

April 28, 2009
File # 8310-00



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Transport Canada
Rail Freight Service Review
Attention: Mr. Walter Paszkowski, Chair
180 Elgin Street, Suite 808
Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5
Sent via email: RFSR-EFMS@tc.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Paszkowski:

Reference: Rail Freight Service Review

It is with confidence that we write this letter, hoping that we have finally come to a place where concerns can be addressed and considered as we continue our struggle in the Peace region to get adequate rail service.

There have been ongoing and serious discussions lately between local government elected officials on both the British Columbia and Alberta sides of the Peace, regarding rail transportation in and out of the region. I do not believe we need remind people that this northern region is seeing unprecedented growth and activity, and all economists and business people alike, are forecasting that growth to continue for the next few decades. It is with this information in mind that we find it puzzling that rail service is not being considered more seriously as the prime means of transporting our goods out of the region to market, or conversely, bringing much needed supplies and resources to our industries and businesses.

We are very fortunate in the Peace region to have a very diverse economy, boasting some of the best agriculture, oil and gas, mining, and forestry, as well as the many varieties of green energy that are continually growing. With all of this activity, large equipment and supplies are needed to be brought in and the resulting product is needed to be shipped out. Unfortunately though, we are experiencing a negative impact to our industries due to the lack of rail service. Rail is not only convenient and cost effective; its use is far more environmentally friendly.

In a time when all levels of government are promoting efficiencies to reduce carbon footprints, we are asking the panel to consider the following issues which need to be addressed to increase our accessibility to the rest of the country, and the world.

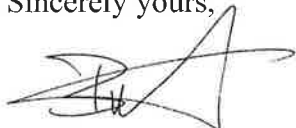
1. The removal, closure, or lack of use of rail lines throughout the Peace region has seriously affected our agriculture industries as this directly impacts how effectively and timely product can be transported to destination markets.
2. The lack of investment in maintenance and upgrading of existing rail infrastructure.
3. Shippers are advising us that even though they have been requesting service in the area, the service provider has been less than cooperative in advancing their business on existing lines and accommodating the request of customers.
4. Routing of trains does not allow for timely shipments to market. For example, shipments from the Peace region destined for Prince George and Prince Rupert are routed south through Hinton, instead of taking advantage of the more direct route through Dawson Creek.
5. The BC side of the Peace is cut off from all markets accessible by rail from Alberta with the present rail line not being used. With the growth of oil and gas in the region, all freight is transported by truck which creates increased traffic and safety issues on our already overloaded highway system.

We are looking for your support as we continue to ensure that all corners of the country have adequate rail service. We are looking for a commitment to upgrading and using the rail lines that are already in existence. The rail line between Hythe and Dawson Creek needs to be not only kept open, but used. We need the commitment that no further lines will be decommissioned, which would further isolate our region, creating an unfair economic situation. We are suggesting that a container depot be created in the Peace region which could prove to create a positive business situation for the service provider.

This is the decade of the north. We are in a position to have the greatest, positive, economic impact on this country, and as we continue to grow in Northern British Columbia and Alberta, and with the increased need to ship goods to and from Asia and beyond through the closest port in Prince Rupert, it is imperative that we have a reliable, cost affective, and efficient rail system. We are hoping that this review panel will be the proactive step to achieving a positive outcome for all.

Thank you for your time, and your consideration of our concerns.

Sincerely yours,



Bruce Lantz
Mayor