

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 2008

Friday 04/01/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Franktown.

Woman, 60, injured in car-train crash

A 60-year-old Smiths Falls woman suffered minor injuries after her vehicle collided with a short freight train near Franktown on Wednesday. Lanark OPP said the woman was eastbound on the Line in Beckwith Township when the collision happened at a level crossing just west of Highway 15. Police said glare from the sun may have affected the driver's ability to see the warning lights. No charges have been laid.

09/01/2008 Brockville Recorder Westport

B&W Railway history to be unveiled at Athens meeting

Westport Railway to a meeting of the Athens Heritage Society on Thursday, Jan. 17. Bob Moore of Richmond, ON, a noted railway historian who is a member of the Smiths Falls Railway Museum, has spent years researching the history of the B&W Railway, which transformed the character of the local community in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The B&W Railway was incorporated in 1871 and work on the 45-mile track between Brockville and Westport was completed in 1887. The completion led to a more ambitious, but ultimately failed plan, to expand the line to Sault Ste. Marie. Moore's presentation includes

more than 100 historic photos with many stops between Brockville and Westport, including Athens, featured along the way. The B&W Railway was in operation through Athens from 1888 to 1952, although it went through changes in ownership and name several times and eventually merged with CN in 1918. It carried passengers, agricultural products and mail between communities and was considered a bridge between the St. Lawrence River and the Rideau Canal during the days before an adequate road system in eastern Ontario.

Saturday 02/02/2008 Ottawa Citizen Lachute

Quebec railway upgrade coming

The federal and Quebec governments will spend \$14 million to upgrade the Quebec-Gatineau railway by replacing railway ties and ballast along the 483-kilometre freight line between Quebec City and Gatineau. The railway links industrial centres in Quebec City, Montreal, Lachute and Gatineau. Genesee Rail-One the Canadian subsidiary of Genesee & Wyoming Inc. bought the line from CP rail in 1997. The regional railway ships products such as wood, paper, particle board, ore over short lines to the U.S.

Thursday 07/02/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River

Two seriously hurt after freight train collides with car

Two people are in hospital - one with life-threatening injuries - after a freight train collided with a car at a railway crossing on TV Tower Road in Laurentian Valley Township, west of Pembroke, early yesterday.

Police said a southbound car was struck at 8:30 a.m. by a westbound train operated by Ottawa Valley Railroad.

The two occupants of the car, the 26-year-old male driver and an 18-year-old female passenger, whose names have not been released, were taken to Pembroke Regional Hospital.

OPP Const. Kevin Davidson said the male driver was airlifted to The Ottawa Hospital's Civic campus with critical injuries.

The female passenger sustained serious, but non-life-threatening injuries, he said.

Const. Davidson said investigators believe the driver went through warning lights at the intersection.

The crossing was closed last night as officers continued to investigate.

Friday 08/02/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River

Teen driver of car hit by train to be charged

Ontario Provincial Police say they will lay charges against the driver of the car hit by a freight train on TV Tower Road, in Laurentian Valley Township, west of Pembroke, Wednesday morning.

Charles Adams, 17, was taken to Pembroke General Hospital with what were described as life-threatening injuries after the 8:30 a.m. crash.

He was later airlifted to the Civic campus of The Ottawa Hospital where he is reported in critical condition.

He faces charges under the Highway Traffic Act.

His passenger, Brittany Short, 16, remains at Pembroke General Hospital with serious injuries.

The southbound car was on the railway crossing when it was struck on the driver's side by a westbound train operated by Ottawa Valley Railroad.

20/02/2008 CNW Beachburg

OVER \$1.5 MILLION TO OTTAWA CENTRAL: The Governments of Canada and Quebec will invest over \$1.5 million of a \$2.4-million project that will help the Ottawa Central Railway upgrade to North American standards. Under the restoration program, the Government of Canada will invest \$948,000, the Government of Quebec over \$632,000, and the Ottawa Central Railway (owned by the Quebec Railway Corporation) more than \$789,000 over a period of five years to upgrade the carrying capacity of 36 kilometres of the railway's tracks in Quebec. (Branchline)

Thursday 10/04/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Carleton Place

3 freight cars leave Carleton Place tracks

Three Ottawa Valley Railroad Company freight cars left the tracks in Carleton Place early yesterday morning. No one was injured in the 6:25 a.m.

accident, a company spokesman at the North Bay headquarters said. He said the scene behind the industrial park on Bennett Street, north of Highway 7, was expected to be cleaned up by the end of the day. The company has no estimate of damage and is still trying to determine the cause of the derailment.

With picture of steam locomotive and map.

Track owners call halt to excursions after clay slippage puts tourist-magnet train at risk

The Hull-Chelsea-Wake-field Steam Train, recently rated as one of the gems of Canadian tourism, has screeched to an indefinite halt because of a major landslide over the weekend near the rail line in Chelsea.

Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras said yesterday that steam train operator Andre Groulx and the non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais, which owns the track, decided to park the train until an engineering study determines if the line is safe.

Andre Guibord, who is a spokesman for train owner Jean Gauthier, said excursions could be cancelled for 2008 or the train could be sold if engineering studies show the soil under the tracks is unstable.

"There are major expenditures coming up: insurance is \$98,000 and improvements to some level crossings will cost \$75,000," Mr. Guibord said. "The owner is fed up with pumping money into a money pit and is about to pull the plug. If things don't shape up, that could be the end of the steam train." He said the company that operates the train has asked the Quebec transport ministry to examine the line, but an engineering study would take at least a week.

The 100-by-100-metre landslide is in a wooded area of Chelsea west of Highway 105 near Loretta Loop, north of Alonzo Wright Bridge on the Gatineau River. The landslide is about 10 to 15 metres from the track, which is owned by Gatineau, Chelsea, La Peche and the Quebec government.

There is no estimate of how much repairs may cost or how the land can be restored.

"We have engineers on site and within the next couple of days, we will have a better idea of what this means," Mr. Perras said. "We will tell people what is happening, what timetable we have and the type of work we are going to do to stabilize the land.

"The Leda clay just sucked in the water from melting snow."

"It became a soup, and the next thing you know, it collapsed," Mr. Perras said. "The train operator noticed the slide on the weekend and reported it to us on Monday."

He blamed the landslide on heavy snow during the winter, soft Leda clay in the area and climate change. He said there have been three landslides in Chelsea this spring.

"One closed Highway 105 for a week near Burnett Road. Another slide closed the road to Meech Lake and the third is now near the railway.

"This is probably the first sign of climate change and how much it is going to affect our infrastructure across Canada."

Mr. Perras said it will take at least two days to determine the extent of the slide and whether it is on public or private land. Taxpayers would pay to repair the damage if the landslide is on public land and private owners would pay if the slide is on private property.

Mr. Groulx threatened to sell the 1907 steam locomotive and its passenger cars in November 2007 if Chelsea and Gatineau insisted that he pay for an engineering study and unspecified improvements that might be needed to prevent washouts from undermining the track.

Mr. Groulx, who took over the excursion train in 1994, said at the time that he could not sign an agreement to improve the track without knowing how much the work would cost.

The municipalities that operate the non-profit railway line demanded an engineering study after a rainstorm on July 20, 2007 undermined part of the line in Chelsea, creating a gully that left a section of the track swinging over a gap like a rope bridge.

Steam train inspectors noticed the rising water and hired a bus to return passengers to Hull from Wakefield before the washout damaged the rail line.

The Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais, which is owned by the three municipalities and the Quebec government, is paying for an engineering study on the safety of bridges and culverts along the 33-kilometre railway line.

The president of Tourisme Outaouais, Jean Thiffault, said the train is one of the region's most valuable tourism assets and generates more than \$8 million in business a year and employs about 100 people during its six-month season.

Quebec government helps get steam train back on track

OTTAWA -- Outaouais MNAs want the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train back on the rails, but they have not promised immediate Quebec government support to deal with a landslide near the track that stopped the train this week.

Gatineau MNA Stephanie Vallée, Hull MNA Maryse Gaudreault and Benoît Pelletier, the provincial cabinet minister responsible for the Outaouais, met with steam train owner Jean Gauthier Friday to discuss how they could help.

Mr. Pelletier said the three MNAs agreed to mediate between Mr. Gauthier and Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, which own the 33-kilometre rail line through the non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais.

"We weren't asked for money, and as far as I am concerned, there is nothing here that belongs to the Quebec government," Mr. Pelletier said. "The main problem is the contract between the owner of the steam train and the three municipalities.

"The owner says the demands from the company are excessive and he can't afford to continue operating the train. If there is a need for some money, I am ready to consider an investment from the Quebec government, but I could not commit an amount of money."

Ms. Vallée said the MNAs want the steam train to continue as the "pride of the Outaouais" because it is a major tourist attraction.

Ms. Vallée said the Quebec Ministry of Transport is to examine the line to determine whether it is safe to operate the train. More meetings between the train owner and the MNAs are expected next week.

Mr. Gauthier decided to park the train on Monday after a major landslide in a wooded area of Chelsea west of Hwy. 105 near Loretta Loop, north of Alonzo Wright Bridge on the Gatineau River. The landslide is about 10 to 15 metres from the track.

Mr. Gauthier said Wednesday that excursions could be cancelled for 2008 or the train could be sold if engineering studies show the soil under the tracks is unstable.

André Guibord, a spokesman for Mr. Gauthier, said the train owner signed a 25-year contract with the municipalities in January out of frustration because negotiations had dragged on for three years. Mr. Guibord said Mr. Gauthier hoped the municipalities would improve parts of the agreement

"It probably boils down to the province providing money to keep the train operating because the train operator will not spend any more money to fix the railway," Mr. Guibord said. "We have to renegotiate the agreement so there is a better sharing of responsibilities and expenses.

"The train operator wants to be able to run the train without political interference from the three mayors who run the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais."

Mr. Guibord said it's possible the cost of repairing the line may be too high for the three municipalities. There is no estimate of how much repairs could cost or how the landslide area can be restored.

The train, which the company says is North America's oldest-running excursion train, operates from May until October. It attracted 54,650 passengers in 2007. During the past 15 years, 725,000 people have ridden the train from its station in a Hull-sector industrial park to Wakefield.

Quebec says steam train line is safe

The Quebec transport ministry has declared that the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train line is safe after examining a landslide in Chelsea, but the train won't run until the municipalities that own the tracks agree there is no risk to passengers.

The train, recently rated as one of the gems of Canadian tourism, screeched to an indefinite halt after a major landslide two weeks ago north of the Alonzo Wright bridge west of Highway 105.

Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras said at the time that steam train owner Jean Gauthier and the non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais, owned by Gatineau, Chelsea and La Peche, decided to park the train until an engineering study shows that the line is safe.

Ministry spokesman Stephane Lauzon said there is no immediate risk that the landslide, which is 10 metres from the tracks, will damage the rails.

Andre Guibord, a spokesman for the train's owner, said Gatineau MNA Stephanie Vallee, Hull MNA Maryse Gaudreault and Benoit Pelletier, the provincial cabinet minister responsible for the Outaouais, are to mediate today between Mr. Gauthier and the municipalities that own the line.

