

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 2018

02/02/2018 *News Local*

Kingston (CN)

Johnstown

The hammer came down on a local business Friday afternoon - in a good way.

Canadian Rail Equipment Works and Services (CREWS) completed the first phase of its rail trans-loading facility adjacent to Johnstown's industrial park on Friday, with local dignitaries helping hammer in the last spike.

CREWS president and chief executive officer Clayton Jones joined Edwardsburgh/Cardinal Mayor Pat Sayeau, Leeds-Grenville MPP Steve Clark, MP Gord Brown and Canadian National (CN) sales and marketing official Daniel Lajoie for the ceremonial driving of the last spike on a cold afternoon at the railyard off County Road 2.

Jones said the firm plans to hire six people, then another 10 after it begins its second phase this spring.

"Four people are already hired," said Jones.

Jones, a Canadian Pacific diesel mechanic who left in 2004 and took his rail expertise to the private sector, is transferring CREWS to the 96-acre site west of the Giant Tiger distribution centre.

He said the location has all the right elements: Proximity to the Highway 401-416 interchange, the Port of Johnstown and the nearby international bridge.

The site also has access to CN's main line through a spur at Johnstown.

The first phase, which opened Jan. 22, can accommodate 200 rail cars.

The second phase will allow for 350 more cars.

CREWS's main business is providing trans-loading from rail cars to trucks, or vice-versa.

The company also allows rail car storage, in-plant switching for large industry and provides certified operating crews for locomotives and track mobiles.

CREWS, which is headquartered in Kemptville, has locations in Maitland and Hamilton and is in the process of moving its main office to the Johnstown site.

The interest has been building since the site opened, said Jones.

"Right now, I think we're getting two to three calls or emails a week," he said.

The total investment for the first phase will amount to \$2 million, said Jones, while the second phase will represent another \$4.5 million.

That will be followed by a third and fourth phase, at the end of which the company will have created 50 jobs, said Jones.

Sayeau is excited at this investment into a growing part of the township, adding he has been touting the virtues of that area for some time.

"The whole area at the Port of Johnstown: Location, location, location is everything," said Sayeau.

But in fact, there is more to CREWS's success, added the mayor.

"It's also a question of the right timing and the right economic environment," said Sayeau.

CN's business model is changing, to the point where the large firm wants to concentrate on its core business rather than trans-loading and storage, so companies like CREWS are able to seize the opportunity, he said.

"I'm really excited about what's going to happen in Phase Two," added Sayeau, leaving the specifics to CREWS to announce later.

17/02/2018 *Ottawa Citizen*

Ellwood

Prince of Wales bridge

The City of Ottawa must restore the Prince of Wales Bridge and the railway that approaches it in the next 12 months or formally discontinue the operations, a regulator has ruled.

Knowing it's virtually impossible to find resources to do such work in short order, the city is considering seeking a court review of the decision released by the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) on Friday.

The agency told the city to either restore the bridge and railway or start the process to officially discontinue operating the federally regulated railway line in that area. The CTA is giving the city until April 30 to choose an option.

City clerk and solicitor Rick O'Connor told council members late Friday afternoon that the legal department, transportation department and external rail experts will review the decision.

"That review is intended to inform a recommendation as to the next steps to be taken in this matter, which may include a request for judicial review," O'Connor told council.

This all started with a complaint to the CTA by the Moose Consortium in 2016 alleging that the city didn't follow the proper process to remove tracks between Bayview station and the Prince of Wales Bridge.

The city has an ongoing construction zone at Bayview station to build the Confederation Line LRT, requiring the removal of existing tracks.

Other rail companies could get access to a discontinued rail line if the owner has stopped operating the tracks.

Moose (Mobility Ottawa- Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises) wants to build a regional train service funded by the private sector and it has eyed the Prince of Wales Bridge as the connection point to western Quebec.

The city owns the bridge, which is completely closed to all uses, and hasn't used the railway that runs north of Bayview station. The O-Train Trillium Line stops at Bayview station, which is the northern terminus of the service.

The decision on Friday caps several months of back and forth between the city and the CTA over this complaint. The city told the CTA last September that it would take about two years to realign the tracks and three years to restore the bridge.

The CTA told the city the timelines weren't reasonable. The city then told the CTA that the agency was exceeding its jurisdiction.

The city intends to use the bridge to link its rail service with the Gatineau transit system, but not in the foreseeable future.

Regulator sparks questions about future of Prince of Wales Bridge

Transportation agency orders city to restore rail line leading to blocked-off bridge

A decision by the Canadian Transportation Agency is sparking questions about the future of the abandoned Prince of Wales Bridge, with some in Ottawa hoping to see it back in operation much sooner than expected.

In a ruling issued Friday, the agency gave the City of Ottawa two options.

