

**COALITION FOR
ALGOMA
PASSENGER
TRAINS.CA**



January 25, 2007

The Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Re: Reduction in Passenger Train Service: Algoma Central Railway (ACR)

We urge you to restore the level of passenger service that has just been reduced by CN on the ACR line for Sault Ste. Marie to Hearst, Ontario. Maintaining this line is clearly consistent with your government's priorities, particularly support for economic development and environmental improvement. The ACR provides train-in access to the more lucrative forms of remote wilderness tourism. Canada's special assets for tourism co-exist in Northern Ontario: spectacular wilderness settings with a rail corridor through them. If properly developed these could draw increasingly large numbers of customers from around the world.

About 30 years ago there were approximately 30 tourist resorts along the ACR line. Due to a steady deterioration of the rail service over the last 15 years, including the fears that the service will eventually be eliminated as ridership decreases, tourist operators have been hesitant to expand their businesses. The Federal tourism strategy calls for more investment in passenger trains to support economic diversity and growth through tourism. An important way of implementing that strategy is to ensure that the train service is not reduced. That means having a second train running on Saturdays and Sundays.

CAPT is very pleased that the federal government has committed \$2.1 million to replace one of the two passenger trains, but a second train is needed to maintain the schedule. We realize that a second refurbished train would not likely be operational before summer, 2007. We are therefore asking that funding be provided to CN to offset the costs of operating the best of their old equipment for 20 more trips as the second train required to maintain the existing schedule for 2007.

The labour intensive tourism industry is a key aspect of Northern Ontario's economic diversification and job growth strategy. It is considered to be an important way to employ northerners laid off from the forestry, mining and steel sectors. To support the growth of the tourism industry in Northern Ontario, government investment in the rail infrastructure is essential.

The schedule change to take effect May, 2007 was formally announced by email on Wed., Jan. 24—a **mere three months notice**. This is extremely unfair treatment of the tourist businesses that have already made their summer bookings based on the previous schedule. Since it will now be impossible to travel just on the weekends, many customers will be lost.

Ridership will be dramatically reduced with the new schedule. The largest numbers travel on the weekend. The new schedule will require departure from the Sault on Friday morning and the return trip on Saturday! The train then goes north on Sunday and returns on Monday. So those who leave the Sault will have to take a day off work on Friday or Monday in order to use the train to access resorts or other recreation usage for only **one** weekend day.

CAPT is currently working very hard with regional partners, including all of the municipalities along the ACR to develop a strategic plan to massively expand the tourism development along the train line. That strategic planning will be totally aborted if the train service is cut back any further. (A reduction in winter service was made 2 years ago.) This is why it is so urgent for you and your government to take swift action on this matter.

We also think that federal support for this train service will fit within your positive environmental initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. Train transportation is a very effective way of accomplishing that goal.

Thank you very much in advance for considering this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

(original signed)

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Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains (CAPT) is a coalition of individuals, businesses and other interests who recognize the significant economic, employment, social cultural, historical and environmental value of Algoma's wilderness passenger and tour trains.