Friday 23/05/2008 CBC News

Maniwaki

Century-old Wakefield steam train for sale

The historic steam-powered train that takes tourists on excursions in western Quebec is for sale, the owner has announced.

André Guibord, a spokesman for Jean Gauthier, owner of Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train Company, made the announcement Friday.

It followed a joint meeting between Gauthier; Benoît Pelletier, the Quebec minister responsible for the Outaouais; and Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), which owns the railway used by the train and is run by municipalities in the region.

The meeting comes more than a week after the train was temporarily shut down because of a landslide near its tracks, but the situation has a long history, Guibord said. "It's been boiling over for a few years," he said, noting that a study is underway on some culverts beneath the railbed.

The steam train company would be responsible for paying for any work needed as a result of the study.

"The engineer, he started listing corrections that he wanted done to the infrastructure and I think Mr. Gauthier decided he's had enough."

The decision means the train likely won't be carrying any more tourists this season, Guibord added.

"That's not to say the train won't run again, but someone else will have to take care of it," he told CBC's French-language service Radio-Canada in French.

Guibord said the decision was made for both business and personal reasons after the owner of the company, Jean Pelletier, was unable to amend the contract he signed several months ago with local municipalities, which own the railway used by the train.

The proposed amendments concerned costs related to a series of studies to determine whether the railbed is safe.

Guibord said there is now a deep lack of trust between the municipalities and the train company.

According to Guibord, the train must be offered first to the CCFO, ahead of any other potential buyers, and the CCFO could choose to run the train itself.

Two other parties, one in the region and one outside the region, have expressed interest in the train, which is worth an estimated \$2.5 million.

Jean Perras, the chair of the CCFO, said he wants to keep the train in the region, and will discuss the possibilities with businesses and different levels of government.

The Wakefield steam engine was built in Sweden in 1907. It was brought to Canada by a public-private consortium that began running train excursions for tourists in 1992. The train was bought by a private company in 1994. It operates between May and October.

Engineers discovered the top of a landslide about 10 metres from the train's track near the border between the municipalities of Chelsea and Gatineau earlier in May.

The train was shut down while engineers evaluated the stability of the rail bed and surrounding soil. Their report has not yet come out. However, earlier this week, Transport Quebec inspectors said the rails themselves were stable.

Friday 30/05/2008 Kingston Whig-Standard Kingston (CN)

Kingston

Facelift planned for train station; Federal funding to be spent on upgrades at Kingston depot

Kingston will reap some of the benefits of \$692 million in federal money that has been promised to improve passenger rail service over the next five years, the top executive of Via Rail Canada said yesterday.

"The [money] will be directed at a number of projects that will have an impact on the quality of service we would offer here," Paul Cote, Via's president and CEO, said before speaking at a Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

Many of the projects are national ones, such as locomotive upgrades, but some smaller work will be done at Kingston's own train station. The station's washrooms will be renovated to make them more accessible to people with disabilities and signage will be improved to ensure signs are better positioned, big enough, or have Braille lettering for the visually impaired.

The washroom and signage work will be also done at Cobourg, Belleville and Brockville.

Cote said Kingston is an important train station as it's the fifth busiest in the country and is at the heart of the central Canadian rail corridor.

The federal government announced the \$692 million last fall to allow Via to refurbish trains, upgrade stations and improve signalling.

"This is the biggest capital investment plan in VIA's history," Cote said.

Via is already making use of the money. Yesterday, it announced the purchase of \$3 million in new steel rails to replace existing rails at Alexandria, Ont., between Ottawa and Montreal, that will be installed within three months.

Via announced Tuesday that it will raise fares by five per cent as of June 10 as a result of rising fuel prices.

Cote described higher fuel prices as a mixed blessing to an audience of about 50 chamber members at the Ambassador Conference Resort.

While they are forcing Via to raise its prices, it's hoped that they will encourage more travellers to take the train in favour of automobiles.

Traffic congestion and environmental damage caused by automobiles are also making the train more attractive, he said.

In January, Ontario, Quebec and the federal government announced they are dicing the feasibility of introducing high-speed train service to Canada's main rail corridor.

Cote said he doesn't expect high-speed train travel will come within a decade, but he said it will be necessary to circumvent traffic congestion and reduce environmental impact.

"This is an especially important concern for Kingston, as the demands on the current transportation system infrastructure between here and Toronto continue to grow," he said.

Unfortunately, he said, passenger train travel takes a back seat to freight travel, which is the biggest revenue generator for CN Rail, which owns the tracks on which Via trains run.

If Canadians want passenger rail service to take priority they should start taking the train more often, he said.

Tuesday 03/06/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Seven buyers eye \$2.5-million steam train.

Owner decides to sell after dispute with municipalities that own track.

Seven potential buyers have shown interest in the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train after it stopped operations indefinitely in May because of a dispute between the owner and the municipalities that own the line on which it runs.

Andre Groulx, who has operated the train for his father-in-law, Jean Gauthier, for 15 years, said yesterday the train is advertised for \$2.5 million on www.ozarkmountainrailcars.com, based in Missouri.

Mr. Groulx said people from the United States, British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec are interested in the train, but no one has made a firm offer for the excursion business.

"We would like the train to stay in the region because it is an important part of the tourism industry in the region," Mr. Groulx said. "The train earns \$8 million a year and there are 100 jobs that depend on it.

"But if there is an offer to take the train out of the area, we will consider it because our objective is to sell the rolling stock."

The train ground to an indefinite halt on May 12 after a landslide near the tracks north of the Alonzo Wright Bridge in Chelsea. Andre Guibord, a spokesman for Mr. Groulx, said Quebec transport ministry engineers ruled that the tracks were safe, but Mr. Gauthier had already decided to sell the business because of frequent demands for improvements from Gatineau, Chelsea and La Peche, which own the former CP line.

"There is nothing wrong with the tracks and nothing makes sense in this situation," Mr. Groulx said. "The municipalities operating as the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais wanted an extensive study of the culverts, bridges and tracks.

"The company doing the study has no railway expertise, but kept making ridiculous demands before the train could roll. It wanted a wooden skid beside the tracks removed and a small tree we had passed for 15 years cut down or the train would be cancelled."

Mr. Groulx said the train was not cancelled because of the landslide. The owner decided to sell, he said, because the municipalities refused to agree that ministry approval was enough for the train to continue.

Karl Lavoie, director of the Gatineau Chamber of Commerce, said Mayor Marc Bureau should have provided more leadership on the issue.

"Gatineau, which is the main city in the region, should have shown more leadership on the train," Mr. Lavoie said. "Almost 30 per cent of people who book package tours get a ride on the train. It is not for me to say what Gatineau should do, but it would be unacceptable if the train stopped running."

Martin Potvin, a spokesman for Mr. Bureau, said the mayor would not respond to criticism of his handling of the steam train issue.

Wednesday 04/06/2008 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

Rural mayors go it alone to plan commuter rail line

A recommendation made last June by Mayor Larry O'Brien's task force on transportation continues to gather steam even though council has shifted its focus from regional transit to transit within the city.

The task force's final report recommended region-wide rail service, mostly on existing tracks, that would include service to the city's surrounding regions, covering more distance with each of three separate service expansions in 2010, 2017 and 2037.

On June 13, Mr. O'Brien is to meet with regional mayors for a followup to last year's transportation summit. Yesterday, the mayor's office would not disclose what the city hopes to achieve at that meeting.

At last year's meeting, regional mayors were taken with the idea of extended rail service, said Armprior Mayor Terry Gibeau.

"It seemed to make a hell of a lot of sense. Everybody signed on and away we went."

Now that the City of Ottawa has shifted its focus, Mr. Gibeau and mayors from eight other municipalities in Ontario and Quebec are in the preliminary stages of planning a commuter rail line on their own.

"It's a bunch of people who happen to be small-town politicians saying, 'Maybe we can do something from this end'," Mr. Gibeau said.

He and a group that includes Mayor Scott Wilson of Bristol, Que., aim to determine whether running commuter trains along the Ottawa Central Railway's line from Pembroke to Ottawa, criss-crossing the Ottawa River, is a viable option.

"It's a loser's argument to say we should discourage people from coming into the city," said Mr. Gibeau, "because they're going to keep coming. They're going to keep driving cars and they're going to keep polluting."

A trial run of the train tentatively scheduled for September will run from Portage du Fort, Que., to Ottawa, near the Walk-ley rail yard, said Mr. Wilson.

"It's going to be nothing extravagant. We're not going to have bleachers or raised platforms or anything like that set up."

The trial run is intended to expose the riders to the route and the duration of the trip.

"There's a whole lot of homework to be done yet," said Mr. Gibeau, including determining whether the region has the ridership to support a commuter rail line.

Although the group is working independently of the city to examine commuting options,

the western mayors have approached West Carleton-March Councillor Eli El-Chantiry, whose ward the existing line crosses, about joining them for future discussions.

"Any effort from our neighbouring municipalities to reduce cars on our roads is a good sign," Mr. El-Chantiry said. "Having said that, it's always the devil in the details. Who's going to pay for what?"

To the city's southwest, a rail line runs through Smiths Falls, then on to Brockville. It has been identified as a possible solution for moving commuters, said Smiths Falls Mayor Dennis Staples.

"We have a number of citizens in my area who commute into Ottawa on a daily basis, clogging up roads," he said. "We're looking at ways that we can work with the city to come up with a better approach to getting people in and out of Ottawa for work."

Mr. Staples said he and other regional mayors expect to find out more about the city's transit plans at the June 13 meeting.

Friday 06/06/2008 Le Droit Maniwaki

Les Amis du train à vapeur tenteront de suggérer des solutions.

John Trent se lance dans la bataille pour la sauvegarde du Train à vapeur Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield et il pointe du doigt les maires de Gatineau, Chelsea et La Pêche.

M. Trent qui fut l'un des initiateurs de ce service de train à vapeur, il y a une quinzaine d'années, a fondé le groupe Les Amis du train à vapeur, qui compte 200 membres. Ce groupe veut maintenant offrir des solutions aux problèmes qui ont causé l'interruption du service le mois dernier. Une conférence de presse à ce sujet est prévue mardi.

« Nous voulons proposer des solutions, un plan de développement et ce ne sera pas le même "tralala" qu'on a entendu depuis deux semaines au sujet du train à vapeur. La Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) nous conte des histoires et nous voulons rectifier les faits. Il ne s'agit pas vraiment de blâmer les maires mais je constate que c'est plus difficile depuis que les trois municipalités ont des nouveaux maires. Je crois qu'ils sont dépassés par les événements. Nous avons créé ce groupe l'an dernier et nous sommes intervenus lorsqu'il y a eu des difficultés pour le renouvellement du contrat », a indiqué M. Trent en ajoutant que son groupe de pression peut exercer une influence déterminante.

Le service de train à vapeur touristique est arrêté depuis la découverte d'un glissement de terrain, le mois dernier. Depuis, les propriétaires ont mis leur entreprise en vente et sept acheteurs potentiels ont manifesté leur intérêt. L'arrêt du train à vapeur jette une douche froide sur la saison touristique de l'Outaouais et affecte gravement la vente de forfaits, dont plusieurs comprennent une excursion en train à vapeur.