It can either try to sell a portion of the rail line leading to the Prince of Wales Bridge, which spans the Ottawa River just west of the city's downtown - which could lead to it being permanently closed if there are no buyers.

Or it can instead restore the tracks - including those that run over the bridge - so they can accommodate rail traffic within 12 months

"Faced with the potential to have to demolish the bridge or discontinue that rail line, I think most residents of Ottawa feel that it would be far preferable to put the bridge into service," said Kitchissippi Coun. Jeff Leiper, whose ward's eastern border is the bridge and O-Train tracks.

"It should put a bit of a fire under city council as well as our federal and provincial partners to find a way to fund it."

The agency made its decision in response to a complaint filed in 2016 by Moose Consortium Inc., a group hoping to rehabilitate the bridge as part of its plan to offer regional rail services to outlying communities in Quebec and Ontario.

The consortium filed its complaint after the City of Ottawa ripped up a quarter-kilometre section of rail tracks just south of the bridge in order to build a new entrance to the Bayview LRT station.

In its decision, the CTA said the city didn't follow the rules that govern the discontinuance of rail lines.

As a result, the city now has until the end of April to report back to the CTA about what it plans to do now.

Costly rehabilitation work

"I don't think council is anywhere near being able to make that decision today," Leiper told CBC News.

With the city's own repair estimates out of date, Leiper said it's difficult to say how much it would cost to rehabilitate the bridge, adding it could be anywhere between tens and hundreds of millions of dollars.

Kitchissippi Coun. Jeff Leiper says he hopes the city can find a way to rehabilitate the Prince of Wales Bridge to allow for rail, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

(Andrew Foote/CBC)

In a memo to councillors, City of Ottawa solicitor Rick O'Connor said the city's legal team is reviewing its options, which could include seeking judicial review.

That's an option Leiper said he would support, as it would buy the city more time to make an informed decision.

Mayor Jim Watson said the city will consult with lawyers and may consider appealing the ruling.

"I don't think it's reasonable for a federal agency to tell us to keep a bridge operational for rail when we don't have the funds to put rail across to Quebec at this point," he said.

Best case scenario

Still, Leiper said most people in Ottawa would welcome a functioning rail bridge linking Ottawa and Gatineau, helping to ease congestion and benefiting the environment.

"Everything points to the importance of keeping the bridge and getting it back in service," he said.

Though Ottawa and Gatineau have long hoped to connect their transit systems by rail, there are still no concrete plans to achieve that goal. (Mathieu Fleury/Twitter)

The City of Ottawa has envisioned converting the abandoned bridge to light rail so it could connect with Gatineau's transit system, but there is no concrete plan or funding in place to achieve that goal.

"What the Canadian Transportation Agency's decision forces us to do is make some plans around that sooner than we might have thought," Leiper said.

Potential for local, regional service

Hull-Aylmer MP Greg Fergus welcomed the CTA's decision, which he said leaves the door open not only to local rail service over the bridge but also the regional service proposed by Moose Consortium Inc.

"The more players that are in there, the better," Fergus said.

"I really do believe rail is the future for being able to move people efficiently, quickly and cheaply, so this is good news all around."

Fergus has also voiced his support for a tramway connecting Aylmer to downtown Gatineau with a potential link over the Prince of Wales Bridge.

Joseph Potvin, director general of Moose Consortium Inc., said he wasn't surprised by the agency's decision and hopes it will accelerate plans to rehabilitate the bridge.

"There's only one way to get between the O-Train line and the Quebec side — which is along the [bridge's] tracks," he said.

Moose Consortium Inc. has submitted plans for a bypass line around Bayview Station, after the City of Ottawa ripped up unused rail tracks as part of LRT construction. (Giacomo Panico/CBC)

Potvin said his team recently submitted proposals to the City of Ottawa and the CTA for the bridge's rehabilitation, including plans for a bypass track around Bayview Station.

The plan also includes seismic upgrades to the bridge as well as cantilevered bike and pedestrian paths.

"There isn't a conflict with the two systems," Potvin said. "It would actually be entirely complementary."

Potvin said the rehabilitation of the bridge would cost \$50 million, which the consortium proposes to finance in full.

His team has pegged the cost of bypassing Bayview Station at an additional \$25 million.

In the meantime, all eyes remain on the City of Ottawa as it weighs its options in response to the agency's ruling.

Take the "Eh-Train"

Ottawa Ontario - Fancy a ride on the Majestic Moose?

How about heading into work on the Rocket Richard?

Those are just two of the 40 names revealed today for the rail cars that will soon travel along Ottawa's two light rail lines.

The City of Ottawa announced the names, which were submitted by children under 16 during a contest last November, at a ceremony Saturday morning at Ben Franklin Place.

The city said it received nearly 2,000 entries, which were then narrowed down to the winners.

The winning entries drew on a mix of both local and Canadian history, and also included some Indigenous names.

