communities would be significant. Many of the communities along the line do not have public roads, as well as many businesses which are significant draws for U.S. tourists."

Toronto

New GO train cars



Ontario is supporting jobs in Thunder Bay and improving public transit by purchasing 65 new bi-level GO Train cars from Bombardier.

The order will increase GO Transit's fleet up to 743 cars, and is an important step toward introducing two-way, all-day service on all seven GO rail lines as part of The Big Move. About 250 workers will work on the \$481 million order, which will be delivered between June 2016 and July 2017.

FAST TRACK

Did you know...



Rail shipment of crude oil in Canada rose from 50,000 tanks to car loads in 2009 to 140,000 tank car loads in 2013.

—Railway Association of Canada

And the number is...

25 000

That is the number of people who signed a petition to save passenger rail service in northern New Brunswick.

—New Brunswick Star

High speed train study

Alberta could step in into 21st century !



On November 25th, 2013 the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future passed a motion that stated "Given the rapid and continual growth in the population of Alberta, in the interest of maximizing the economic impact of that population growth, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future undertake a study of the feasibility of establishing a high-speed rail transit system to be built for Alberta in phases."

The infrequent passenger rail in Alberta reflects Canada's dire state of passenger rail nationally. It has been 28 years since

passenger rail existed between Calgary and Edmonton.

Previous Alberta studies on high speed rail that were completed in 2004 and 2008 resulted in no action taken by the government. Even Alberta High Speed Rail, a private company interested in building the project has been unsuccessful in convincing the government to take action in this regard.

Polls have routinely showed that the citizens of Alberta and Canada want high speed rail. So, is the time finally right for the people of Alberta to have passenger rail like the rest of the modern world has had for the last four decades?

In the meantime, citizens may have an opportunity to air their thoughts before March 31st. The report will be released in the near future.

JUST WATCH ME !



OLIVIA CHOW

She recently introduce a private bill to the house of Parliament regarding the future of VIA Rail. Now that she run for Mayor of Toronto, will it go further than David Collette's attempt in 2003?



ANDREA HORWATH

Ontario NDP Leader recently created uncertainty about how Ontario will actually pay for transit projects by saying no to new dedicated taxes.

This was really said...

"The long-distance routes represent the most attractive business improvement opportunity for Amtrak"

- Tom Carper, Amtrak's board member

Eastern shores

TIME TO SEND THE RENAISSANCE FLEET BACK HOME ?



Mark Vogel - FLICKR

Sometimes several external events come together to create a rare opportunity. Recently I learned that Via Rail has been facing growing reliability problems with its UK-built Renaissance cars. Apparently Via's supply of spare parts is nearly exhausted and will be hard to replenish given the overseas manufacture and limited edition characterized by these coaches. There are also rumours of corrosion and other problems as the cars approach the time when railways would typically undertake a mid-life refurbishment. But Via Rail seems to be increasingly short of cash, so refurbishment seems like a dream in today's political and financial climate.

Things are very different just south of the border. Instead of cutting back on overnight train services, the U.S. is investing in them by ordering new stainless steel, single-level sleeping cars, dining cars

and baggage/dorm cars from CAF, a Spanish company that would build them in New York State to North American standards.

Things are also very different overseas. According to The Scotsman, cited in the online publication BusinessTraveler, a proposal call has been issued for a new franchise to operate the government-funded Anglo-Scottish sleeper services from 2015. Whoever is awarded the franchise, must commit to invest in new and superior rolling stock, for which £100 million has been put forward by the Scottish and UK governments. Desired amenities include en-suite washrooms, showers and possibly a dining car and wi-fi. There is only one problem: Britain has not built new sleeping cars since the Renaissance fleet (then known as NightStar) was built in the 1990s, and the cars in use on the Anglo-Scottish sleeper are much older. They do not even offer en-suite washrooms.

Might there be an opportunity for Via Rail to sell its UK-built Renaissance cars back to Britain, where the funds seem to be already available to refurbish them? They offer all the amenities that the Anglo-Scottish service franchise is seeking: en-suite washrooms, showers, dining cars and Wi-Fi. Assuming Via could get more than scrap value from the sale, and assuming that shipping costs were not prohibitive, the proceeds from the sale could enable Via to re-equip the eastern transcontinental trains with more suitable and robust equipment.

An extension to the CAF order just south of the border comes to mind as a cost-effective solution, though Canadians and tourists may be less inclined to accept public washrooms after the privacy offered by the Renaissance en-suite facilities.