Tuesday 10/06/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Group agrees to sell historic steam train

Several key players in the Outaouais region agreed yesterday afternoon to find a buyer for the jewel in the area's tourism crown, the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train. The group — including the municipalities of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Peche — also agreed to fix the landslide that halted the train last month. The slide occurred north of the Alonzo Wright bridge near Highway 105. Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras, who was at the meeting, said he hopes the train will resume service as early as September or October. The train generates more than \$8 million of business a year.

Tuesday 10/06/2008 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

Municipal leaders to chime in on regional rail system plans

Municipal leaders from around Eastern Ontario are scheduled to gather at Ottawa City Hall on Friday to pursue plans for a regional rail system, Mayor Larry O'Brien announced yesterday morning.

The morning session is a follow up to last year's summit, at which mayors and reeves began discussing a proposal from Mr. O'Brien's task force on transportation: to run trains from as far away as Arnprior, Smiths Falls and Alexandria into downtown Ottawa to ease the pressure commuters put on highways 416 and 417. The panel, led by former federal transportation minister David Collenette, suggested relying heavily on existing rail lines, and potentially even serving communities in the Outaouais.

Ottawa City Council has spent the past several months examining plans for an urban mass-transit system within the city, but other Eastern Ontario towns were so taken with the idea that several have been pursuing elements of the plan independently. - . As the Citizen reported last week, mayors of communities in the Ottawa Valley are planning a test-run of a train along the Ottawa Central Railway line, which extends to Pembroke. ;;

Mr. O'Brien has argued that solving! the city's internal transportation is- • sues is just part of the solution for Ottawa, since so many commuters from outside the municipal boundary add to congestion in the city.

Federal Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon is to take part in the summit, as will Ontario Municipal Affairs Minister Jim Watson and National Capital Commission chief executive officer Marie Lemay.

Wednesday 11/06/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Commuter train gathers steam

Make Chelsea line a transit route: Backers

Supporters of the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train say the train should be re-launched with more equipment and new stations and track so the line can be used for a commuter train linking Wakefield to Ottawa's light rail network.

John Trent, a spokesman for Friends of the Steam Train, said yesterday the federal and Quebec governments should help pay for improvements that would be too expensive for Gatineau, Chelsea and La Peche, the track owners.

Train owner Jean Gauthier decided in May to sell the 1907 steam locomotive and passenger cars because he said he was frustrated by frequent demands for improvements from the three municipalities and had lost confidence in their ability to manage the line.

Gilles Picard, director of Tourisme Outaouais, said the train is an \$8-million-a-year business that attracts 53,000 visitors every summer.

He said 70 per cent of the people who booked package tours of the Outaouais cancelled their reservations when they discovered the train had stopped running.

Mr. Trent said the provincial and federal governments should help improve the line because there has been no public investment in the rail service in 18 years and it is the on-

ly short line in Quebec that doesn't have government support.

Mr. Trent said a new station should be built near the Casino du Lac Leamy because Gatineau's bus transitway will separate the Hull station from the turntable needed to turn the 1907 steam locomotive around. He said a station could be built in Chelsea and covered platforms are needed in Wakefield to protect passengers on rainy days.

"The mayors and municipalities are just too small for this so the MNAs, MPs and regional economic development people need to be involved," Mr. Trent said.

"They still have not included one person who knows anything about transport or trains."

La vision du train à vapeur.

Il y a une vingtaine d'années, les représentants des trois niveaux de gouvernement et de la société civile ont investi temps, recherche et argent afin de développer ce qui est devenu le Train à vapeur Hull - Chelsea - Wakefield.

Ce que nous pouvons appeler "la vision du train à vapeur" ne s'est pas matérialisée par magie. Le tout a commencé avec le besoin de poursuivre le développement économique de l'Outaouais qui émanait auparavant de l'industrie forestière.

Le déclin de ces industries dans les années 1980 a été compensé par l'essor de l'industrie touristique. Deuxième activité économique dans le monde, elle est généralement "propre" et verte et fournit un large éventail d'emplois. Toutefois, l'Outaouais n'a pas bénéficié pleinement de cette manne, car il n'y avait que peu d'attractions à caractère familial, bien que la région soit très belle et ait le potentiel d'attirer les touristes avec le développement d'éléments attrayants. Il y avait un chemin de fer avec des trains à vapeur gérés par la société ferroviaire Bytown et ses partenaires.

Des études avaient démontré que si le train devenait une destination touristique permanente, jouissant d'une infrastructure publique exploitée par un exploitant privé, il avait le potentiel de devenir une "locomotive" du tourisme en Outaouais et dans la Région de la Capitale Nationale.

La "vision du train à vapeur" est celle d'un attrait qui place l'Outaouais sur la carte touristique en faisant une utilisation efficace des infrastructures locales déjà en place pour avoir un effet cumulatif pour attirer davantage de touristes et d'investissements, d'emplois et de revenus de taxes.

Promesses tenues

Le chemin de fer a ainsi été cédé par le chemin de fer Canadien Pacifique aux municipalités de Hull (Gatineau) Chelsea et la Pêche en retour de reçus d'impôt afin que la voie ferrée soit maintenue en tant que fiducie publique. Les gouvernements fédéral et provincial ont investi dans l'amélioration de la voie. Comme il n'y avait pas de train à vapeur disponible au Canada, un train a été importé de la Suède. Le train a débuté en 1992 et la famille Gauthier a pris la relève du premier exploitant en 1994.

Le train à vapeur a fait plus que respecter ses promesses : il attire plus de 55 000 touristes par année, apportant des retombées économiques de 10 à 12 millions \$ par année à la région, et fournir une centaine d'emplois. Un "tour opérateur" qui organise des forfaits tout-inclus dans la région soutient que le train est la source de 20 à 30 % de ses revenus. C'est une icône du patrimoine de la région. L'image du train est devenue notre symbole touristique, rendant accessible la beauté naturelle de la Gatineau et redonnant vie à une infrastructure existante en l'Outaouais. Le président de Tourisme Outaouais base sa campagne annuelle sur les attraits principaux de la région, dont le train à vapeur.

La croissance des revenus et les 15 ans d'utilisation sans accident ont permis à l'exploitant de retirer sa dette en capital et de réaliser des profits réguliers. Il attire de nombreux visiteurs à Wakefield. Des visiteurs se laissent tenter par l'achat de résidences ici.

À Chelsea, il permet de garder ouvert un sentier d'accès le long de la rivière Gatineau pour les randonneurs et les skieurs.

En tant que l'un des derniers services vapeur réguliers au Canada, il alimente la fierté de la majorité des résidents avec son sifflet familial et ses trains gastronomiques. De plus, le train est devenu un lieu privilégié pour des mariages, des parties et des réceptions de tous genres.

Pendant plusieurs années il a payé des taxes mais n'a que très peu fait appel à des investissements publics.

Solutions à long terme

Les propriétaires ont mis le train en vente en déclarant qu'ils n'avaient plus confiance en leur relation avec les maires de Gatineau, Chelsea et La Pêche qui constituent la Compagnie du chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), propriétaire de la voie ferrée qui loue cette infrastructure à l'exploitant. La pierre d'achoppement immédiate fut le fait d'un glissement et d'un "lavement" de terrain mais les problèmes sous-jacents sont plus profonds. Ils sont de nature structurale.

Des remèdes à court terme et des solutions rapides ne suffiront pas pour sauver le train à vapeur Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield. Toutes les parties doivent profiter de l'occasion pour travailler ensemble et trouver une solution à long terme. Le train représente pour notre région un potentiel de développement économique important.

Un plan de développement sera crucial pour attirer un nouvel exploitant qualifié. Les maires méritent nos félicitations pour avoir démarré le processus de sauvegarde du train et pour avoir invité la communauté d'affaires et du tourisme à travailler avec eux.

Un nouveau Plan de développement devra être créé. Parmi ses composantes, on y retrouvera les réparations nécessaires à l'emprise, aux ponts et aux ponceaux. On devrait chercher des partenaires pour la construction d'une nouvelle gare près du Casino et aussi regarder la possibilité d'une gare secondaire à Chelsea. Des améliorations à Wakefield pourraient inclure des quais couverts pour les jours de pluie. Le défi présenté par les effets du projet Rapibus sur la ligne et la coupure entre la plaque tournante et le "dépôt-atelier-gare" rendant inutile ce dernier est une occasion à saisir. De plus, l'idée d'un service additionnel vers Montebello et de l'achat de voitures et d'une locomotive supplémentaire est à envisager de nouveau.

Il sera important de garder en tête la possibilité que ces lignes puissent éventuellement servir à des trains légers pour navetteurs et pour les joindre au train léger d'Ottawa.

Bien que les nouveaux investissements nécessaires ne soient pas énormes, en attendant, des investissements des instances fédérale et provinciale sont nécessaires pour pallier les moyens réduits des municipalités ;

Tout nouveau contrat avec un exploitant doit clairement indiquer que l'emprise des voies est la responsabilité de l'organisme propriétaire. L'exploitant pourrait payer des frais pour chaque kilomètre parcouru comme c'est le cas ailleurs, ou il pourrait être tenu responsable pour l'entretien avec une réduction de taxe afin d'encourager de tels investissements.

Pendant que la préparation de la gouvernance et du plan visionnaire est en chantier, le Conseil renouvelé peut chercher un nouvel exploitant. Dans l'immédiat et à plus long terme, seul un conseil d'administration voué à la "Vision du Train" saura mener le plan de développement jusqu'au terminus.

Solid offer made to buy Wakefield train

Shut down by a landslide, new owners are required to re-open attraction

The Wakefield steam train, shut down by a landslide in the spring, attracted 55,000 passengers last year and is reported to be valued at \$2.5 million.

The Wakefield steam train, shut down by a landslide in the spring, attracted 55,000 passengers last year and is reported to be valued at \$2.5 million.

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train could be back on track in the fall.

The excursion train has been standing still since the spring, after a landslide in Chelsea about 10 metres from the track. In May, the owner of the rolling stock announced that the operation was for sale.

Yesterday, André Groulx said that they had a solid offer from a Gatineau entrepreneur, who wishes to remain anonymous until the deal closes.

The Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), owned by the municipalities of Hull, Chelsea and Wakefield, owns the track and has a first right of refusal. The non-profit organization has 30 days to match the offer and decide to operate the train.

Mr. Groulx, general manager of the Steam Train, also announced that a consultant reported that the landslide's effects could be mitigated with about a week's worth of work, at a cost of \$100,000. But it's an expense the current owner of the train will not undertake, leaving it to the new owner and CCFO to negotiate.

He received in the last two months seven offers to buy the train, some from as far as Western Canada and the United States. "Our main criteria was that the train stayed in the region," said Mr. Groulx.

A few weeks ago, a consultant retained by the steam train company examined the "crater" left by a landslide just outside of the track's easement, west of Hwy. 105 near Loretta Loop. Noël Journeaux, a civil engineer who has worked for CP and CN, said that stabilizing the slope between the track and the Gatineau river is not complicated.