The names of the six Trillium Line cars are:

Nanuq-Polar Bear;

Northern Lights;

Rocket Richard;

Dreamcatcher;

Emily Murphy;

Portage.

Congratulations to all contest winners of the Name The Train Contest.

Thank you to everyone who took part in the competition - Jim Watson 24 Feb 2018.

The names of the 34 Confederation line cars are:

Canada Goose;

Farley Mowat;

Gord Downie;

Inuksuk;

John McCrae;

Logdriver-Draveur;

Lord Stanley;

Louis Riel;

Majestic Moose;

Odawa;

Poppy;

Snowbird;

Bluenose;

Boreal;

Emily Carr;

Jacques Cartier;

Juno;

Nathan Cirillo;

Normandy;

Samuel de Champlain;

Thomas D'Arcy McGee;

Totem;

Tundra;

Wagosh-Fox;

Acadia;

Agnes Macphail;

Amik-Beaver;

Bertha Wilson;

Billy Bishop;

Eh-Train;

Henrietta Edwards;

Maple Taffy;

The Mountie;

George Brown.

Mayor Jim Watson, councillors Stephen Blais, Keith Egli, and general manager of transportation John Manconi presented the 40 winners with two free tickets for the inaugural ride of the Confederation Line.

The 12.5 kilometre line, which runs from Tunney's Pasture in the west to Blair Station in the east, is running six months behind schedule but is expected to open in November 2018

03/03/2018

Canadian Press

Kingston (CN)

Freight train derailment causes major passenger delays near Kingston, Ont.

Trains travelling between Toronto and Montreal or Ottawa have been delayed by at least six hours, said Via Rail.

KINGSTON, Ont. A freight train derailment east of Kingston, Ont., has caused hours of delays for rail passengers in the province and led to cancellations of several Via routes out of Toronto.

Trains travelling between Toronto and Montreal or Ottawa have been delayed by at least six hours, Via Rail said.

Two cars at the back of a Canadian National Railway train carrying paper derailed just east of Kingston at 1:20 p.m.

A CN spokesperson, Patrick Waldron, said one of the cars was upright on the tracks while another lay on its side across the tracks. Crews were working to remove the vehicles and repair any track damage.

Some 647 people were on passenger trains at the time of the derailment, and more than a thousand were believed to have been affected by the delays, a Via spokesperson, Marie-Anna Murat, said.

Murat said all trains on the route were cancelled for the evening, adding that passengers can either exchange their tickets or receive a full refund.

Via Rail has provided buses and other forms of alternative transport for most of the passengers stranded at the time of the derailment.

Waldron did not provide an estimate for when the derailed freight cars would be removed.

Via Rail halts passenger service after CN train derails near Kingston, Ont.

No injuries after 2 cars carrying paper derail near John F. Scott Road

Via Rail has cancelled all Saturday night passenger travel on its Montreal-Toronto and Ottawa-Toronto routes after two CN Rail train cars derailed near Kingston, Ont.

The two cars were carrying paper and were at the end of a westbound train when they derailed near John F. Scott Road at around 1:20 p.m., said CN Rail spokesman Patrick Waldron.

One car came to rest on the tracks on its side, while the other remained upright, Waldron said.

No one was hurt, and no dangerous goods spilled, he added.

'It would've hit us'

Logan Cadue was shooting photos and video of trains with a friend, he said, when they suddenly heard "a hiss of air" coming from the lumber cars on the train.

"We could see a bit of dust kicking up from the rear of the train. Then the boxcar on the tail started wobbling back and forth," Cadue said.

The train's brakes then began to squeal, and Cadue said he and his friend "booked it back" away from the train.

"It all happened so fast," he added. "If [the boxcar] had gone over and tipped our way, it would've hit us, for sure."

Cadue said he saw no one injured. Kingston police also quickly arrived on the scene, he added.

Saturday night trains cancelled

There were 647 passengers aboard Via Rail trains that faced delays caused by the derailment, company spokeswoman Marie-Anna Murat said in an email.

More than 1,000 passengers would be also affected by Saturday's cancellations, she said.

Via Rail was "doing its best to accommodate passengers that are currently on route with alternative transportation," Murat said.

"Passengers who were scheduled to depart tonight will have to make other arrangements as all trains are cancelled, she said.

"They have a choice of a full refund or exchange for a later travel date at the same rate they purchase their ticket."

Passenger travel between Ottawa and Montreal was not affected, Murat added, nor was travel along the Toronto-London-Windsor corridor.

CN Rail said at around 5:30 p.m. ET that crews were still working to remove the cars, repair any damage to the track and reopen the corridor.

The company said it had also notified the Transportation Safety Board of the derailment.

Via gets back on track after derailment

Via Rail service on the TorontoOttawa route resumed its normal schedule Sunday morning after an earlier freight train derailment.