Another alternative might be to employ Maritimers at IRSI in Moncton to rebuild older stainless steel cars released from Amtrak as a result of the new CAF car deployment. Stainless steel "heritage" equipment is old, but apparently Via's rebuilds have an excellent reputation for reliability. Other options might include rebuilding surplus lightweight ex-GO cars at New Richmond, providing employment in rural Quebec. The possibilities are intriguing, if only Via had the money, and if only it could expend its efforts more constructively than patching up UK-built cars where spare parts are scarce and a mid-life refurbishment is on the horizon. Those Renaissance cars ride well and are appreciated by many passengers, including my wife and me, but if they are contributing to the demise of our few remaining overnight trains, we must send them to a good home. In the UK, they might be welcomed as ideal candidates for a rebuilding program that would transform the image of the Anglo-Scottish sleeper service.—*Marcus Garnet, Vice President East of Transport Action Canada*

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Follow us on



Coming soon...

- TRANSPORT ACTION ONTARIO AND TRANSPORT ACTION CANADA AGM at 10:00 am on April 26 at the Centre for Social Innovation, 215 Spadina Ave., Toronto. In the afternoon there will be a presentation by Metrolinx and a visit to Union Station to see the progress of the revitalization project.

More News from Transport Action Canada

National Dream Renewed Programme

Harry Gow, founding president, Transport Action Canada

Transport Action Canada sponsors a public participation programme called "The National Dream Renewed" (NDR) to give voice to Canadians about their VIA Rail passenger service and to provide information on VIA's limited mandate, its current weak status, its declining funding and its shrinking network.

Growing obsolescence of its motive power and rolling stock and station closures are among other concerns aired at a series of town hall meetings across Ontario from Kingston to Sarnia and Thunder Bay and in several communities in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, from Halifax to Edmundston (last-named in French).

The first phase of events described above helped spark an in-depth study of railway development opportunities in New Brunswick, focussing on retention and revitalisation of the route of the VIA *Ocean* - the original Intercolonial Railway - and manufacturing activity to fill the gap left by the untimely demise of the Industrial Rail Services facility in Moncton. The same consultant, Greg Gormick, was retained by Transport Action for the first phase, and then by a consortium of municipalities and regional interests for the study.

A second phase has now begun with Harry Gow addressing a town hall meeting in Port Daniel - Gascons, in the Gaspésie Region, leading to an alliance of the New Brunswick Save the Train campaign and the Gaspésians working to get their train back; and it continued with a series of meetings in Sudbury (with the MTO), Sault Ste Marie, Wawa and Hearst.

The latter three were town hall meetings to help the communities affected by an unexpected and hurried cut of funding to CN for the Algoma Central Railway's regular passenger service through this roadless wilderness area. People from all over the Algoma region and even Windsor and Michigan were in the crowd at Sault Ste. Marie, as a lot of people would lose all access to their summer homes, resorts, camps and trap lines if Transport Canada's funding cut is carried out.

Initial fund-raising by Elizabeth Hill brought in substantial funds last year, with some generous help from members and supporters, enough to keep the programme going in 2014, and amounts from British Columbia and Prairie groups have been set aside for a series of town hall meetings planned for late April and early May 2014 in Vancouver (and perhaps the Island), Edmonton, Melville and Winnipeg. Any members in Western Canada who wish to offer help organising in the places named - and perhaps others - are requested to contact the author of these lines at: hwgow@sympatico.ca.

Charitable donations to Transport Action Canada for the National Dream Renewed programme are always welcome. They will support town hall meetings in more communities across the country. You may use the enclosed cut-out form and envelope to mail your donation to Transport Action, or go to PayPal.com to donate to ndr@transport-action.ca. Please accept our thanks in advance for any such assistance.



Impromptu "Save our train!" rally on the Ocean (see back page)

Trip report - Port-Daniel-Gascons (Gaspé)

Harry Gow with Justin Babcock

Background:

Readers know that VIA Rail Canada has shut 25 stations in the last months, many of them on the Gaspé Peninsula and in New Brunswick. While pressure from TRAQ and Transport Action may have contributed to a stay of execution for the Charny Station and one other, the situation took an even more dramatic turn when VIA abruptly suspended service of the (former) Chaleur train and its connecting bus from New Carlisle to Gaspé.

With this dramatic background, the Coalition for the Gaspé train, which had held a successful meeting at Port-Daniel, organized another at nearby Gascons for Thursday, October 24th, to give voice to the local people whose lives are disrupted by the loss of the train, and to maintain pressure for its return.