He recommends building a berm, three metres high and 10 metres long, to stop further erosion along a stream.

The president of Tourisme Outaouais, Jean Thiffault, is hopeful that the train will be back on its tracks. His confidence stems from the knowledge that the current operator has offered the unnamed buyer to help with the transition, for a year or two. He said that some tourism business, such as those who package tours, have seen their revenues drop by 40 per cent.

He said that it would take a few months to get the operation going again.

While the transaction could close as early as 35 or 40 days from now, the new owners will have to service the train, rehire all the staff, ensure that the work is done at the landslide as well as start a new promotional campaign.

As soon the railway closed, Gatineau mayor Marc Bureau set up a steering committee to help re-launch the operation chaired by Michel Plouffe, Gatineau's director general of economic development.

He could not comment on the transaction, which is a private sale. He noted that he had met with "many promoters" interested in buying the train.

Reports have valued the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train company at \$2.5 million. In operation since 1992, and with its current owners since 1994, the train attracted close to 55,000 passengers last year.

Wednesday 16/07/2008 Brockville Recorder Kingston (CN) Mallorytown

Train, truck collide near Mallorytown

At least three injured

MALLORYTOWN A transport jammed on a railway crossing almost caused a disaster Tuesday afternoon when an eastbound Via Rail passenger train severed tractor from trailer and catapulted down the track with its locomotive derailed.

There were conflicting reports late Tuesday afternoon about the number of passengers injured on the Toronto to Montreal train, but none appeared to have been seriously injured.

Via Rail spokesman Catherine Kaloutsky said three people aboard the train, a locomotive engineer, an onboard employee and a passenger, suffered minor, non-life-threatening injuries and were taken to hospital. She did not have the names of the injured.

Ontario Provincial Police Sergeant Darin Kirker, who was running the regional communications centre in Smiths Falls, said he had been told five people on the train suffered minor injuries, while the truck driver escaped unhurt.

Mallorytown residents Ryan Darling and Amanda Kerr, whose house is barely 30 metres on the north side of the crossing, saw the drama unfold as a crew of men in another truck tried to rig up chains to dislodge the flatbed trailer, owned by a road construction firm named Roto-Mill, from the tracks.

It all happened in less than five minutes.

"I just looked out the front door and the truck got stuck," said Darling. "I said you guys better hope a train doesn't come."

No sooner had the words come out of his mouth, Darling said, when the crossing arms started to come down and bells started ringing for the Via Rail train No. 60, which had 209 passengers and seven crew members aboard.

Darling said one man unhooked the chains and fled, adding the driver of the transport, who ran up the tracks and frantically waved a shirt to warn the oncoming train, was pulled away by another man.

"We just ran off in the other direction," said Darling. "I was on the phone (talking to 911) when the train hit."

Darling said he wanted to thank the unknown man for unhooking the chains from the following truck or it would have been pulled into his house.

"It just tore it completely in half," he said of the tractor and trailer. "You could just feel the explosion."

Darling immediately ran up to where the train had stopped to see if he could help.

"When I stepped on the first car it was bare," he said, and speculated that the train's crew might have had time to empty the first passenger car.

"Everybody seemed very calm," he said.

Kaloutsky confirmed the collision caused two cars to derail: the engine and a baggage car at the front of the train.

"All the remaining passenger cars remained upright."

EMS units from Leeds and Grenville and Cornwall were dispatched to the scene to examine and transport some of the victims to hospital. Three people were carried via ATV, one on a stretcher, to the crossing approximately 300 metres from where the train came to rest.

One passenger, Joann Patton of Kahnawake, Que., walked the length of the track to where her husband, Joseph, had been taken aboard an ATV to be checked for a heart condition.

"We were supposed to take the 6:45 train," she said as she tried to locate an EMS paramedic to tell her where he husband was. "We just decided to take an earlier train to get home earlier."

The couple had been in Toronto the previous night to see the Alison Krauss concert.

The Pattons were in the third passenger car and Joann said her husband knew there was a problem ahead when they approached Mallorytown.

"Joseph saw it and knew it was a (transport)," she said.

The impact was something Patton has never experienced.

"It was like a jolt so hard ... it hurt inside," she said.

The track was still blocked in the area Tuesday evening, interrupting service from Toronto to Montreal and Toronto to Ottawa, said Kaloutsky.

Late last night, Via officials were expecting its operations would return to normal, with some minor delays, by this morning.

The company was making alternate arrangements for people booked on the line and the passengers on the train.

People inquiring about the passengers on train No. 60 were asked to call the railway's emergency hotline at 1-877-747-0707.

Wednesday 23/07/2008 CBC News Beachburg

A passenger train running along the Ottawa River between Pembroke and Ottawa would breathe new life into the region, an economic development group says.

The group, in Quebec's Pontiac region, wants the train to travel on existing track west of the national capital, passing through Renfrew, Ont., crossing into Quebec, and dipping through Portage-du-Fort and Shawville before crossing back into Ontario at Fitzroy Harbour, toward Kanata and Ottawa.

The group's chair, Heather Alberti-Dickson, said Wednesday that such a train would "just change the face of Pontiac," a region that once relied on forestry, but has been struggling economically since the downturn in the industry.

Alberti-Dickson said she has discussed the idea with most of the communities along the A passenger train running along the Ottawa River between Pembroke and Ottawa would breathe new life into the region, an economic development group says.

The group, in Quebec's Pontiac region, wants the train to travel on existing track west of the national capital, passing through Renfrew, Ont., crossing into Quebec, and dipping through Portage-du-Fort and Shawville before crossing back into Ontario at Fitzroy Harbour, toward Kanata and Ottawa.

The group's chair, Heather Alberti-Dickson, said Wednesday that such a train would "just change the face of Pontiac," a region that once relied on forestry, but has been struggling economically since the downturn in the industry.

Alberti-Dickson said she has discussed the idea with most of the communities along the route, which are all trying to attract homeowners, tourists and businesses to the region.

"They're just so on board with this idea, because they can all see how it's going to benefit their communities," she said.

The Ottawa Central Railway owns the track, which is used daily to haul freight.

James Allen, the railway's general manager, said he supports the new plan and doesn't think it would be difficult to make room for a passenger train.

"Where these projects become difficult is where you have to lay down track. But where we are now the infrastructure is in place, so it's just a matter of using it."

The next step, Allen and Alberti-Dickson said, is to put together a business plan that includes information about the estimated cost of the service and the demand for it.

Once that is in place, the communities hope to approach the provincial and federal governments for money to support the project.

31/07/2008 Canada Newswire Alexandria

VIA RAIL TO IMPROVE OTTAWA TO MONTREAL RAIL LINE: VIA

Rail plans to invest more than \$25M on a multi-phase, multi-year program to modernize key parts of its rail infrastructure between Ottawa and Montreal. These improvements are part of VIA Rail's overall capital investment plan. In this first phase, upgrades to the Ottawa-Montreal line will include the addition of a 0.76-km long passing track approximately 16 kilometres east of Ottawa, near Carlsbad Springs, a project which will be carried out by PNR RailWorks. The siding will be constructed with remote-controlled power switches tied into the existing Centralized Traffic Control system and Rail Traffic Control dispatch system. The siding will also be equipped with a back track for the storage of maintenance equipment, when required. VIA will also be installing new continuously-welded rail and performing other associated track work over some 40 track-miles between Coteau, PQ, and Moose Creek, ON. This work, which is expected to be completed within the next few months, will be carried out by Total Track.

Additionally, structural rehabilitation of the bridge over the South Nation River in Casselman, a project which has been awarded to SEMA Railway Structures, will also be completed. "These initiatives will improve comfort, speed, ride quality and reliability," said VIA Rail president and CEO Paul Côté.

"They will also enhance overall safety, and increase scheduling flexibility and capacity for additional trains. Just as importantly", he noted, "a more efficient operation will also contribute to reductions in fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions."

Wednesday 06/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Steam train derailed for 2008

\$4.3M in repairs needed to restart train, mayor says

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Train won't roll again until July 2009 at the earliest because \$4.3 million in urgent repairs to the line are needed to make the tracks safe.

Gatineau Mayor Marc Bureau said yesterday the three Outaouais municipalities that own the line plan to ask the federal and Quebec governments to pay most of the cost of the improvements because the work is too expensive for them. He said Gatineau, Chelsea and La Peche are still committed to the train, but not at the expense of public safety.

Three engineering studies show that the 32-kilometre line, built in 1917, will require repairs to more than 90 culverts, additional track repairs and a new station in Gatineau over the next several years, bringing the total cost of the improvements to \$9.6 million.

The excursion train has been idle since the spring.

That's when a landslide occurred about 10 metres from the track in Chelsea.

Steam train owner Jean Gauthier announced in May that the business was for sale.

The improvements include \$900,000 to stabilize the slope north of the Alonzo Wright Bridge where the landslide occurred, more than \$1 million in bridge repairs and \$1.8 million for a new station.

Federal and provincial financing is needed by this fall so work on the line can start in the spring of 2009.

Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras said there is a potential buyer interested in the business and he hopes the required repairs won't stand in the way of restarting the train.

"Today we asked every municipality in the region to work together on this in order to find \$4.3 million," Mr. Perras said. "This is an important train for tourism, not just on the Gatineau side, but also on the Ottawa side of the river."

A Quebec ministry of transport report in May said the tracks were safe. Steam train manager Andre Groulx said at the time that the report proved there was nothing wrong with the line for the excursion train.

He said the company the municipalities hired had no railway expertise and the firm was making "ridiculous demands" before the train could roll.

Mr. Perras, who is head of the municipal non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), which owns the line, said the train was stopped because of a landslide during the summer of 2007 and another one in May.

He added the Quebec government gave strict orders about infrastructure safety after a 2006 overpass collapse in Laval killed five people.

"You have to double-check everything connected with infrastructure because you can't play around with the lives of people," Mr. Perras said. "The safety of passengers and people who live near the railway is paramount."

The president of Tourisme Outaouais, Jean Thiffault, said he was disappointed the train will not run this fall because the business brings \$8 million a year to the region and attracts 55,000 passengers each year

Tuesday 12/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Speakers blast mayors for missing the train

Politicians say they're stuck until province, federal government ante up cash to fix rail

WAKEFIELD, Que. - The Outaouais will lose the steam train for good unless the mayors of Gatineau, Chelsea and Wakefield, the municipalities that own the railway track, change their way of thinking and act, warns John Trent, a supporter of the train.

During a heated public meeting last night at the Wakefield Mill, Mr. Trent, president of Friends of the Steam Train, shared his perception of the situation. He said the mayors are slow to act, have taken their time to meet a federal minister, have not spent a dime on track maintenance in the last 15 years, have inflated repair projections costs and have refused to accept responsibility for the infrastructure.

The mayor of La Pêche, Robert Bussière, defended the actions of the Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais, the municipal non-profit corporation that owns the track. Fixing the railway would cost \$3.3 million in urgent repairs, will a total, long-term required investment of \$10 million, he explained. "Before the municipalities spend the first penny, we need a confirmation from the provincial and federal governments of an infrastructure program," said Mr. Bussière, adding that a request has been sent, but the forms for a program are not yet available.