The derailment Saturday afternoon - caught on video by a Kingston man - forced the cancellation of Via Rail's Saturday evening trains on the Toronto- Ottawa and Montreal-Toronto routes.

The video, taken by Kingston photographer Logan Cadue, shows two rail cars coming detached from a westbound freight train as it approaches John F. Scott Road, near Highway 15. One car toppled onto its side; the other stopped on the tracks.

The derailment, which involved a Canadian National Railway freight train, occurred at about 1:20 p.m.

No one was hurt, but passengers on several Via Rail trains had to be bused to their destinations.

Via spokeswoman Marie-Anna Murat said 647 people were on passenger trains at the time of the derailment. She said passengers affected by Saturday's cancellations could either exchange their tickets or receive a full refund.

Mayor takes on county over ATV route through town

When Natasha Mason moved to her heritage house along the Mississippi River in Almonte four-and-a-half years ago, it seemed like a dream come true.

"I never thought when we found the place that this would be a problem," Mason said. "We thought we'd found a little place of paradise."

What Mason didn't realize, however, was that the County of Lanark had plans for the abandoned rail line that runs along the back of her property, just 25 metres from her bedroom. Purchased from CP by the county in 2017 for \$100,000, the renamed Ottawa Valley Recreational Trail (OVRT) is set to become a pathway for snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles, part of a network of trails that runs across Renfrew County, through Lanark County to Smiths Falls.

"The reason we chose our house is because it's quiet," said Mason, who suffers from severe anxiety. "I don't see why people should be allowed to destroy my peaceful living."

Others fear the motorized vehicles will pose a danger on a trail that's now used by children, skiers and dog-walkers.

Lanark sees the trail as a tourism draw: Seven of the county's eight municipalities voted to open the trail to motorized vehicles. For now, however, the Almonte portion is closed while the county waits for proposals to rehabilitate the old railway bridge that spans the Mississippi River and links the trail's north and south ends. The county is ready to spend \$1.5 million on the trail in town, adding guardrails to the bridge and gravel along the roughly two kilometre stretch through town.

The lone holdout is Mississippi Mills, the township that includes Almonte, and Mayor Shaun McLaughlin concedes he feels outgunned by the other members of county council.

"So far, the county has not been willing to compromise on any single issue. Not even a nudge," said McLaughlin. "It's frustrating."

"The people came out to Almonte for its charm and its peace and quiet. There is nothing charming, peaceful or quiet about an ATV," McLaughlin said. "ATVs are godawful loud."

Mississippi Mills proposed a bypass around Almonte that would keep the snowmobiles and ATVs out of the town, but the detour was long, crossing the Mississippi at Appleton, and would need the consent of more than a dozen private landowners. Council rejected it.

"Unless we start building a new bridge, we can't give them a shorter one," McLaughlin said.

The railway bridge over the Mississippi is the jewel in the crown for those who want motorized vehicles on the trail.

"Any bypass around Almonte is going to have the barrier of the river - that's the reason we want to use the bridge," said Darin McRae, president of the 1,000-member Beautiful Eastern Association of Snowmobile Trails club - BEAST for short. "One of our obligations is to build safe trails. And one of the things we're trying to do is get off ice. Ice crossing is not safe."

Homeowners' worries about the noise and pollution from snowmobiles are overblown, he said. Modern snowmobiles use fourstroke engines that are quieter and cleaner than their predecessors, he said. And warmer weather has meant the snowmobiling season lasts for just a few weeks in winter, when people's windows are closed.

But ATVs are another matter. They're noisier and their season is longer and is mostly in summer, when residents have their windows open. And ATV riders in general, are less responsible operators than snowmobilers, McLaughlin says. "They're scofflaws," he said.

He sees the dispute as a classic fight of rural vs. urban lifestyle.

"It's a different culture," says McLaughlin, who lives in the rural part of Mississippi Mills and is used to the sound of vehicles speeding along trails that are about 500 metres from his house.

"When you look at a clash between two rights, you look at who would suffer the most harm if something happened. Right now, ATVs and snowmobiles aren't allowed to go through Almonte. So we would take nothing away from them. If they are allowed to go through Almonte, it takes away peace and quiet from residents. There is harm."

Mississippi Mills is looking into its legal rights in the matter, including whether the municipality's bylaws trump county council's laws. But the best hope, McLaughlin says, is to reach a compromise on the trail use. The township is to meet March 5 with county Warden John Fenik. Fenik, who is also mayor of Perth, maintains the county has the right to allow motorized vehicles on the trail, even though he sympathizes with Almonte residents.

"I understand if the trail came right through the heart of my town, I'd probably have some problems with that. I understand where Almonte residents are coming from."

At the same time, the OVRT will be a powerful tourism draw for Lanark, luring motorsports enthusiasts to local businesses. Carleton Place council has embraced the trail, which also cuts through that town, though not as close to homes as it does in Almonte.

