

NEORN Passenger Rail Summit

Thursday, April 19

[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

Good morning everyone. I'm very glad to bring you greetings on behalf of the City of Sault Ste. Marie and our City Council, here at the North Eastern Passenger Rail Summit.

I'd like to begin by recognizing our guest speakers: Bruce Budd, President of Transport Action Canada, Ken Bittem, who has worked in railroad management for almost 40 years, Sylvain Gervais, Bombardier's Director of Operations and Maintenance for Canada and Corina Moore, President and CEO of Ontario Northland.

I also want to thank the organizers of the Summit, in particular Lucille Frith and Dawne Cunningham, and I would also like to recognize Linda Savory-Gordon, Dorothy Macnaughton and Al Errington from the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains. Thank you all for your efforts and your advocacy on this important issue.

Transportation is fundamental to the health and sustainability of Northern Ontario. Transit options such as passenger rail service provides access to towns and cities located throughout the North, contributing to an improved quality of life for citizens and facilitating the movement of visitors to the region.

Passenger rail is an environmentally friendly, safe and generally inexpensive form of public transportation, particularly suited to a rural area such as Northern Ontario. The natural beauty of the North provides endless opportunities related to tourism and recreational options, but a transit system needs to be in place to provide access throughout our region.

NEORN's proposed North Eastern Ontario Rail Loop addresses this situation by connecting communities, First Nations, businesses and the people of Northeastern Ontario to the rest of Canada through Toronto.

In the Algoma region, efforts from the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains and Missanabie Cree First Nation to restore passenger rail service between Sault Ste. Marie and Hearst provide an example of the aforementioned unlocked potential.

There are several tourism-related businesses and recreational properties located along the rail line's corridor that are only accessible by rail. Approximately 400 km of the 470 km line is not accessible by public road.

The service has been historically subsidized by the federal government and a socio-economic impact study conducted in 2014 by BDO Canada determined the federal government's annual contribution of \$2.2-million supported between 170 to 220 jobs.

There are clearly numerous benefits that come with restoration of passenger rail service. I have outlined this in a letter from my office to Prime Minister Trudeau.

Government subsidized passenger rail service is provided by governments across the world and right here in Canada, and it needs to be provided once again to the North. As a matter of fairness, our Federal and Provincial Governments need to make an investment in Northern Ontario's economy and in Northern Ontarians by providing support for passenger rail service.

On that note, I once again want to thank NEORN, the Coalition for Algoma Passenger Trains and the Committee Promoting Muskoka Rail Travel for continuing to push for passenger rail service. Your cause is important to our region, and as Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie, I remain committed to providing assistance. Thank you.