Moreover, the three municipalities will have to find the money to cover their share, a third, of the capital costs, Mr. Bussière said -- "and without confirmation from these two parties, forget it!"

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide closed the railway track. Since then, the owners of the rolling stock have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers.

Mr. Bussière said Gatineau's senior staff has recommended that the CCFO, which has first refusal in the sale of the rolling stock, turn down the current offer.

Friends of the Steam Train is questioning some of the figures made public last week by the three mayors. While a consultant retained by the train operator said repairing the damage from a landslide would cost \$100,000 and take a week to complete, the CCFO says the repairs would cost \$900,000 and take two months to complete.

"The mayors are like three spoiled boys who received a golden egg-laying goose for the region, took it for granted and wasted a legacy," said Mr. Trent.

More than 1,100 people signed a petition urging local elected officials to get the steam train back on the tracks as soon as possible.

The CCFO must get on with the work, said Mr. Trent, and bring in experts to guide them.

Neil Faulkner, who now lives in the area, ran a railway in Tanzania. He stated that the CCFO cannot do the job, "but it's not its fault. It's conflicted in its membership. We need some group who can keep the track in the public eye."

Joseph Potvin is part of a citizen advocacy group proposing to use the track not just as a tourist attraction, but also to serve commuters. He argued that rising fuel costs is a major issue for the community of La Pêche, because lower income residents will have to move to the city when they can't afford to fill up anymore.

"Let's take advantage of the year, year and a half the train is not running to upgrade the track for a low-speed, light commuter train," he said.

19/08/2008 CBC News Maniwaki

RAIL COMPANY REJECTS SOLE LOCAL BID FOR WAKEFIELD STEAM TRAIN: The only bid for the Wakefield steam train from a local business has been rejected, making it likely the train will leave the Outaouais region. The bid by businessman Christian Nadon for the historic tourist train was rejected by La Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) because it required changes to the contract signed with the train's current owner, said the mayors of the municipalities that own the CCFO. The CCFO owns the railway used by the train, and is itself owned by the municipalities of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche. The CCFO has the right of first refusal for all offers, and has complained that it could not exercise that right for a conditional offer.

However, it indicated that it is willing to negotiate. Nadon, the owner of Oh! Petits plats français, the catering company that prepared food served on board the historic tourist train, said he was told by CCFO that his offer did not meet the requirements, even though he had said he was willing to negotiate.

He criticized the CCFO's owners for not trying to meet with him and negotiate. The century-old tourist locomotive was put up for sale by the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield Steam Company in May, after a landslide near the tracks forced it to suspend operations temporarily. In August, the municipalities of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche estimated that the railway needs \$4 million in infrastructure repairs and upgrades before the train can run again, and asked the federal and Quebec governments to help fund the work. (Branchline)

Tuesday 19/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

The three municipalities that own the tracks for the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train have rejected an offer from a buyer interested in operating the train in the Outaouais, increasing the chances that the train will leave the region.

André Groulx, who has run the train for his father-in-law for 14 years, said as far as he is concerned the steam train no longer exists. He said the buyer wanted Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche to repair the line and hoped to renegotiate the business's contract with the municipalities.

Mr. Groulx said as far as he is concerned he will probably have to sell the train to a buyer from the U.S. or somewhere else in Canada. He added he has two serious offers from buyers who want to operate the train outside the Outaouais.

Martin Potvin, a spokesman for Gatineau Mayor Marc Bureau said in a news release yesterday that the municipal non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), which owns the line, rejected the offer on Friday because the potential buyer wanted to change the agreement.

"Since it was a conditional, not a firm offer, the CCFO could not approve it or exercise its right of first refusal," the news release said. It added the three municipalities are willing to discuss the sale with the vendor and potential buyers to ensure that the train remains in the region.

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide near the track forced the business to close. Since then, the owners of the rolling stock have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers.

Gatineau's mayor said on Aug. 5 the municipalities that own the line plan to ask the federal and Quebec governments to pay for most of the urgent improvements, which are expected to cost \$4.3 million.

Mr. Groulx said the business -- if it is to continue -- would still be as a tenant of the three Outaouais municipalities and no tenant should be expected to pay for improvements on someone else's property.

"Do the municipalities want the train that has brought \$60 million in business to the region during the past 14 years?," Mr. Groulx asked. "They never even talked to the potential buyer. Perhaps they want a bicycle path instead."

"We will probably have to resort to selling the train outside the region. The Quebec Ministry of Transport didn't have any problem with the line. The municipalities know nothing about operating a railway."

Steam train supporter John Trent said last week the train is in danger of disappearing because the three municipalities are too slow to act.

Mr. Trent said Outaouais mayors have delayed seeking federal help, have not spent a dime on track maintenance in the last 15 years, have inflated repair projection costs and have refused to accept responsibility for the line.

Wednesday 20/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Shunned bidder cries foul at mayors

Christian Nadon says his pitch to buy the doomed Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train was handled in bad faith.

The Gatineau businessman who offered to buy the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train has accused the three Outaouais mayors responsible for the tracks of bargaining in bad faith after he submitted a bid.

Christian Nadon, the caterer who made box lunches for the train and provided meals for the dining car, decided to make a bid for the business after he was forced to lay off 30 employees when the train owner, Jean Gauthier, announced the sale of the business in May.

Mr. Nadon said the railway-line owner, the non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), headed by the mayors of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, never spoke to him before rejecting his offer with little explanation on Friday.

He said mayors Marc Bureau, Jean Perras and Robert Bussière sat on the offer for 30 days before explaining that they couldn't consider the proposal because it was a "conditional and not a firm offer."

Mr. Nadon said he wanted to discuss the contract with the mayors and convince the three municipalities to accept responsibility for major repairs on the line.

"There was no negotiation or any co-ordination between me and the mayors," Mr. Nadon said. "During the 30-day delay, they never contacted me once or even acknowledged that I was trying to be the new owner.

"The whole steam-train file was handled in bad faith. If there was a will for this deal to go through, why didn't they call me back within two days to say there were some conditions they couldn't accept or wanted to negotiate?"

Mr. Nadon said the contract requires the municipalities to make major repairs to the line. He said the train owner is responsible only for regular track maintenance.

The steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide near the track forced the business to close. Since then, the owners of the rolling stock have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers.

Gatineau's mayor said on Aug. 5 the municipalities that own the line plan to ask the federal and Quebec governments to pay for most of the urgent improvements, which are expected to cost \$4.3 million. The total cost of all improvements is expected to be \$9.6 million.

André Groulx, who has run the train for his father-in-law for 14 years, said as far as he is concerned the steam train no longer exists. Two buyers from the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada have offered to run the train outside of the region.

Mr. Groulx said the train has attracted \$60 million in business to the region during the past 14 years, including \$8 million in 2007. The train carries about 55,000 passengers a year.

If the business continues, Mr. Groulx said it would still be as a tenant of the three Outaouais municipalities that own the track and no tenant should be expected to pay for improvements on someone else's property.

Gilles Picard, the director of Tourisme Outaouais, said it would be a tragedy if the train is sold to an outside buyer because it is an "icon" that attracts visitors to both sides of the Ottawa River.

"Are the mayors the best people to own a railway? ... The mayors are not elected to run a railway and they agree with that. That is why we think the line should be run by someone else who takes responsibility for the track."

22/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Vankleek

HAWKESBURY MAYOR MAKES PITCH FOR OPERATING STEAM TRAIN IN EASTERN ONTARIO: The mayor of Hawkesbury wants investors to operate the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train in Eastern Ontario to create a "motor of economic development" for the town. Mayor Jeanne Charlebois met Andre Groulx, the train operator, to discuss operating the train on the track that carries Ottawa Central Railway freight and VIA Rail passenger trains. She has also consulted Ottawa Central Railway officials about the possibility, she said. Mrs. Charlebois said the train could stop in L'Orignal, Hawkesbury, Vankleek Hill and at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville. The steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide near the track forced the business to close. Since then, the owners of the train have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers. The asking price is \$2.5 million. Mr. Groulx, who has run the train for 14 years, said he will probably have to sell the train to a buyer from the U.S. or somewhere else in Canada. He added he has two serious offers from buyers who want to operate the train outside the Outaouais. Mrs. Charlebois said the train could run to the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville and to Limoges 35 kilometres east of Ottawa, which will be the location of the \$50-million Valcartier Village Vacations water park. (Branchline)

Friday 22/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria

Hawkesbury mayor makes pitch for operating steam train in Eastern Ontario

Charlebois seeks investors to buy grounded Wakefield train to boost area's economy.

The mayor of Hawkesbury wants investors to operate the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train in Eastern Ontario to create a "motor of economic development" for the town.

Mayor Jeanne Charlebois met Andre Groulx, the train operator, earlier this week to discuss operating the train on the track that carries Ottawa Central Railway freight and VIA Rail passenger trains.

She has also consulted Ottawa Central Railway officials about the possibility, she said.

Mrs. Charlebois said the train could stop in L'Orignal, Hawkesbury, Van-kleek Hill and at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville.

The steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide near the track forced the business to close. Since then, the owners of the train have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers. The asking price is \$2.5 million.

Mr. Groulx, who has run the train for his father-in-law, Jean Gauthier, for 14 years, said he will probably have to sell the train to a buyer from the U.S. or somewhere else in Canada. He added he has two serious offers from buyers who want to operate the train outside the Outaouais.

The three municipalities that own the tracks for the Hull-Chelsea-Wake-field steam train have rejected an offer from a buyer interested in operating the train in the Outaouais, increasing the chances that the train will leave the region.

"We are trying to find business people or investors in the Ottawa-Gatineau region who would be interested in buying the train because there is a track here," Mrs. Charlebois said.

"It would be better if the train stayed in the region instead of going elsewhere in Canada or to the United States."

Mrs. Charlebois said the train could run on CN Rail and VIA Rail track to the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville and to Limoges 35 kilometres east of Ottawa, which will be the location of the \$50-million Valcartier Village Vacations water park. (CN owns some of the rail lines that carry VIA trains.)

"Can you imagine going from Hawkesbury to the Tulip Festival by steam train for the day and then returning home?" Mrs. Charlebois asked.

"The train could eventually travel between Montreal and Ottawa if VIA Rail agreed.

"This would be an extraordinary asset for our region in tourism and economic development, creating 100 jobs over six months of the year. It would be a natural link to all the attractions in our area. We could even have special trains for Halloween and Christmas."

Friday 22/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

Commuter rail trial run set for Oct. 5

The commuter rail line discussed by mayors of communities in eastern Ontario and West Quebec has set a date for its trial run.

On Oct. 5, the mayors of Bristol, Que., Arnprior and Renfrew will join other area politicians and Ottawa Central Railway staff on a test run of the train from the Walkley railyard to Pembroke along existing OCR tracks. The run is intended to expose riders to the route and duration of the trip.