"I've got lots of emails from people in Almonte saying, 'This is tyranny' ... 'You're ramming it down our throats' and 'We don't want it,' " Fenik said. "But (county) administration, our planning and roads departments, are saying, 'This is our property and we have the legal right to do this.' ...

"We do have the authority to turn that into a road," Fenik said.

City to appeal agency's order to replace ripped-up rail

Mayor Jim Watson asking transport minister to intercede in squabble with federal agency.

The City of Ottawa is appealing a federal agency's order to restore, sell or scrap a portion of rail line near the Prince of Wales Bridge, and the mayor is asking a federal minister to step in.

As part of light rail construction, the city removed a section of the line north of Bayview Station.

The Canadian Transportation Agency's (CTA) mid-February decision would force the city to either put the line up for sale, which could lead to its permanent closure if no buyers come forth, or restore it to a state where it could be re-opened to rail traffic within 12 months.

Given until the end of April to respond, city officials had said they would likely appeal the decision, which they saw as the agency going too far.

In a memo Tuesday, Mayor Jim Watson said the city has started filing an appeal with the Federal Court of Appeal. If approved, that appeal process could take a year or two.

Watson told reporters later that day he doesn't think the agency's decision is fair.

"We have every intention of using that bridge " we believe it's in [our] best interest that we don't go spend money now when we're not ready for that service to go," he said.

"We want to get service to Kanata as Phase 3A [of the light rail network], as I call it, then Phase 3B would be to Gatineau."

Request to cabinet

Watson also said he's written to federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau to request a review under Section 40 of the Canada Transportation Act, which gives the federal cabinet the power to change or throw out an agency ruling.

"You can certainly appreciate the City's surprise and disappointment in being asked to make this unfortunate 'either or' determination at this point in time,"

Watson wrote in the letter, which was attached to Tuesday's memo.

"Particularly, it appears that the CTA has rendered its decision without taking into account the ongoing discussions between the cities of Gatineau and Ottawa, as well as with local Members of Parliament, with respect to the future potential use of the [bridge] in connecting our two transit systems."

Watson wrote it would take two to three years to get the bridge ready, rather than the 12 months imposed by the agency, and he said he doesn't believe are any viable groups with enough money to run rail over the bridge.

A group called Moose Consortium Inc. has submitted plans for a rail line over the bridge that would go around Bayview Station and service outlying communities such as Smiths Falls, Casselman, Arnprior, Montebello and Wakefield.

That group reported the rail line's removal in 2016 to the CTA, and claims it can pay the \$50 million it estimates it will take to fix the bridge.

CITY'S IN A BIT OF A FIX

The federal Liberal cabinet should quash a decision by a regulator compelling the City of Ottawa to fix the Prince of Wales Bridge, Mayor Jim Watson says.

The city is taking a double-barrelled approach in its fight against a Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) order. On top of asking for help from cabinet, the city is also asking the Federal Court of Appeal to consider hearing an appeal.

The CTA order, sent to the city last month, orders the city to restore the rail line north of Bayview station, including the Prince of Wales Bridge, so it would be operable within 12 months of the agency giving running rights to another rail company, or to discontinue the line altogether.

The order follows a 2016 complaint by the Moose Consortium, which raised concerns about the city removing tracks while building the joint Confederation Line/Trillium Line station. Moose (Mobility Ottawa- Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises) wants to run a privately financed regional rail system and has eyed the Prince of Wales Bridge as an interprovincial link.

In a letter sent Tuesday to federal Transportation Minister Marc Garneau, Watson wrote that the CTA made the order without considering ongoing discussions between the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau, including local MPs, about connecting the OC Transpo and STO transit networks using the bridge.

"You can certainly appreciate the city's surprise and disappointment in being asked to make this unfortunate 'either or' determination at this point in time," Watson wrote.

Watson also said he doesn't believe there are viable rail operators that could use the railway.

The Canada Transportation Act allows appeals directly to cabinet.

A spokesperson for Garneau confirmed his office has received Watson's letter and "will follow due process," but wouldn't comment further.

At city hall, Watson said it doesn't make sense for the city to spend millions now to upgrade the bridge when it's not ready to run trains to Gatineau, especially when the city's third phase of LRT is projected to be to Kanata.

As Watson described it, "Phase 3A" would be to Kanata and "Phase 3B" would be to Gatineau.

The city doesn't have money to fix the bridge. It doesn't even have money yet to build LRT to Kanata.

With no work planned, the city contends that the CTA's order simply isn't doable under the funding constraints.

"We don't believe that the decision is fair for the City of Ottawa and for our taxpayers," Watson said.

"We have every intention, as I've said on many occasions, of using that bridge. We want to have the O-Train go over to Taché Boulevard Rapibus station so we have a more seamless transition between people who work in Gatineau and live in Ottawa, and vice-versa."

