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Brutal treatment by CN is damaging VIA's flagship *Canadian* train all across Canada

TORONTO – During a summer when more Canadians and international travellers than ever are riding VIA Rail's transcontinental train, the *Canadian*, CN is trashing the schedule and the reputation of what is regarded as the world's finest long-distance passenger train.

"The delays CN is creating for the *Canadian* and its habitual lack of concern are out of control," says Transport Action Ontario (TAO) president Robert Wightman. "Whether they care to acknowledge it or not, CN has a contractual service agreement to efficiently and reliably handle the *Canadian* and all VIA passenger trains on its lines. CN is flagrantly disregarding this deal and shoving the *Canadian* into sidings clear across Canada to give its freight trains priority."

VIA's *Canadian* runs for 4,313 km from Toronto to Vancouver on CN lines, for which the former Crown corporation receives more than \$6 million annually to do little more than allow it on its tracks. In 2009, CN forced VIA to lengthen the *Canadian's* schedule because of changes in its freight operations, adding an extra night and more costs to VIA's service. CN has failed to improve the on-time performance of the train and it is now at its lowest level of reliability ever.

"We've heard horror stories about this for quite some time, especially from Northern Ontarians who rely on the *Canadian* to provide their only access to several remote communities," says Northern and Eastern Ontario Rail Network (NEORN) lead spokesperson Eric Boutilier. "TAO and NEORN asked Toronto rail consultant and policy adviser Greg Gormick to look into this matter and provide his analysis. It doesn't paint a pretty picture of the results of CN's actions."

Gormick's analysis found the *Canadian* from Vancouver arrived in Toronto on schedule only once between March 2 and June 22, 2017. In the past week, it hasn't arrived on time at all. The *Canadian* due into Toronto on the morning of Tuesday, August 1 arriving 15 hours and five minutes late, after midnight on Wednesday, August 2.

Because of CN's insistence on the lengthened schedule, VIA now doesn't have enough cars to assemble an extra train in Toronto when the eastbound *Canadian* arrives late from the West. This delays the westbound train's departure and inconveniences hundreds of passengers. As a typical example, the westbound *Canadian* scheduled for Tuesday left 12 hours and 46 minutes late on Wednesday because it required the equipment and crew from the late inbound train.

"This drives costs up astronomically," says Wightman. "Sleeping car passengers, who pay as much as \$9,000 per couple for high-end Prestige Class accommodations in the summer, are provided with hotel rooms at VIA's expense when the Toronto departure is seriously delayed. VIA also provides extra dining car meals to sleeping car patrons when the *Canadian* runs late."

However, coach passengers don't receive complimentary hotel rooms when the train departs Toronto late. Thanks to the Canada 150 Youth Pass VIA offered during this sesquicentennial summer, coach traffic is up more than 40 per cent. There has been considerable grumbling about the delays on social media by many of these new, first-time travellers, who have said it will, indeed, be a "once in a lifetime experience" because they won't ride the *Canadian* again.

This is in sharp contrast with the performance of the *Canadian's* U.S. counterpart, Amtrak's *Empire Builder*, which operates daily on the Chicago-Seattle/Portland route just south of the Canada-U.S. border. As part of a 2015 report for Thunder Bay-Superior North MP Bruce Hyer, Gormick statistically compared the two trains. That analysis is included with this release.

Says Boutilier, "While the *Canadian's* performance has deteriorated, the *Empire Builder* has been consistently running on time, only a few minutes late or even early. This is on a route comparable to CN's, with lots of single-track and extremely heavy freight traffic. Part of that route is owned by Canadian Pacific, which Amtrak considers one of its top service providers."

TAO and NEORN are calling on Transport Minister Marc Garneau to resolve this situation. Both citizens' groups point out the damage done to VIA's *Canadian* is an insult to travellers and taxpayers, who ultimately pay for the abysmal CN service that undermines VIA's best efforts.