The idea of a regional rail line for commuters was first raised last June by Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien's task force on transportation. Since then, the regional mayors have been looking into the viability of a commuter rail line on their own.

Friday 22/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Alexandria

Commuter rail to Alexandria a possibility by next year

Casselman mayor has high hopes for pilot project after area leaders meet with VIA president

A pilot project that would see VIA trains taking commuters between Alexandria and Ottawa could be in place by fall 2009, the mayor of Casselman said yesterday, but any integration into Ottawa's transit system will have to wait until big questions about downtown light rail are settled.

"In the past six months we've been getting regular phone calls. They want to know when the train's going to start," said Mayor Conrad Lamadeleine.

"There's hope that next year we would be experiencing a pilot project."

Mr. Lamadeleine met VIA Rail president Paul Côté in Montreal yesterday, along with Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien and Smiths Falls Mayor Dennis Staples, to discuss regional commuter rail using VIA's property.

"VIA made it very clear that they wanted to work with us to look at the capacity of the current system to host some additional ridership," Mr. Staples said.

The idea of a regional rail service built mostly on existing tracks was sparked by a recommendation last summer by the mayor's task force on transportation. Discussions about the system were furthered at a regional mayors' meeting hosted by Mr. O'Brien in June.

The rail line from Alexandria in the east has scheduled improvements such as installing a passing track at Carlsbad Springs that should make a pilot project possible by 2009, Mr. Lamadeleine said. The village mayor estimated that as many as 1,000 people would use the service that would terminate at Ottawa's main VIA station.

A pilot project for the commuter rail to the south of Ottawa is further down the line. Mr. Staples said Smiths Falls will start work immediately to identify what the exact need would be for the service, though he's certain it will be welcome.

"We have a number of people in our community who would be happy to use a line from our city through to the Fallowfield station," he said.

Mr. O'Brien said he was pleased with the commitments Mr. Côté made at yesterday's meeting, which included integrating OC Transpo's planned SmartCard payment system into any future commuter rail.

"We agreed that that once (Ottawa's transit) system has been approved by council we would see what integration would be needed to ensure that the systems work together," he said.

The City of Ottawa has decided on a \$4-billion transit plan that includes a tunnel in the downtown core and expanding rail to the east, west and south. However, city council has not yet decided in what order the features of the plan will be built.

Bay Councillor Alex Cullen, who chairs the city's transit committee, said he expects discussion of the new rapid transit system to dominate this fall's public consultations on the city's transportation master plan, which were announced yesterday.

"I don't want to call (light rail) the elephant in the room, because everyone knows about it," he said, adding that issues such as cycling, walking and roads should all be addressed at the meetings.

Mr. Cullen said he expects city staff will unveil several possible schedules for building the transit system on Sept. 9, before the public consultations take place. He said he presumes most of those options will see the downtown tunnel built first, but after that there are many possibilities.

Tuesday 26/08/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Rail line not out of steam yet

The federal government has refused to upgrade the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield stream train line, but Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras says the municipalities will apply for another grant in September and the train could still roll again next summer.

Mr. Perras said the government rejected a grant application by Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche in 2007 because the steam train did not carry freight. He said he does not know whether the line would qualify for a grant under a new federal-provincial infrastructure program that is to start this fall.

"We were told that the grant request that we submitted was not eligible for support," Mr. Perras said. "I don't see the steam train carrying freight between Wakefield and Hull."

"We have met several times with federal and provincial officials during the last three or four months and they suggested submitting something in writing. I am optimistic, but it is difficult to say whether the rail line would qualify because we haven't seen the grant criteria."

The steam train has been parked since May, when a landslide near the track forced the business to close. Since then, the owners of the locomotive and passenger cars have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen interesting offers.

Gatineau's mayor said on Aug. 5 that the municipalities that own the line intend to ask the federal and Quebec governments to pay for most of the urgent improvements, which are expected to cost \$4.3 million. The total cost of all improvements is expected to be \$9.6 million.

But the non-profit Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), headed by the mayors of the three municipalities, rejected an offer to buy the business from Christian Nadon, the caterer who made boxed lunches and provided other meals for the train.

André Groulx, who has run the train for his father-in-law for 14 years, said as far as he is concerned, the steam train no longer exists.

Two buyers from the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada have offered to run the train outside of the region.

Harry Gow, co-president of Friends of the Steam Train, said the government's refusal to help repair the track is a bad sign for the mayors who run the line.

"The money is intended for freight railways," Mr. Gow said. "Federal and provincial governments put money into sidewalks, bike paths, highways and streets."

"These things are ways of moving goods and people. I don't see why it should be less of a necessity to move people than pig iron or even pigs. Trains are more fuel-efficient than cars at moving people."

03/09/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

DEAL IN THE WORKS?: While announcing a grant for a new sports and cultural complex in Chelsea Quebec, Federal Transport Minister Cannon said he could not announce a grant to repair the tracks used by the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train, which has been for sale since a landslide near the line in May. He said the federal and provincial governments are working on an agreement and he cannot negotiate a deal in public. (Branchline)

Thursday 04/09/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Braeside

Two hurt after van collides with train

Two people were airlifted to hospital yesterday morning following a collision between a van and a freight train in Braeside, just west of Arnprior. OPP were called to the scene at a level crossing on Osborne Street at about 8:14 a.m. Two people were trapped in the van and had to be cut from the wreckage.

One occupant had more severe injuries and was taken to hospital in Ottawa, while the other was taken to hospital in Arnprior. The identities of the injured and their condition were not immediately available. Officials at the offices of the North Bay-based Ottawa Valley Railway, which operates the line, declined to comment on the incident.

Friday 05/09/2008 Ottawa Citizen Chalk River Braeside

50-year-old man dies after vehicle struck by train

A man is dead after a Wednesday morning collision between a car and a freight train in Braeside, just west of Arnprior. Denis Labelle, 50, of McNab-Braeside Township, was driving across the tracks on Osborne Street at about 8:14 a.m. just as a westbound train reached the intersection. Mr. Labelle and passenger Norman Booth, 58, had to be cut from the wreckage. Mr. Labelle was airlifted to The Ottawa Hospital's Civic campus with life-threatening injuries, and was pronounced dead later that morning. Mr. Booth was transported to nearby Arnprior hospital, and later transferred to Ottawa with non-life-threatening injuries. The Ontario Provincial Police collision investigation unit was on the scene and the intersection was closed until 4:30 p.m. An autopsy will be performed in the coming days. Const. Reggie Armonas of the OPP said police don't think alcohol was a factor.

Wednesday 10/09/2008 Ottawa Sun Beachburg

Pembroke kicks in cash for commuter train

City to pay share of trial run for Valley-to-Ottawa route

PEMBROKE - The City of Pembroke is willing to pay up to \$1,500 to take part in the trial run of a commuter train between the Upper Ottawa Valley and Ottawa.

The Oct. 5 trial, will see a group of community leaders from Renfrew and Pontiac Counties take a train ride between Ottawa and Beachburg and back, to test the viability of a regular commuter route.

The \$10,000 cost of the trip is being split between the Pontiac and Renfrew County, which will each kick in \$5,000. Each county in turn will be asking participating municipalities to help out. "There is no budget for this," Pembroke Deputy Mayor Les Scott said. "Our cost could be anywhere from \$700 to \$800 all the way up to \$1,200, depending on who else joins in."

Although the trial run does not run as far as Pembroke, Scott said this is only designed to see how practical the idea of a regular commuter run would be.

If successful, the route could be expanded to include Pembroke -- which would also open up the Petawawa region.

"This will indicate if it is worth doing at all, and if it will provide good service to the people of this area," he said.

Coun. Cheryl Lowe said a train route would be beneficial, as it is no longer convenient to get to Ottawa by bus.

"A lot of seniors are unable to drive to Ottawa," she said, so this is a worthwhile idea to investigate.

A regional commuter train was first proposed by Ottawa mayor Larry O'Brien, and since then has grabbed the imaginations of councils and economic development groups on both the Ontario and Quebec sides of the Ottawa River.

The Pontiac Community Futures Development Corporation based out of Shawville is a strong backer of regional rail.

The group has been behind a proposal to have the commuter train weave between the provinces to cover sections of both the Pontiac and Renfrew County.

In Renfrew County, Whitewater Region has been strongly supportive of the concept, with councillors seeing great opportunity and potential benefits for the municipality. Joining in to explore the idea is Renfrew, Arnprior, Pembroke and communities within the Pontiac including Bristol.

The train leaves Ottawa at 10 a. m. Oct. 5, heads to Beachburg and returns to Ottawa by 4 p. m.

Thursday 11/09/2008 Le Droit Maniwaki

La saga du train à vapeur Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield pourrait connaître un dénouement heureux d'ici quelques semaines.

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train saga is progressing towards a solution, the Friends of the Steam Train have been informed by Québec Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Benoît Pelletier and many others that the Québec Government will invest a million dollars+ in urgent repairs to infrastructure save the 2009 season. The Operations Manager of the steam train, André Groulx has advised the Friends that he has a new buyer. The CCFO (infrastructure owners), who had stalled the previous buyer and then vetoed his offer at the last possible minute, are under pressure - confirmed by Le Droit today - to let the rehab project get started, especially as the Outaouais Regional Council has voted 400,000 dollars to complement the Provincial amount. The City of Gatineau will announce a contribution, understood to be about \$600,000 soon.

Orange Prize winner Transport Minister Cannon, who has the steam train on his website (!), has said that the whole deal will be finalized within a week. Meanwhile Eastern Ontario municipalities around Hawkesbury, Ont. are working on a steam train project of their own.

This should put the heat up under the municipally-owned infrastructure owner on the Québec side (the CCFO) to get on with it and cut a deal.

Le maire de Gatineau, Marc Bureau, affichait beaucoup d'optimisme lorsqu'interrogé à ce sujet par les journalistes, hier matin. M. Bureau a déclaré qu'il espère être en mesure d'annoncer « bientôt » que tous les éléments du plan de financement des travaux nécessaires sur la voie ferrée, sont confirmés. «

Il y a une entente de principe pour le petit train. C'est une entente où chaque partie paie un tiers des coûts et nous, « régionalement », on devra trouver notre tiers et on travaille à ça actuellement. La Conférence régionale des élus (CRÉO) a déjà annoncé une contribution (400 000 \$) et la semaine prochaine ce sera probablement la Ville de Gatineau. Tourisme Outaouais doit aussi contribuer et ça va passer à son conseil d'administration. On s'est entendus sur les travaux urgents (à faire

sur la voie ferrée) et on espère obtenir toutes les autorisations gouvernementales pour réparer les ponts et ponceaux. Trois travaux sont urgents : la réparation du glissement de terrain et celle d'un pont et d'un ponceau. Le montant de 4,5 millions \$ représente ce qu'il y a d'urgent à faire (avant d'être en mesure de relancer le train à vapeur) », a déclaré M. Bureau.

