

Minister Garneau
Confederation Building 458
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6



Dec 10th 2015

RE: ONR Lockout a Potential Risk to Public Safety

Minister Garneau,

At the outset, let me congratulate you on your new position as Minister. I am writing you regarding concerns that have been raised with me about train traffic safety on the Ontario Northland line in Northeastern Ontario.

The people of Northern Ontario have already seen first-hand the risk of rail safety with the repeated train derailments in Gogama and Hornepayne. This is why I am very concerned that trained mechanics of the ONTC have been locked out by the provincial Liberal government. The fact that trains are continuing to roll may be putting safety at risk and violating Federal Transport safety regulations. As Minister of Transport, it is your primary responsibility to put the public safety of Canadians in Northern Ontario first.

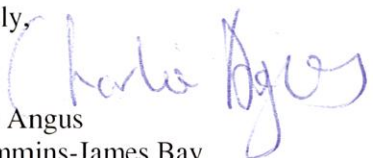
Despite being a provincial corporation, there are aspects of the ONTC's rail service that fall under your jurisdiction. Any train leaving ONR tracks and onto another rail line such as the interchanges at Rouyn, Hearst, and North Bay immediately comes under Transport Canada's jurisdiction. Given that some of these trains carry large loads of acidic materials we have to ensure that safety standards are being met especially as these trains travel through the heart of populated communities. It falls within your mandate to ensure that trains travelling along lines under federal jurisdiction are fully compliant with railway Freight Car Inspection and Safety Rules.

This means that there must be proper safety checks being done, with staffs that are properly certified. Troubling questions have been brought forward to me that I am asking you to investigate whether fully qualified people are in place or whether it is possible that those without updated certification are assuming these roles.

I am concerned that this lock out is part of a strategy by the Wynne government to undermine the public transportation mandate of ONTC. It has been three years since the Wynne government shut down public train service. Since then we have seen promises broken on ensuring adequate public bus transportation. The lock out of staff at the shops in Cochrane and North Bay will set the grounds for selling off more vital assets of northern infrastructure as part of a negative austerity and privatization agenda.

But I am deeply concerned that such political brinkmanship could lead to shortfalls in safety. Therefore I am asking that you intervene to look into the issue to ensure that all federal safety regulations and certifications are being met. I also ask that your department increase its safety checks during this lockout to ensure that this continues to be the case.

Sincerely,


Charlie Angus
MP Timmins-James Bay