"The *Canadian* is a valuable component of our national transportation system, a vital provider of service to remote communities and a strong contributor to Canada's tourism industry," says Wightman. "It's time for Ottawa to call a halt to this shabby treatment of passengers, who should enjoy the same rights as a carload of grain or crude oil. If the government fails to act, then the *Canadian's* world-renowned reputation and marketability will be destroyed,"

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VIA RAIL CANADA TRAIN #2 – THE CANADIAN

ARRIVALS AT TORONTO UNION STATION

SATURDAY, MARCH 4 – WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 2, 2017

SCHEDULED ARRIVAL DATE AT TORONTO UNION STATION	DELAY (HOURS AND MINUTES)
Saturday, March 4	2:53
Tuesday, March 7	3:27
Saturday, March 11	7:41
Tuesday, March 14	6:58
Saturday, March 18	4:46
Tuesday, March 21	2:54
Saturday, March 25	5:33
Tuesday, March 28	8:58
Saturday, April 1	6:55
Tuesday, April 4	3:15
Saturday, April 8	0:30 early
Tuesday, April 11	3:17
Saturday, April 15	3:45
Tuesday, April 18	5:00
Saturday, April 22	1:04
Tuesday, April 25	5:26
Saturday, April 29	1:50
Tuesday, May 2	11:16
Thursday, May 4	9:47
Saturday, May 6	3:36
Tuesday, May 9	2:38
Thursday, May 11	5:36
Saturday, May 13	7:30
Tuesday, May 16	20:33
Thursday, May 18	8:03
Saturday, May 20	12:32
Tuesday, May 23	9:16
Thursday, May 25	2:36
Saturday, May 27	4:37
Tuesday, May 30	7:08
Thursday, June 1	7:25
Saturday, June 3	7:05
Tuesday, June 6	6:18
Thursday, June 8	4:26
Saturday, June 10	7:29
Tuesday, June 13	4:14
Thursday, June 15	3:06
Saturday, June 17	5:55
Tuesday, June 20	6:21
Thursday, June 22	9:20

Due to technical problems, VIA suspended its GPS-based reporting of the on-time performance of the **Canadian** and other long-haul trains outside the Quebec-Windsor Corridor at the end of June and resumed the service in late July.

SCHEDULED ARRIVAL DATE AT TORONTO UNION STATION	DELAY (HOURS AND MINUTES)
Tuesday, July 25	6:01
Thursday, July 27	9:52
Saturday, July 29	11:34
Tuesday, August 1	15:15

AMTRAK'S EMPIRE BUILDER vs. VIA RAIL'S CANADIAN 2013

KEY INDICATOR	AMTRAK EMPIRE BUILDER (DAILY)	VIA CANADIAN (BI-WEEKLY/ TRI-WEEKLY)
ROUTE MILES	2,581	2,680
RUNNING TIME	Chicago-Seattle: 46'10" Chicago-Portland: 45'55"	86'42"
AVERAGE SPEED	Chicago-Seattle: 48 mph Chicago-Portland: 49 mph	32 mph
ROLLING STOCK TYPE	Bi-Level Superliner	Single-Level Budd HEP-1
TRAINSETS REQUIRED	5	4
ONE-WAY TRIPS OPERATED	730	264
TRAIN-MILES OPERATED	1,884,860	707,520
RIDERSHIP	536,391	99,171
PASSENGER-MILES	365,161,290	118,100,000
REVENUES	\$ 72,900,000	\$45,252,000
EXPENSES	\$129,500,000	\$99,807,000
OPERATING LOSS	\$ 56,600,000	\$54,555,000
SUBSIDY PER PASSENGER	\$105.52	\$550.11
SUBSIDY PER PASSENGER-MILE	15.5¢	46.2¢
COST PER TRAIN-MILE	\$68.70	\$141.06
SUBSIDY PER TRAIN-MILE	\$30.03	\$77.10
COST RECOVERY	56%	45%