L'optimisme du maire est partagé par les exploitants du train à vapeur, même si ceux-ci ont entamé des discussions avec la Ville de Hawkesbury et les Comtés unis de Prescott-Russell. Louise Groulx a déclaré hier que tout dépend de la réponse finale du gouvernement du Québec. « On est plus optimiste maintenant car les députés Benoît

Pelletier, Stéphanie Vallée et Maryse Gaudreault ont fait pression sur les maires et sur la ministre des Transports du Québec, Julie Boulet. De plus, nous avons un nouvel investisseur intéressé à acheter notre train à vapeur et celui-ci veut le conserver dans la région. Au bout du compte, tout va dépendre de la décision finale de la Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) mais au moins, maintenant, il y a de la lumière au bout du tunnel », a déclaré Mme Groulx.

Friday 12/09/2008 Le Droit Maniwaki

LE TRAIN À VAPEUR EST LE BIENVENUE À CHELSEA

(réf. article de Jean-François Dugas - Le Droit le 12 sep. 2008)

Décidément, un certain Claude Lamarche a un dent contre le train à vapeur, mais ce n'est pas le cas de tout le monde à Chelsea. Des 1 200 personnes qui ont signé la pétition des Amis du Train, 237 sont de Chelsea. Au pro-rata de la population, les Chelseans sont

plus nombreux à signer que les gens de La Pêche (158) de Gatineau (263) et d'Ottawa (277). Les autres signataires viennent de partout au Québec, Canada et le monde. Les Chelseans semblent donc être plus en faveur du train que les autres résidents de la région.

La seule communication que les Amis ont recue contre le train venait de quelqu'un dont le langage ordurier a découragé toute réponse de notre part. J'espère que ce n'était pas monsieur Lamarche! Ce colère me rappelait un peu les gens qui lançaient des roches contre le train pendant la première semaine des opérations, jusqu'à ce que la Sureté du Québec s'en mêle.

Les Chelseans en majorité sont polis et ne lancent ni roches ni de mots injurieux, - au contraire. On entend parfois quelques-uns exprimer des réserves de façon polie, mais la

grande majorité s'exprime volontairement en faveur du train à vapeur.

Harry Gow

469 route 105, Chelsea, Qc J9B 1L2

819 827 8552

(Harry Gow est résident de Nouveau-Chelsea depuis 40 ans; ses parents et grand-parents y ont vécu aussi).

In the spirit of restoration

Group to give rusting historical train a facelift

Posted 2 days ago

One thing they don't lack is spirit.

A group of train buffs is getting together every week in Kingston to lay the foundation for an ambitious restoration of The Spirit of Sir John A., the old locomotive beside the tourist bureau in Confederation Park.

The Spirit is popular with children and tourists, but it's in dire need of a facelift. Rust has eaten away large sections of the old train, window frames are rotting and many small parts are damaged or missing.

With \$170,000 in municipal funds plus another \$300,000 in donations that are yet to be raised, the train buffs hope to restore the locomotive over the next five years to coincide with its 100th anniversary in 2013.

Douglas Smith, who chairs the Kingston division of the Canadian Railroad Historical Association, said that about 10 people interested in working on the restoration turned out for a meeting this week, and he's hoping the number will continue to grow.

Smith said he's still looking for individuals who have professional experience working with steam locomotives and could serve on a project management team.

Organizers are also wrestling with the question of what to call themselves.

"We started the thing off as 1095 Restoration Group, as that is the CPR operating number of the locomotive, but there were those who felt that people knew the thing as The Spirit of Sir John A.," Smith said.

Although it isn't official, the train buffs are considering a slight alteration to its original name so they would be called The Spirit of 1095 Restoration Group.

The old locomotive was built in 1913 by the Canadian Locomotive Company Ltd. on the section of Kingston's waterfront that is now covered with luxury, high-rise apartments. The old train was one of 500 "10-wheel" locomotives owned by the company and one of the most popular on the railway. The last train in the series was No. 1111 built in December 1913.

According to the railroad association's website, these sturdy engines carried both passengers and freight and were often used as helpers when heavy freight trains needed assistance climbing steep grades.

In 1966, the Kingston Jaycees purchased No. 1095 and presented it to the city on Canada Day. The engine was renamed The Spirit of Sir John A. in honour of Canada's first prime minister.

In addition to fundraising and renovating, the restoration group is working on a plan to move the Spirit about six metres toward the lake to allow for more space between the locomotive and the old train station.

The group meets again on Monday at the plumbers and pipefitters hall at 25 Terry Fox Dr., beginning at 2 p. m. Interested individuals can contact Smith at 613-548-3727 or by e-mail at drg.smith@sympatico.ca.

Monday 15/09/2008 Barrys Bay This Week Renfrew Barrys Bay

Council recognizes mural, cancellation stamp

Posted 18 days ago

There were plenty of thanks doled out in Killaloe last Tuesday evening, as the mayor and councillors of the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards gathered in front of the new mural painted on the wall of the Canada Post office.

Mayor Janice Visneskie said her council wanted to do something special for Killaloe's 100th birthday and she credited Councillor Kathy Marion with the idea of a mural.

"Kathy's drive and commitment brought this to fruition," Visneskie said.

Marion, in turn, said the mural is a "direct result of the First Impressions program."

In the First Impressions Community Exchange Program, a volunteer team from one community makes an unannounced visit to another community of similar size. The team records its observations and impressions, compiles the information and later presents its findings and constructive feedback. Marion said Bruce Moore, on the Regional Economic Development team out of Smiths Falls, convinced her Killaloe should take part in the program. Renfrew County Economic Development officer Mitch Wilke helped with the organizing; on Marion's team were Don Bohart, Kim Barnes, Melissa Johnston, Petra Vornweg and Tony Pearson. The group visited Wilberforce.

It was there that Marion saw a mural created by Bancroft artist Allen Helgendorf. She was so impressed she contacted him to learn more about his work and then invited him to a council meeting, where he was asked to submit a sketch for a possible mural.

"Allen did a lot of research on the town and studied many pictures," Marion said. "I think he has accurately depicted Killaloe in the past."

She thanked Canada Post for allowing the mural to be painted on its wall, Renfrew County roads department for painting the bridges in the village, the Killaloe Garden Club for the flower boxes and the lovely gardens in Station Park and "everyone else who made this community more pleasant."

There are many more locations suitable for murals, she added, but the costs would have to be paid for through fundraising.

Moore congratulated the township on working to improve Killaloe.

"We want to work with communities who will do something positive with the reports they receive," he said. "You've thrown down the gauntlet to Highlands East."

Muralist Helgendorf said he was glad he was able to bring "joy and beauty" to Killaloe through his mural.

"A bare wall demands something be done with it," he said.

A new postal cancellation stamp was also introduced at the ceremony. Councillor O'Reilly said she approached Maureen Cashubec at the post office with the idea of a cancellation stamp depicting Killaloe. Postmaster Sheila Tabbert was brought into the discussion and Caitlin MacDonald was asked to create a design for the stamp. She incorporated the covered bridge over Brennan's Creek with the dates of the Killaloe Centennial.

Tuesday 16/09/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Gatineau council to vote on steam train repairs

Published: Monday, September 15, 2008

OTTAWA - Gatineau council is to vote Tuesday on a plan to spend

\$1.7 million on repairs to the track used by the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train.

The train has been parked since May, following a landslide near the track. Since then, owners of the locomotive and passenger cars have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen offers.

Two buyers from the U.S. and elsewhere in Canada have offered to run the train outside the region. Hawkesbury Mayor Jeanne Charlebois has suggested the train could use freight and passenger rail lines near her city if an investor could be found to operate it.

Gatineau Mayor Marc Bureau said Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, the municipalities that own the line, will ask the federal and Quebec governments to help pay for the most urgent improvements.

Stabilizing a slope near the slide and repairs to culverts and two bridges are expected to cost \$4.5 million. The total cost is expected to be about \$10 million.

Martin Potvin, a spokesman for the mayor, said the three municipalities, plus the MRC des Collines de l'Outaouais regional government and Tourisme Outaouais, are considering spending \$3.3 million on track repairs. Mr. Potvin said the federal and Quebec governments would be asked to match the regional contribution.

Chelsea Mayor Jean Perras said the federal government rejected a grant application by Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche in 2007 because the steam train did not carry freight. He said he does not know whether the line would qualify for a grant under a new federal-provincial infrastructure program that is to start this fall.

Tuesday 16/09/2008 CBC News Maniwaki

The City of Gatineau will contribute up to \$1.7 million toward repairs to a railroad that could potentially allow the Wakefield steam train to chug through the region again.

The money will be provided to the company that owns the railroad, la Compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO), on the condition that the upper levels of government also contribute money toward re-launching the train, the City of Gatineau said in a news release Tuesday.

The Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train carried tens of thousands of tourists each year on excursions through the municipalities of Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, which own the CCFO.

Other economic and tourism partners in the Outaouais region are pledging additional aid worth \$1.325 million, bringing the total fund for the train project to \$3.025 million.

The steam train ceased operations in May after a landslide near its tracks. Its owner, who was responsible for repairs to the tracks under an agreement with the CCFO, subsequently put the train up for sale.

The CCFO estimated in August that the track needs \$4 million in infrastructure work before the century-old locomotive could safely run again.

According to the Outaouais Tourism Board, the train used to bring 50,000 to 60,000 tourists into Wakefield each year, generating close to \$10 million in revenues.

Thursday 18/09/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Gatineau OKs \$1.7M for train track fixes

Gatineau council has voted to spend \$1.7 million on repairs to the track used by the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train. The train has been parked since May after a landslide. Since then, owners of the locomotive and cars have put the operation up for sale and say they have received half a dozen offers.

Stabilizing a slope near the slide and repairs to culverts and two bridges are expected to cost \$4.5 million. Other improvements are likely to increase the cost to \$10 million. Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, the MRC des Collines de l'Outaouais and Tourisme Outaouais are considering spending a total of \$3.3 million on track repairs.

Sunday 05/10/2008 Ottawa Citizen Smiths Falls

Man dies after being struck by train

A 50-year-old man has died after being struck by a train in the Rideau Heights/Hunt Club area of south Ottawa Friday night, police say.

The man was struck by an eastbound VIA Rail train at about 10:30 p.m. He was taken by ambulance to the Civic campus of Ottawa Hospital but died a short time later.

The man's identity has been confirmed and his family notified, but his name has not been released.

Monday 06/10/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Candidates on board to revive steam train

Four federal election candidates in Pontiac riding -- including Transport Minister Lawrence Cannon -- pledged yesterday to help resurrect the Wakefield-Chelsea-Gatineau steam train.

There were even suggestions that the line, once fixed, could be used for a commuter train.

The four were taking part in an all-candidates' meeting in Wakefield organized by the Low Down to Hull and Back News and Friends of the Steam Train.

Apart from Mr. Cannon, the Conservative incumbent, the meeting included Liberal Cindy Duncan-McMillan, New Democrat Céline Brault and Green candidate André Sylvestre. Bloc Québécois candidate Marius Tremblay and Marxist-Leninist Benoit Legros did not attend.

"If there's an issue where there's any consensus, it's this one," said Mr. Cannon, pledging that the government would make sure the train can reopen for the 2009 tourist season.

The other three candidates also strongly supported resurrecting the train. In fact, they even raised the possibility of using the track for a commuter line, an idea that was roundly applauded by the audience of about 150.

