



**Ms. Helena Borges**  
**Director General, Surface Transportation Policy (ACG)**  
**27<sup>th</sup> Floor, Tower C, Place de Ville**  
**330 Sparks Street**  
**Ottawa, Ontario**  
**K1A 0N5**

Dear Ms. Borges,

As the Association that represents municipal governments in Manitoba we are pleased to have the opportunity to provide input to the terms of reference for the review of rail freight service in Canada. Over the years municipalities have increasingly become involved in rail related issues as the decline in rail service has led to greater traffic on municipal roads and changed the overall traffic patterns in many municipalities.

While the draft terms of reference certainly cover a significant number of areas, we believe a proper review would not be complete without a serious evaluation of the overall discontinuance process. The recent amendment to the Act dealt with some minor adjustments, however a more complete review of the process is required.

Right now in Manitoba communities are feeling the impact of the abandonment of the Morris to Elgin Line. With other lines in the early stages of the abandonment process, other communities will soon feel the same negative impacts.

The challenge for municipalities is that the movement of the vast majority of products will not stop just because the rail line is gone. What was once transported on rail lines is now moved on municipal roads, increasing the pressure on municipal infrastructure. However the impacts of this shift will be difficult to predict as regular traffic patterns will change with the loss of rail lines. Some products will move on roads to the next closest rail line, while others may just move by road to local urban areas where they will be trucked to their destination. As municipalities work diligently to strategically plan infrastructure investments, the changes brought about by rail line abandonment is counterproductive.

All too often rail service providers are quick to opt for the discontinuance of a rail line rather than explore other options. We firmly believe that many of the lines that have either been abandoned or are slated to be abandoned could be saved if a stronger discontinuance process was in place.

Rail lines are critical components of the overall transportation system in Manitoba and across Canada, and it is imperative that they operate at maximum efficiency. We believe that a level of service review is much needed and will go a long way toward improving the efficiency of the current transportation system. With increasing fuel costs making truck transportation less and less viable, it is even more critical that the rail line system is maximized.

We look forward to the finalization of the terms of reference and the Federal Government moving forward with the review. We would appreciate updates as they become available and see a role for our organization in commenting on the draft recommendations once they are developed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Bell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ron" and the last name "Bell" clearly distinguishable.

Ron Bell  
President