The tracks on which it runs from Matapedia east have had their problems, including the effects of brine used for vegetation control on the grade crossing signals, giving VIA a pretext to "suspend" service. The counties-owned railway claims it has restored these to safe functioning, and has had it inspected to prove that and it claims that Transport Canada agrees, so VIA now seems to be dragging its feet and has not restored service. The Coalition headed by Cynthia Patterson and MP Phil Toone has been applying pressure to ensure VIA returns the train to the line soon.

Travel to Campbellton:

With all this in mind, I set out on VIA train 22 from St-Lambert Québec to link up with Cynthia Patterson of the Gaspé region. Cynthia met me at la Gare du Palais, Québec and took me up the hill for dinner with her family, including Cynthia's spouse Dennis Drainville, (Anglican Bishop of Québec); he in turn took me to Dufferin Terrace to watch the *Queen Elizabeth II* leave port and dramatically turn in the middle of the St. Lawrence.

In the evening Cynthia and I took a taxi to Charny station, where we were met by a delegation of TRAQ and Transport

Action members including stalwart André Filion. We just missed seeing L-F Garceau, who arrived after we boarded about 2200 (10 p m). The Renaissance *Ocean* had the usual lounge where we had a glass of wine, before going to explore the transition car and the trailing *Tweedsmuir Park* car. The train was full and before turning in we remarked that we were glad that David Jeanes had reserved the last two (!) sleeper cabins for us. The ride was smooth and we slept. I woke up briefly at 5:40 am in time to see the long wooden station at Matapedia where we halted briefly. The Ocean reached Campbellton on time and we were off the train by 7:10 and on our way to the Tim Horton's at the north end of the station/commercial building where we awaited our New Brunswick colleagues.

(From here I'll turn over the narrative to Justin Babcock of Campbellton):

"Hello team, Just like to say we had a good trip on the Gaspésie! Marc and I met up with Cynthia Patterson and Harry Gow early Thursday morning after they got off the train in Campbellton. We had some great conversations on our way to Port Daniel-Gascons. Cynthia and Harry have been in the saving train business for many, many years and are very knowledgeable.

Once in Port Daniel we helped them set up for their meeting. At the meeting I got up and spoke about our group in English and Marc did the same in French. The meeting went well, with Harry making the Transport Action presentation, and the President of the Gaspé Railway Society speaking as well as MP Phil Toone. Many Gaspésians also spoke about their concerns. About 50 people were in attendance, and quite a few media.

We also we able to speak with Phil about our petition, and as Greg Gormick mentioned, he is willing to help us. He would like to meet us soon to discuss this issue.

Our group's presence made news headlines on CBC and Marc made the TV on TVA-CHAU. It was a great trip for our group and connected ties with the Gaspé group which is important on our fight to save the trains."

From this point I shall recount the rest:

In my view, based on assessing numbers in U of O classrooms, I would say the crowd was closer to 70, but not to worry, they were vocal and engaged at whatever number. I would also like to mention that the assistant NDP Transport critic, Hoang Mai came and spoke in support of the Coalition. He also took a lot of notes and said he had learned a lot from the meeting. One of the reporters present was Gilles Gagné for Le Soleil. As a former railroader he has always remained in touch with Transport Action Canada and TRAQ. Thanks to Luc Côté and Marcus Garnet for mounting our PowerPoint presentations, which were well-received by all.

For the return trip, after an overnight stay in the Gîte MacDale B & B at Hope, QC and a drive by my hostess I took a red-eye flight (Ive. 6:45 am) to St-Hubert airport via Mont-Joli and Québec (arr. 9:45). Jacinthe kindly picked me up and ferried me back to St-Lambert station, where I picked up my car.

Conclusion:

The Coalition meeting was a success, and had heavy media coverage all the way from Campbellton to Québec City. A

useful connection was made with the Northern New Brunswick rail passenger advocates, and a meeting between Coalition heads and the counties' railway company was held just before the main one to help coordinate strategy. Transport Action and NDR made their points, and hopefully injected the wider VIA context and national policy considerations into the group's thinking.

Thanks:

The writer wishes to thank Cynthia Patterson for getting me invited, and both her and Phil Toone for all their hard work in setting up the meeting. I also wish to thank the Patterson-Drainville family and the MacWhirters for their hospitality, Marc and Justin for the ride and Marc again for running the PowerPoint projection! Thanks to VIA and Pascan for smooth on-time trips, to David Jeanes for arranging my VIA segments and to Transport Action Canada for sponsoring me both ways and Cynthia on the VIA trip. Enfin, merci à Jacinthe!

