



The Honourable Omar Alghabra P.C., M.P.
Minister of Transport
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Composition of the HFR Board

November 2, 2022

Dear Minister Alghabra,

We are reviewing the recently released update the HFR RFEOI; are pleased to see three experienced railway executives named to the project, and we understand that the process of board recruitment is now getting underway.

An effective board of directors must serve both as a pool of expertise the executive can draw upon and have the experience to accurately evaluate the performance of the executive leadership. To that end, we recommend that the composition of the new board be modelled on the supervisory boards of larger European railways such as Deutsche Bahn and SNCF, with a breadth of relevant railway operations, mechanical, and civil engineering experience as well as independent directors.

Some of this valuable experience is to be found within the ranks of VIA Rail's current and former employees, and both the SNCF and DB boards have significant labour representation. High Frequency Rail will also be the most significant transformation of the passenger rail industry in Canada in generations, so the presence of labour representation at the board level should serve to smooth the change management process and ensure ongoing effective delivery of the project.

With the respondents to the RFEOI being primarily European, the presence of North American railway experience at the board level will also assist in the translation of that expertise into the North American railway and regulatory context, potentially avoiding costly missteps and delays.

Noting the damage done to VIA Rail by previous attempts to generate short-term savings when required by Ottawa, we also ask that the enabling legislation for HFR provide this new board with a mandate and the independence to act in the interests of the travelling public and prioritize long term service quality.

As you know, we continue to have concerns about details of the HFR project, including timely and cost-effective project delivery, and structuring the private sector's participation in a way that is financially appropriate for passengers and taxpayers, and ensuring transparency. An experienced and independent board with appropriate stakeholder representation could contribute to allaying some of these concerns.

Sincerely,

Terence Johnson
President, Transport Action Canada