

Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133

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Rail Freight Service
Review Secretariat
Suite 808-180 Elgin Street
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Agricultural Service Board for the Municipal District of Spirit River No. 133. We thank you for the opportunity to provide some comments however; we have no suggestions for improvements as we understand the complexity of the problems. We say problems because there are many things that just do not seem correct and require fixing in our opinion.

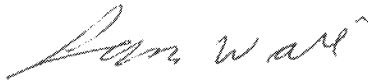
It is our belief that farmers are treated like we are the bottom of the "Food Chain". All other freight seems to have priority yet we are told that the rail cannot make any money but they say they never lose while hauling grain. We are a captive market at the mercy of the rail to market are production and being from the north we are double disadvantaged. Grain with alternative methods of competitive freight is targeted by the rail companies and shortline alternatives and we are left until last because of our one rail line monopoly unless we have something that is needed quicker. With three grain terminals in our municipality we often have cars stockpiled along abandoned tracks. We have been told that these box cars are allocated a maintenance allotment but are never used; instead they are moved around the country in an elaborate shell game while the maintenance money is pocketed. At the Provincial Agricultural Service Board Program a resolution was passed asking Transport Canada to force maintenance upon the rail companies so that the grain cars do not leak as they pass through each municipality possibly spreading weeds but also losing the commodity trusted to them to deliver to the final market where the owner takes the loss.

Our Terminals were developed to accommodate 100 railcar spotting which was required to be efficient. We often here that cars are not delivered as promised and trucks have to be turned away. Some of these trucks possibly have been on the road for 4-6 hours to reach the terminal. I have heard the Engineers when they max their hours they have to return home by taxi leaving the train idle which throws the scheduling out on down the line. Why are they heading out on a run that they cannot e expected to complete.

We hope that our comments will be of use in trying to determine where the inefficiencies are that they may be corrected. There is no reason that trucks can compete with the rail in an efficient way to move mass quantities of any commodity or freight yet it is happening.

We will eagerly await to read your findings and plans to correct the problems that have plagued rail freight for the many passed years.

Sincerely;



Larry Wallin
ASB Chairman