New Brunswick rail study released **Ted Bartlett, Director, Transport Action Canada**

All three levels of government should work together to address the rail industry crisis in New Brunswick, according to a comprehensive document released by Transport Action Atlantic on January 21. The report, prepared for TAA by consultant Greg Gormick, was jointly funded by the municipalities of Moncton, Dieppe, Riverview, Miramichi and Bathurst, and by Enterprise Greater Moncton. It addresses three issues: the proposed abandonment by CN of 139 miles of track that would leave Bathurst and Miramichi entirely without rail freight service; the deteriorated state of Atlantic Canada's last remaining rail passenger service; and the forced bankruptcy of Moncton's Industrial Rail Services Inc.



Peer reviewer Howard Easton (l.) and Transport Action Atlantic VP Ted Bartlett (r.) present an advance copy of the NB Rail report to New Brunswick Premier David Alward.

The consultant emphasizes that continued rail service is an economic necessity for New Brunswick's North Shore, but suggests that the business model embraced by CN may not be the most effective delivery method, either from a cost or customer service perspective. Furthermore, he says, the line through Bathurst and Miramichi is essential to the viability of continued rail passenger service between the Maritimes and central Canada. An alternate routing using CN's main freight line through New Brunswick is not a practical option.

The report points to a growing trend throughout the United States toward both federal and state support of strategic rail infrastructure projects, noting nearby examples in Maine where both freight and passenger services have been successfully rejuvenated. The efficiency of rail transportation offers extremely important benefits and incentives to industrial development, warning that without rail, northern New Brunswick could be at considerable disadvantage.

The key recommendations include a careful examination of all ownership and operational alternatives for the endangered CN Newcastle Subdivision – including engaging a qualified shortline company to manage the service – and verification of CN’s estimated track rehabilitation costs by a competent independent third party. If public funds are to be used for rail upgrading, there must be assurance in return that the taxpayers’ investment will be protected over the long term.

VIA Rail’s *Ocean* should be returned to a daily schedule as quickly as possible, the report urges, citing research by Amtrak for a similar route in the U.S., projecting greatly increased ridership along with improved crew and equipment utilization would substantially reduce the cost per passenger mile. In fact, the Amtrak study predicted the overall public funding requirement for more than doubling the frequency would increase by less than 10 percent.

The report says VIA management has completely failed to recognize that the true value of long-haul passenger trains today lies in the service they provide to intermediate communities along the route – rather than merely linking the end-points. For this reason, the train is of particular value to places such as Miramichi, Bathurst and Campbellton, where other public transportation options are limited.

The document urges that the use of the problematic British-built Renaissance equipment on the *Ocean* be discontinued or minimized to the fullest practical extent, to improve operational efficiency and flexibility and make the train more attractive to passengers.

Much of the reliable and proven stainless-steel fleet previously employed remains idle for a large portion of the year, and could be used to great advantage in Atlantic Canada, the consultant says.

The collapse of Industrial Rail Services Inc. is blamed on a “toxic” relationship that developed over time between the company and VIA Rail, as a result of numerous mistakes made by both parties in executing three railcar rebuilding contracts. Gormick believes, however, that the enterprise can be salvaged, urging intervention by the minister of transport to initiate the process. He argues that the provincial government has made a substantial investment in IRSI; that the company had been providing valuable employment for 240 skilled tradespeople in Moncton; and that VIA has an ongoing need – at least in the short term – for refurbishing and repair of its aging equipment.

But the ultimate solution to the passenger railway’s woes, the report argues, is a long-term plan to re-equip the company with modern, functional, comfortable and cost-efficient rolling stock. Furthermore, it’s time to introduce a long-overdue act of Parliament to properly establish VIA as a full Crown corporation with a clearly-defined mandate, rights and obligations, supported by stable year-to-year funding, and to

reconstitute its board of directors to include expertise in rail operations and passenger transportation.

Transport Action Atlantic is also advising municipalities that they need to become more assertive on rail service, and advocate strongly for fulfillment of the recommendations contained in the report which they made possible. While railways are traditionally a matter of federal jurisdiction, there is a role for communities to play. They should insist that they be consulted when service decisions are being made, and encourage the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to intensify its efforts to make rail passenger service an issue of national concern.