The train has been idle since May after a landslide forced the business to close. Since then, the owner has put it up for sale.

Area groups are trying to raise funds to repair the track.

Gatineau, Chelsea and La Pêche, which own the line, plan to kick in some money, but want the federal and Quebec governments to help.

Gatineau MNA Stéphanie Vallée has said Quebec is committed to repairing the rail line.

However, the federal government rejected a grant application in 2007 because the steam train did not carry freight.

Monday 06/10/2008 The DailyObserver.ca Beachburg

TRIAL RUN FOR COMMUTER TRAIN: After a trial run called Rail Day, municipal leaders from Renfrew and Pontiac Counties issued a joint communique declaring they support in principle the development of a commuter rail service for the region. Riding a passenger train from Ottawa to Beachburg, area politicians got their first glance at what such a service would look like. The trial run was arranged in co-operation with Ottawa Central Railway to show federal, provincial and municipal leaders the route and the benefits a commuter rail service would offer. Renfrew County Warden Janice Visneskie said that years ago it was economical to ride the train from Ottawa to the rural communities, and perhaps it is viable now. "With today's soaring transportation costs and the desire for residents to live a more environmentally-sensitive lifestyle, it is timely to investigate the feasibility of a commuter rail service between Ottawa and the Ottawa Valley," said Warden Visneskie. First proposed by Ottawa Mayor Larry O'Brien, the initiative has grabbed the imaginations of councils and economic development groups on both sides of the Ottawa River. "The development of a transportation program linking our communities is important to our collective economic growth and development and complements the need for improved highway infrastructure," said Whitewater Region Deputy Mayor Lowe. He explained that by using the existing Ottawa Central Railway corridor, it is not unrealistic to expect a transportation service could be established without undue hardship to link valley communities with urban employment hubs. While the declaration launches the project in the direction of devising a plan, it also urges the federal and provincial governments to assist in obtaining regulatory approvals and assistance in accessing any funding that might be available for such a concept. The next step will be to conduct marketing and feasibility studies to determine ridership and other factors. A task force has also been formed which, at this point, includes representation of Whitewater Region, the Town of Renfrew and the Town of Arnprior. Although there was no discussion of funding, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke MP Cheryl Gallant acknowledged the commuter train is a vision that can be made a reality. She noted its potential to attract tourist dollars to the region. MPP John Yakabuski said rail companies may have been too hasty in ripping up the tracks. He added a commuter train presents several opportunities that all levels of government should explore. Assessing the value of such a service, Pembroke Mayor Ed Jacyno said there are many details that will have to be hammered out. He said the rail beds would have to be upgraded and the train would have to run at a much faster speed to accommodate work schedules. While he sees great potential in the project, Mayor Jacyno warned that expansion of Highway 17 to four lanes must still be a priority. "The two of them in unison could work together". (TheDailyObserver.ca, Oct. 6)

25/10/2008

Brockville Recorder

Brockville

Brockville

Brockville spending \$250,000 on railway tunnel upgrade.

It's better to spend more now and do the job right, city councillors decided this week when they approved a \$250,000 option to fix the north end of Brockville's railway tunnel.

"If you're going to fix it, do it right," Mayor David Henderson said Friday.

"It's a key part of the city."

While city officials have long considered the south end of the historic railway tunnel, at Armagh S. Price Park, a potential heritage tourism draw, the north end at Tunnel Avenue, just north of the downtown core, is fenced off and generally ignored by the population - other than as a dumping ground.

An assessment of the tunnel's north portal, done last year by the engineering consulting firm Genivar, "concluded that the structure is in poor condition and requires attention in the near future," according to a report from city staff.

"The two piers on either side of the entrance are shifting outward and the mortar is being washed out by ground water," adds the report.

"Genivar's engineers are concerned that there is some risk that the structure could collapse and have recommended the city limit access to the site to qualified staff and professionals."

Genivar's report proposed five options, ranging from the status quo, meaning the eventual collapse of the north portal and the prospect of a costly repair, to full restoration at an estimated cost of \$250,000.

At Tuesday's regular council meeting, councillors were presented with a motion to choose one of the less costly options, which would have spent some \$75,000 to eliminate water infiltration into the masonry from above and make drainage improvements at the ground level.

Most councillors felt that would be a stopgap measure and the city would end up having to restore the north portal eventually.

Doors at the north end of the Brockville railway tunnel on Pearl Street stand open on Friday. The structure is in bad need of repair and rather than use stopgap measures, the city will opt for a more thorough \$250,000 restoration.

"It would be pennywise and pound foolish," Councillor Henry Noble said Tuesday.

"Saving one dollar now to spend 10 later makes no sense to me."

Councillor Gord Beach, while disputing the notion that the north portal of the tunnel is a heritage site, said the restoration nonetheless needs to be done in order to preserve the structural integrity of the area of Pearl street running above it.

Operations director Conal Cosgrove said Friday the city is now awaiting a design proposal from Genivar ahead of a restoration contract likely in the spring

Monday

03/11/2008

Ottawa Business Journal

Beachburg

CN buys Ottawa rail line

The Ottawa Central Railway is among four properties that Montreal-based railway giant CN is buying from the Quebec Railway Corp. (QRC) for \$49.8 million.

CN said today it has acquired three principal railway subsidiaries of the QRC, along with a rail-freight ferry operation, giving CN back the 540 track miles of rail line it formerly owned in eastern Ontario, eastern Quebec and northern New Brunswick, as well as a ferry service

on the St. Lawrence River in eastern Quebec.

CN had sold the rail lines to QRC in the late 1990s and has held a minority equity interest in the ferry operation since its startup in 1975, the company said.

The OCR runs between Coteau, Que., where it interchanges with CN, and Pembroke Ont., as well as serving Hawkesbury. Between Coteau and Ottawa, the OCR operates over VIA Rail trackage.

The other properties CN is buying are the Chemin de fer de la Matapedia et du Golfe, which has 221 miles of track from Quebec to New Brunswick, the 196-mile-long New Brunswick East Coast Railway, and the Compagnie de gestion de Matane Inc., which provides shuttle boat-rail freight service on the St. Lawrence River between Matane and Baie-Comeau, Que.

CN said it will be investing in the properties over the next three years to upgrade their rail lines and replace their existing locomotive fleet with "more modern motive power."

03/11/2008

CBC News

Maniwaki

GOVERNMENTS TO HELP GET STEAM TRAIN BACK ON TRACK:

The Quebec government will provide \$200,000 for an assessment of railroad repairs needed to get the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield steam train back on track, announced Benoit Pelletier, the Quebec minister responsible for the Outaouais. Once that is complete, the Quebec and federal governments could cover up to two-thirds of the cost of the next step - the repairs themselves, confirmed Pelletier and Pontiac MP Lawrence Cannon. Another third would be expected to come from within the region. Private and municipal funding of \$3 million had been committed earlier to help with the project. If all goes according to plan, elected officials hope the train could be running again in 2009.

The steam train ceased operations in May after a landslide near its tracks, which are owned by La compagnie de chemin de fer de l'Outaouais (CCFO) run by local municipalities. The train's owner, who was responsible for repairs to the tracks under an agreement with the CCFO, subsequently put the train up for sale. Andre Groulx, the manager of the steam train company, said he was "very, very happy" with the government announcement and made it known that he no longer plans to part with the train, at least in the short term. The CCFO estimated in August that the track needs \$4 million in infrastructure work before the century-old locomotive could safely run again. According to the Outaouais Tourism Board, the train used to bring 50,000 to 60,000 tourists into Wakefield each year, generating close to \$ 10 million in revenues. (Branchline)

Tuesday 04/11/2008 Ottawa Citizen Maniwaki

Wakefield train gains political backing

Governments ready to spend heavily to restore attraction

The federal and Quebec governments are promising to work toward getting the Wakefield steam train back on track by spring. But they're not committing funds just yet.

Yesterday, an array of ministers, members and aides in black suits gathered in Wakefield to promise -- almost -- new life for the train. It had to stop operations after a landslide made the track unsafe.

"We will have a very good structure, a very safe structure, and the train will be a subject of pride (for) the citizens of the Outaouais again. Rest assured of that," said Benoît Pelletier, the Quebec minister for the Outaouais region, and MNA for Gatineau.

"We couldn't remain untouched by the situation. We had to act, along with our partners in the Quebec government," and the municipalities involved, said federal Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon, the MP for Pontiac.

"The first step will be to determine the exact state of the railway line and the actions needed to put it back in service." For starters, the governments are committing funds for engineering studies -- \$100,000 from Quebec, and an unspecified amount from Economic Development Canada. There are some areas that urgently need repair, as well as less-urgent upgrades that the two governments also want to make.

Beyond that, the two ministers say they have their governments' backing to spend heavily to put the train back in business.

Eighty jobs and \$10 million in annual tourism revenues depend on the train, said Mr. Cannon.

Forty per cent of all reservations made through Tourisme Outaouais include a trip on the train, he said.

While the exact cost of repairs is unknown, the federal, provincial and regional governments are each planning to pay one-third of the repair costs, said Mr. Pelletier. "This is not equivocal, even though there are no figures," he said. "It is a firm undertaking from our government and the government of Canada." He also cautioned that there is no guarantee the reconstruction will go ahead, "because, after all, we have to be very careful with public funds. This is taxpayers' money." Still, he said there's a firm goal among the many partners aimed at getting the train running again by the spring of 2009.

"For the moment, I can't tell you whether it (the cost) will be \$2 million or \$3 million or \$6 million or \$7 million," he said, but each government wants to pay a one-third share to get the train running.

"We're going ahead very systematically so that the train can get back on track as quickly as possible. That's our objective." "If we (governments) agree on the fact that it needs substantial investment ... then there will be substantial investment."

Tuesday 04/11/2008 Ottawa Citizen Beachburg

CN Rail reacquires lines, Quebec ferry

TORONTO - Canadian National Railway Co. said yesterday it had reacquired three former subsidiaries and a rail-freight ferry operation from close partner Quebec Railway Corp. for \$49.8 million.

CN agreed to purchase the CFMG line, a primary artery for Quebec shippers of aluminum, paper and forestry products, as well as the New Brunswick East Coast Railway and Ottawa Central lines.

The railway also acquired QRC's Compagnie de gestion de Matane Inc. rail-ferry services that runs along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River.

"QRC has done a great job with these rail properties, and we believe we can improve on that in (the) future," said Hunter Harrison, CN's chief executive, in a statement.

Mr. Harrison added that the company has a three-year investment strategy for the assets to upgrade each line and replace the locomotive fleets.

The three lines rejoin CN after the railway sold them to QRC in the late 1990s. None of the 214 jobs across the four assets are to be cut, CN said.

"Post-transaction, it will be 'business as usual' under CN ownership, with no immediate changes in freight, VIA Rail passenger rail service or employment levels," the company said.

CN has weathered economic headwinds well through the last quarter, through increased operating efficiencies, according to analysts. The company reported a 14-per-cent rise in profit in the third quarter on Oct. 23, beating expectations.