Watson still thinks a cycling and walking path across the bridge is out of the question.

"I believe that would be a complete waste of tax dollars to do something like that for \$10 million and a few years down the road we have to rip it up and put rail in for the rail system," Watson said, adding the city has an obligation to seal up the bridge and keep people off until it's ready for trains.

Aileen Duncan, a Centretown resident who started a petition in 2016 to keep the bridge open, said people just want to know the city's intentions for the crossing. The city had to block the bridge to pedestrians to protect its liability, but the fences keep getting cut.

Duncan acknowledged the difficulty with the bridge having an active railway designation and she sees positive signs in the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau talking about its future, but she predicted the "landmark" bridge will again become a flashpoint as the warmer months approach.

"It's my impression that the public wants clarity on what the city intends to do with this bridge," Duncan said.

"This bridge isn't going away."

Advocates want action on disused rail bridge

A group advocating for the Prince of Wales Bridge is asking federal Transport Minister Marc Garneau to not let the City of Ottawa off the hook so easily when it comes to the interprovincial crossing.

The grassroots Ottawa River Bridge (ORB), which has a core group of about five people organizing the effort, wrote to Garneau on Monday suggesting that the federal cabinet shouldn't rescind an order from the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA).

The order compels the city to restore the rail line north of Bayview transit station so that it would be operable within 12 months of the agency giving running rights to another rail company. The order also applies to the city-owned bridge spanning the river. The other option offered by the CTA is for the city to discontinue the line, effectively removing the city's control.

The city wants Garneau to step in and is also asking the Federal Court of Appeal to consider hearing a challenge to the CTA's decision.

"The concerns expressed by the City of Ottawa are legitimate. Still, we believe that rescinding this decision would allow for the city's inaction on the bridge and railway to continue," ORB member Elena Prokopenko says in the letter to Garneau.

The ORB would rather Garneau vary the order. The group suggests a one-year extension that would see the city return to the CTA and explain its intended use of the bridge. By April 30, 2019, the city should present a three-year strategic plan to bring the bridge to a state where it can be operational within 12 months, the ORB says.

"In addition, you may wish for the City of Ottawa and Ville de Gatineau to report back to your office in April 2019 to provide an update on their discussions regarding interprovincial transit, an activity that Mayor (Jim) Watson committed to in his 2018 State of the City address," Prokopenko says in her letter to Garneau.

The city doesn't have the money to fix the bridge and return it to an operational rail line. It's part of the city's long-term transit plans " Watson calls it "Phase 3B" of the third stage of LRT, with Phase 3A being LRT to Kanata " but there's no timeline. The mayor is against spending \$10 million to temporarily repurpose the bridge as an interprovincial pedestrian and cycling path.

In his own letter to Garneau earlier this month, Watson complained that the CTA made its decision without considering the discussions between local politicians about connecting the Ottawa and Gatineau transit systems using the bridge.

The CTA started the investigation after receiving information from the Moose Consortium, which raised concerns about the city removing tracks near Bayview station during the construction of the joint Confederation Line and Trillium Line station. Moose (standing for Mobility Ottawa/Outaouais: Systems and Enterprises) has ambitions of starting an interprovincial rail network using the Prince of Wales Bridge.

Wakefield Train Plan Gets Thumbs Up from Man Who Kept Locomotive Running

Ottawa Ontario - A new plan to bring train travel back to Wakefield, Quebec, has the blessings of the man who kept a historic locomotive going for nearly three decades.

Doug Simpson, 93, worked for 29 years as a maintenance supervisor at the pulp and paper plant in Thurso, Quebec, where locomotive number 10 once was used. The Bytown Railway Society, which currently owns the locomotive, has offered up the use of the small diesel-electric locomotive and a passenger car to a group that would like to see it operate in west Quebec.

"That'll be the real, real, thing. You can't go wrong with that," said Simpson about the durability of the 1924 locomotive on offer.

Lumber was drawn from the vast forests north of the plant, shipped by train and milled in Thurso until the operation was sold in 1964.

Simpson recalled how his employer once sent him to General Electric's manufacturing facility in Pennsylvania for instruction on how to keep equipment like the historic locomotive running.

"They're simpler than a six-cylinder car, and more serviceable. There's no end to it," he said.

Stopped Running in 2011

It's been seven years since the Hull-Chelsea-Wakefield tourist steam train stopped running after a storm washed out the tracks.

In 2011, the Outaouais Tourism Board said the train brought in 50,000 to 60,000 tourists into the region each year, generating close to \$10 million for the region.

A group that includes Wakefield businessman Marc Fournier has now proposed using the smaller, diesel-electric locomotive on a 4.3 kilometre run between Morrison's Quarry, south of the village, and the end of the line in Wakefield.

