



NATIONAL MEMO – ALL UNITS AT VIA RAIL

Looming Corridor Privatization Threat Overshadows the Promise of HFR



Dark days for VIA Rail as nationwide-service cuts since 2018 have happened in advance of privatization

Rail travel is by far the most green mode of travel, yet at a time when more Canadians than ever want to travel in an ecologically responsible way, Canada's national passenger rail network is failing Canadian travellers with equipment shortages, service reductions and privatization.

By the end of 2024, the Government of Canada will have selected a private, multinational company to assume operations of a major portion of VIA Rail Canada.

No one is buying VIA Rail, however; the Government of Canada is handing over VIA's Corridor operation for free, including the transfer of new trainsets valued at \$980 million of taxpayer dollars, and a deal guaranteeing the new private operator a profit for up to 50 years.

In return, the consortium of private companies will be responsible for 1) assuming VIA's existing Corridor operations and 2) building the new High-Frequency Rail (HFR) line between Toronto and Québec City.

The Transport Minister's plan is detailed in the RFEOI released in Spring 2022:

<https://www.transportation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/High-Frequency-Rail-RFI-Eol.pdf>

Three consortia of multinational corporations will be submitting proposals this Spring, with the Federal Government selecting the winning proposal in the Fall of 2024.

The Transport Minister's plan to link HFR to the privatization of the Corridor is unnecessary and will doom the already underfunded transcontinental and regional services. HFR was once lauded as the saviour of VIA Rail – now it is the death knell.

QUIET SERVICE CUTS

After decades of underfunding by the Federal Government, equipment shortages have meant that pre-pandemic service levels were never returned to the communities below:

VIA Service Reductions Since 2018

- 33% Service Reduction – Canadian (Vancouver-Toronto)
- 15% Service Reduction – Corridor-wide (Ontario-Quebec)
- 50% Service Reduction – Corridor Communities of Kitchener, Guelph, Stratford and St Mary's
- Service Discontinued – 650/651 Kingston-Toronto
- 66% Service Reduction – Winnipeg-Churchill Sleeper Accommodation
- Service Discontinued – Winnipeg-Churchill Dining Car
- Service Discontinued – Montreal-Halifax Dome Car
- Service Discontinued – Corridor Bicycle Service and Checked Baggage

Thus far, it has been estimated that roughly \$500 million has been spent since 2022 setting up a second, redundant Crown Corporation called VIA HFR Inc., creating jobs, stipends and expense accounts for corporate executives. Not a single cent of that money has been spent on actually running any trains to serve passengers.

HFR won't be completed for at least 15 years, meanwhile VIA's existing services have already been drastically cut. There appears to be no plan to improve services.

In fact, if the long-distance fleet is not replaced within the next 5 to 10 years, we risk losing service across the country due to equipment failures.

At a time when more Canadians than ever want to travel by train, the Federal Government is dooming the breakup of the VIA Rail.

TAKE ACTION – SAVE VIA RAIL

Now is the time to strengthen the national rail network.

Our campaign is resolved to fight the Government's privatization plan for VIA Rail and to expand publicly-owned passenger rail in Canada.

Our campaign has formed strategic alliances with unions, passenger and transport advocacy groups such as The Teamsters, Transport Action Canada and the International Federation of Transport Workers, and have presented at major national events such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Unifor's Transport Council Convention, Unifor's Canada Council Convention and the International Transport Federation Convention. Our campaign has also been actively engaged in lobbying municipal and federal politicians across the country to advocate for a public and expanded VIA Rail.

Please share these links with friends and family.

Sign our Parliamentary Petition:

<https://www.ourcommons.ca/petitions/en/Petition/Sign/e-4754>

Write Your MP:

https://backontrack.unifor.org/take_action

In Solidarity and Advocacy,



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