

# COALITION FOR ALGOMA PASSENGER TRAINS.CA



1520 Queen Street East Sault Ste Marie ON Canada P6A 2G4

January 7, 2009

## **CAPT Presentation to Tony Martin Pre Budget Consultations**

**Quality passenger train services networking and connecting the people, businesses and communities of Algoma, to each other, adjacent regions and the rest of the world.**

1. Timely, efficient, accessible passenger rail service between Sault Ste Marie and Hearst
2. Timely, efficient, accessible passenger rail service between Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury
3. Development of high quality Algoma wilderness rail tourism and recreation corridor

### ***Why – Our Economy, Environment and Quality of Life***

1. Economy
  - Lack of adequate passenger rail service significantly restricts economic development, local and regional wealth generation and job creation
  - Transportation in our economy is an inflated cost because it is so dependent on far more expensive road transportation
  - Decreasing traffic on our highways decreases road maintenance and expansion needs, the most costly transportation infrastructure to build and maintain.
  - Rail is the most reliable, attractive and safest all-season travel ie. Air travel cancellations and road closures due to weather
  - Linking the United States to half of Ontario through Sault Ste Marie
2. Environment
  - High dependence on roads creates far higher pollution and other environmental costs that would be substantially less if far higher rail use were encouraged and supported.
  - Rail can potentially handle substantially more freight and passenger traffic than road with a substantially lower environmental and geographic footprint.
3. Quality of life
  - Isolation of communities because of travel distances, safety concerns and weather. ie. Holiday air travel and road closures this past year. Northern Communities need to be able to link to each other and the rest of the world economically, safely, comfortably and all-season.
  - Decrease out-migration, especially by youth
    - New University and difficulty getting students to Sault Ste Marie

***Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains***  
**www.CAPTrains.ca**

- Difficulty of students accessing education and keeping connected to their communities.
- Increase in-migration of doctors, educators, entrepreneurs and other professionals needed to ensure the health, viability and growth of our communities and economy
- Linking northern communities to each other, regional recreation opportunities and the rest of the world, reliably, attractively, affordably and all-season for social, economic and recreational benefits
- Baby Boomers and the general aging population requires more suitable forms of transportation
- Road travel more than 3-4 hours is very unattractive to most people both locally and worldwide because of economic, comfort, safety and accessibility issues.
  - Student travel to and from regional communities
  - European and Asian travel
  - Beautiful and desirable area to visit this central area of Ontario and Canada, but very low percentage of potential tourists are travelling here because long driving distances are not inviting or acceptable to most tourists
  - Difficult to access by any current travel options ie. Long drives, flight difficulties, expense, time...

## **Solutions**

1. Research and implementation of a development and operations plan to re-introduce the rail service between Sault Ste Marie and Sudbury.
2. Consultations with Aboriginal populations, regional communities, industries, businesses and other public interests be essential. Public consultations must be an initial and ongoing
3. Public investment supporting upgrading rail infrastructure to usable standards.
4. Government has to reassert its role in regulation of rail to:
  - Ensure that rail infrastructure is maintained at a standard that ensures both passengers and freight can be transported safely, efficiently, effectively, economically and additionally for passengers, quickly and comfortably.
  - Ensure passenger trains can be run on punctual, reliable and timely schedules
  - Ensure Canadian individuals and businesses have access to rail opportunities
5. Passenger trains and services need to be upgraded to ensure they meet social, economic, and accessibility needs.
6. Train stations must be improved, replaced where needed, and maintained.
7. Passenger trains need to network with cooperative schedules
8. Public management of passenger rail services should be considered, with management boards that are representative and answerable to the public to ensure accountability and transparency.

## **Conclusion**

Fundamental to a competitive, successful economy is the ability to move people and goods safely, efficiently, effectively, economically and additionally for passengers, quickly and comfortably.

Our culture and economy have become very dependent on roads for most transportation, which has resulted in an escalating isolation of individuals, communities and businesses in our region from each other and the rest of the world. Most people in our region, our province and our country are not travelling long distances because of

expense, disabilities or safety concerns. Rail is potentially the safest and most attractive transportation that is accessible physically and economically. Our dependence on roads presumes that every Canadian can afford, have access to, or physically drive a car. Visitors to our country are also assumed to want to drive long distances to enjoy many of our most attractive and engaging places, activities and people. Canada has many people with physical or age related disabilities or restrictions affecting driving, as well as a high and growing population of people with economic constraints that preclude or severely restrict vehicle ownership and use. Both these trends are increasing and becoming more prevalent with our aging population and global economic challenges.

Our dependence on roads also makes our economy less competitive by inflating transportation costs both for goods and people both directly and through higher government costs to maintain and build ever bigger roads. Moving more of our transportation needs onto rail would also substantially decrease pollution and other environmental effects.

Government has a crucial role to play in helping our region develop a world-class wilderness rail corridor linked to the United States and the rest of the world. Our communities also need the passenger and freight rail links to expand business opportunities, diversify our economy, and ensure long-term stability to our communities, cultures and economy.

*Thank you*

CAPT Co-Chairs

*Marie Price & Al Errington*