"There's a glimmer of hope because the train in question is much smaller," explained Fournier earlier this month.

A major hurdle, however, is whether the weight of the diesel-electric locomotive can be supported by a culvert scheduled to be built under the rails in the village's south end later this summer.

The culvert wasn't designed to carry the load of the original steam train.

Fournier's group has been asked to hire an engineer to assess whether the culvert can bear the weight of the lighter locomotive.

Trying to Get the Municipality on Board

Another obstacle to returning a train to Wakefield is a council that could have new priorities.

The new mayor of La Peche, Guillaume Lamoureux, said he wants council to examine the feasibility of rail traffic in Wakefield, given the long history of failed attempts.

Lamoureux told CBC News he's working with municipal staff to formally summarize those efforts in order not to repeat mistakes or "entertain false hopes."

"One of the biggest challenges is to get local buy-in," said Philip Jago, a Bytown Railway Society volunteer working to restore the historic coach by January.

Jago said the Railway Society is offering to donate and maintain the diesel-electric system.

He said the cost of moving the locomotive and its car from storage in Ottawa to Wakefield is likely less than \$500,000.

As for Fournier, he said he's optimistic that once the culvert analysis comes out in his group's favour, the municipality will "recognize the project is viable and get on board."

Connection to Guy Lafleur?

Mythology around the number 10 locomotive sometimes connects it to hockey legend Guy Lafleur, who wore the number on the back of his Montreal Canadiens jersey.

Lafleur is probably Thurso's most celebrated son, and a statue of the five-time Stanley Cup winner stands in the middle of the town.

His father Rejean started as a welder at the Thurso wood plant when he was 14, following in his own father's footsteps.

Simpson worked with both men, but is quick to debunk any connection between the locomotive and the famous hockey player.

The engine merely took its number sequentially, Simpson said, coming as it did after locomotives eight and nine.

"There is no connection to Guy Lafleur, No, no, no," laughed Simpson. "That's all BS."

Five held after Kingston-area chase ends in train collision

Five men are in custody after the vehicle they were in struck a Kingston police cruiser and then, after a chase by provincial police, was hit by a passenger train near Bath Thursday afternoon.

After hitting the cruiser, the suspect vehicle headed to Highway 401, taking the westbound lane. Loyalist OPP officers spotted the vehicle, and saw it exit at County Road 6 and head south.

When it turned off the highway, two passengers jumped out and fled on foot.

They were quickly arrested. The southbound vehicle then turned east onto the railway tracks near County Road 7 and McIntyre Road, north of Bath, just west of Kingston.

The suspects left the car and were then collared by police.

The now-empty vehicle was parked on the shoulder of the railway tracks and it was sideswiped by Via Rail train 64, which was heading to Kingston, then on to Montreal.

County Road 7, about six kilometres north of the village of Bath, was closed to traffic for several hours after the collision.

Passenger Carrie Schipper said her train, travelling from Toronto, stopped at about 2 p.m. at the crossing between McIntyre and Ham roads in Loyalist Township.

"All of a sudden to the left side of me, facing north going east, there were at least eight police officers and I saw a couple with rifles," Schipper said.

Via officials told the passengers there were no fatalities, Schipper said. They were then told the train would be stuck there for at least two hours while police investigated the scene.

"We were told they were arrested and they have to clear the tracks," she said.

The five suspects were handed over to Kingston police.

Tourists and History Lovers Flock to Canada's First Railway Tunnel

Brockville Ontario - Tourists and historians are once again flocking to Canada's first railway tunnel in Brockville, home to stone walls, century-old mineral deposits, and a brand new light show.

The tunnel opened for its second season Saturday, after its debut in 2017 made it one of the top tourist sites in Ontario, said Brockville councillor David LeSueur. "The city has made it completely safe and added the light show and music," said LeSueur, who worked on the tunnel for seven years and spoke with CBC Radio's In Town and Out, Saturday.

"It's something for everyone."

The 525 metre stone tunnel, built between 1854 and 1860, runs through the downtown core of the city

It was initially built for the Brockville & Ottawa Railway.

The tunnel was last used for train travel in 1970, and the City of Brockville acquired it more than a decade after.

In August 2017, the city reopened the tunnel as a tourist attraction.

Although the rail tracks have been removed, the tunnel features a light show that highlights its engineering, architectural, and geological features.

LeSueur, who also chairs the Brockville Railway Tunnel Committee, told In Town and Out that its original walls remain untouched.

"There's a little bit of water that drips on you in certain areas. You'll see stone work. You'll see an area that they used gun powder to blast through the rock," he said.

"It comes out to the north end of the city near the CN tracks, and the line used to go all the way up to Ottawa."

Roughly 25,000 visitors walked through the tunnel during its debut weekend last year, LeSueur said.

"A lot of people say that, at the end of the day, it calms them down," he said.