The complete report can be accessed on Transport Action Atlantic’s website at <http://atlantic.transport-action.ca>

NB and CN cut a deal, but Feds won’t buy in

Just days after Transport Action Atlantic released its landmark report, one of the key recommendations became reality – at least in part. But it wasn’t enough to ensure the future of rail passenger service in the Maritimes.

CN and the Province of New Brunswick have reached a deal to preserve and upgrade 95 endangered miles on the Newcastle Subdivision of the former Intercolonial Railway. The agreement will see the Province invest \$25 million in infrastructure improvements over the next five years that will ensure continued freight service to Miramichi and Bathurst. In return, CN has pledged up to \$30 million for maintenance and operation of two sections of threatened line for 15 years.

Unfortunately, a 44-mile stretch between those two small North Shore cities has no on-line freight customers, and the railway still plans to proceed with abandonment proceedings for that portion. But that section of track is critical for passenger service; VIA Rail’s *Ocean* has been the only train using those rails for more than a year.



The ominous dotted line on this CN handout map could spell the end of all rail passenger service to the Maritimes, as early as July of this year.

With the statutory abandonment process already underway, the Province has apparently drawn a line in the sand, and

challenged the Government of Canada to come up with a contribution to keep the entire subdivision intact. CN says for that to happen an additional \$10-million investment will be necessary, the railway isn't prepared to do it.

Premier David Alward and Transportation Minister Claude Williams point out that rail passenger service is really a federal responsibility, and the cash-strapped provincial government has already pressed its resources to the limit with its contribution for freight service.

But so far there's been no sign that federal funding will be forthcoming, with Transport Minister Lisa Raitt and Rob Moore, New Brunswick's regional minister, both saying little beyond the obvious facts that the regulatory process is unfolding and that CN is a private business. Minister Raitt continues to maintain that VIA is an arms-length Crown corporation and makes its own business decisions. Minister Moore has gone farther, saying that the Harper Government has already committed a billion dollars in capital to VIA, and has no more to give – without acknowledging that none of that expenditure has found its way to Atlantic Canada. VIA, for its part, says it has no intention of investing in or buying the track.

But the clock is ticking rapidly. CN has confirmed that unless there is intervention from some quarter, the 44 miles will be abandoned as of July 8, and the legendary *Ocean* will make its last run almost 110 years to the day after its 1904 inauguration.

It would mark the end of all rail passenger service east of Quebec City. Even though some have pointed out that there is an alternate rail route between Moncton and Montreal, the provincial government's consultant concurs with Transport Action Atlantic's findings – rerouting passenger service over the Napadogan Subdivision, CN's main freight route to the Maritimes, isn't an option.

Members of Parliament from all parties are adopting various strategies – some louder than others – in an effort to persuade the Harper Government to commit the needed funds. They are supported by municipalities and chambers of commerce all along the *Ocean* route, and by a petition organized by the Campbellton-based citizens coalition Save our Trains in Northern New Brunswick that now boasts nearly 25,000 signatures.

MPs ride Maritime rails to support the *Ocean*

Twice in three weeks, crowds of passenger rail supporters thronged the VIA station in Campbellton NB to overflowing to welcome members of Parliament riding the *Ocean* on whistle-stop journeys to Ottawa. On March 2nd, Ontario MP Bruce Hyer was the star attraction, and on the 23rd no fewer than five members of the NDP caucus were on board.

While Campbellton produced the most passionate turnouts, there were similar demonstrations of support at locations all along the route on both occasions, as people who firmly believe in coast-to-coast rail service turned out to help send a strong message to the federal government. In Halifax, Amherst, Sackville, Moncton, Rogersville, Miramichi, Bathurst – and on board the train itself – the enthusiasm was contagious. And the message was the same: Ottawa needs to earmark some of its infrastructure funding to preserve and strengthen rail passenger service in the Maritimes and eastern Quebec.



Mayor Gerry Cormier and several members of his council, other community leaders and interested citizens with Bruce Hyer (4th from right) and New Brunswick Green Party Leader David Coon on the station platform in Miramichi, NB.



Mayor Robert Small and Deputy Mayor Lisa Emery with several other councillors, Transport Action's Dennis Livingstone, and MPs Robert Chisholm, Phil Toone, and Megan Leslie during a brief station stop in Amherst, NS.



MPs Yvon Godin (l.) and Phil Toone (r.) with Moncton Councillor Charles Leger, Deputy Mayor Cecile Cassista and Councillor Lisa Hansen of Riverview, NB.