"Kids like to dance to the music. Historians and photographers are hard to get out of there. They love the architectural features and the mineral deposits that have been built up for 150 years plus."

This year the tunnel reopened around Easter, LeSueur said, to welcome back families during the long weekend.

It was even home to an Easter egg hunt this year, he added.

"All the citizens of Brockville were thinking we should open it as a tourist attraction," he said.

"It's a fantastic site.

17/04/2018

Ottawa Citizen

Otrain

Chance Missed to mark LRT Milestone

The first LRT train travelled through the downtown tunnel on the weekend, right to the edge of Tunney's Pasture.

One would have thought, \$2 billion and five-plus years later, this would be cause for celebration. Where was the magnum of champagne being rapturously smashed on the bow (the bumper?) of the train - the ribbon-cutting by Watson-Naqvi-Chiarelli-McKenna Inc., the appearance of the town crier and Dave Smith? Instead, we had a tweet from the mayor on a Saturday afternoon. Then - hang on - some retweets!

This was a lost opportunity, in other words. But this has been the story with the whole building of the LRT. There has, I think, been a failure to engage the public in pride-building in the biggest project the city has ever undertaken. Mass humility, dearest Ottawa, is overrated.

You know, people love watching things being built. This is why they cut holes in hoarding when a highrise goes up, because everyone has a little kid inside them. We want to see. When they did that rapid bridge renewal on the Queensway, for Pete's sake, they had to install bleachers for all the curious.

During tunnel construction, I wondered why someone didn't mount a webcam so we could peek at daily progress. Why not tell us how many feet they crunched through every day? Where was the boatload of hoopla when the tunnel was finally finished? I mean, I once watched an entire documentary on the making of the Chunnel from England to France. Fascinating.

Where was our riveting story of human achievement by mighty machines? Untold.

These people have ripped up downtown (for years), gummed up Scott Street (for years), rerouted our daily flow. Can't we have the odd high-five?

Why, too, isn't there a trainfacsimile on display somewhere so people can at least have a look inside?

(I see by the web - where we're to learn everything - the train has 14 doors, carries about 300 but with only 120 seats and will travel an average of 35 km/ hour.)

Why, too, isn't there an LRT office downtown that brags about the great stuff we're doing, with models and mock-ups and answers to every question we might possibly have?

Oh, for the days of Guy Laflamme and his heart-stopping, fire-breathing Godzillas to chase the bores away!

And it isn't just me. Here was a followup tweet from Graham Richardson at CTV Ottawa to the transit commission boss, Stephen Blais: "How about allowing a camera down there and we will do a live show? I have been asking for months."

Instead we had this tweet from His Worship: "An incredible and exciting view from inside the LRT tunnel! A train has gone underground just after uOttawa station, travelled through Rideau, Parliament & Lyon stations and emerged at the West portal, just before Pimisi station! It's on it's way to Tunney's!"

David Jeanes is president of Transport Action Canada and a pretty wise man when it comes to all things rail. He agreed the city missed a chance to put on braggly boots and blast its own horn on the weekend.

"I agree. You'd think when there's a good news story, it would be good to have the media and the public aware of it."

He's been watching the construction of LRT pretty closely, partly by relying on weekly updates from the Confederation Line website.

"It's not really engaging the public as well as it could. And I think for a project of this cost, you could certainly afford to have a lot more public information."

After the fiasco of the Rideau Street sinkhole, one might have thought completion of this tricky section - and the tunnel itself - would be a milestone worth a holler or two.

"The actual day that they broke through was never announced," Jeanes said.

"In the east end," he said, "the Blair and Cyrville stations are virtually complete, as are the Belfast yards. Would it be so hard to have public tours one weekend?"

In 2017 we had Kontinuum, after all, during which tens of thousands managed to take an underground acid trip through the partially built Lyon station without actually perishing."

Public safety is obviously an issue and there may be an abundance of caution being exercised by Rideau Transit Group, which is building the system under contract. It may suit them just to finish the job and hand over the keys, forgoing the dog-and-pony part.

But a thing to remember about a paying audience: We love a dog, we love a pony, we don't love a tweet.

The city responded to our inquiries with the following statement:

"An O -train Confederation Line train was moved from the eastern alignment to the western end over the weekend. This move was part of the testing and commissioning of the train, tracks and guideway. As testing schedules shift due to a number of factors, it was not possible to hold a media event at a precise time. Testing from Tunney's Pasture and the West Portal will now occur on a regular basis, as has been underway for several months from Blair to uOttawa Station.

"The City of Ottawa and RTG are focused on meeting the revised Revenue Service Availability date and launching a reliable, efficient and environmentally friendly LRT system in November of this year.

"Updates on the progress of construction and testing are provided at the Finance and Economic Development Committee. The next update on the Confederation Line will be presented on May 1, 2018." - Steve Cripps, director, O -Train construction