



Western Newsletter

Transport 2000 Canada

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba & Saskatchewan



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Yoho Park brings up the tail end of the Hudson Bay in Dauphin, Manitoba at the end of October. The train featured a dome car during the month long tourist season in Churchill, Manitoba.

Photo credit: Mark Perry

ARRIVALS...AND DEPARTURES

The last four months have certainly seen some rather interesting developments with respect to the Executive of the two western regions of Transport 2000 Canada. Back in September, Transport 2000 BC saw an election of several new people, with George Wooldridge becoming President, Brendan Read taking the Vice President's position, Melissa Northe taking on a position as a director of T2BC and lastly, Martin Wooldridge becoming Membership Secretary.

The desire of these individuals was to consolidate the Prairies into T2BC for various reasons, most of them valid. You have no doubt received communication from various individuals, including George Wooldridge (President of Transport 2000 BC), Peter Lacey (VP West for Transport 2000 Canada), and Martin

Wooldridge (President of Transport 2000 Prairie) explaining the thoughts about the process of merging the two organizations.

From where I sit as editor of this newsletter, I was initially (and still am to a degree) in support of the basic concepts of the merger, however, George, Brendan, Martin and several others wished this process to carry forward regardless of how to properly process the request. This was when we saw questions from Transport 2000 Canada out in Ottawa and several of us here in the prairies about certain aspects of the proposed process and consultation of the membership. No proper answers were ever received. In short, the entire process was rushed, and when the brakes were applied by several people out west, it appeared that Brendan, George, Martin and a couple others

did not wish to exercise some patience to work through the issues and quit the organization.

I am saddened by this news and hope these individuals would reconsider their resignations and work towards the goals of the organization (of which these individuals hoped would continue) and within the established rules of the organization, but I have my doubts this will happen.

In the meantime, we will carry forward and continue working towards our goals of economically and environmentally sustainable public transportation. We can use a hand, and can work with anyone, regardless of your location. Most of our work is done electronically, and if you can help us out with anything, feel free to drop any of us a line.

Jon Calon
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PRAIRIE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Activity levels on behalf of the membership have continued at a high level much of it focused on retaining the Regina-Saskatoon (Craik Subdivision) rail corridor in Saskatchewan. There is a basis for guarded optimism as a favourable short line Feasibility Study has been completed after 20% of the cost had been covered using funds contributed by Stakeholder Committee members. The balance of feasibility Study Funds are covered by a grant of 80% of total cost by a Saskatchewan government program to a maximum of \$25,000. A total of 31 railway lines, in the three Prairie provinces & B.C., (21 in Saskatchewan) were put on the three-year abandonment list in the fall of 2006. The Regina-Saskatoon intercity link was selected as the most obvious line for T-2000 Prairie involvement to ensure retention for the future. However interest has been expressed by community groups and rail based businesses with the aim of ensuring other subdivisions become short line operations, such as the Tyvan (Regina to Stoughton), Lewvan (Regina to Lampman), Northgate (Lampman to the US border), White Fox (Nipawin to Meath Park). Transport 2000 Prairie Executive Members have been acting in a guiding role for many of these efforts. It's unfortunate your Executive and activist membership don't have sufficient human and financial resources to contribute to the effort on a wider basis.

In addition to short line advocacy, summer activities included an extensive letter campaign to raise awareness of the fragile state of VIA's finances and ability to continue operating. While the impact is hard to measure, it was

reassuring on October 11th when \$691.9 million of funding over 5 years was announced for VIA Rail.

As part of the process of building support and increasing advocacy for the retention of rail infrastructure the following are some of the meetings members of the Executive have had on behalf of the membership:

- 9th July - Deputy Minister of Transport for Saskatchewan
- 29th August - Saskatchewan Transportation Company Ray Clayton President & CEO
- 30th August - Inaugural Meeting of the Craik Subdivision Stakeholder Committee at Craik.
- 13th September - Randy Weekes & the Saskatchewan Party Economics Committee
- 24th-25th September - Tourism Summit hosted by Tourism Saskatchewan

In the area of city transit whilst additional low floor buses have been added to city fleets in Regina & Saskatoon, the low cost monthly pass was vetoed by the City of Saskatoon Council. The vote was a 6-5 against continuing the pass program with the Mayor casting the deciding vote. To pre-empt a similar move in Regina the original activists of the Regina Citizens Transit Coalition, with strong representation from T-2 Prairie held a strategy meeting on 20th November in Regina.

I anticipate 2008 being a year of change and new challenges. The Prairie Region membership should expect to receive a separate letter in this regard over the next few weeks.

I do wish all members Season's Greetings and hope the New Year will be rewarding for everyone.

Martin Wooldridge

THE FUTURE OF TRANSPORT 2000 IN THE WEST

I regret that George and Martin Wooldridge have resigned as Transport 2000 BC and Prairie presidents, together with three vice-presidents. However, T2000 will still be active in the West, where we were founded in 1976, and where transportation is such an important part of history and the economy.

T2000 BC and Prairie both still have 5 executives or directors, who will have to deal with filling these vacancies. They are independent organizations, associated with T2000 Canada. The national office has handled memberships at their request for several years and has reimbursed regional expenses such as production of this newsletter.

Western Canada affiliation, local membership processing, or local newsletter funding are not issues for T2000 Canada, but changes to our association with regional groups require consultation and properly documented decisions. It is unfortunate this did not happen.

Past contributions to T2000 Canada by George Wooldridge, (VP West, 2004-2006) and Brendan Read (VP East 2006-2007) are appreciated, also Martin Wooldridge and Jon Bodvarson's work at T2000 Prairie. After an unsuccessful campaign in April 2007 to become national president and VP west, Brendan and George elected to focus on T2000 in the west. I am sorry this effort did not result in a gain for the whole organization.

But I do hope for better success for us all in 2008 and that they can again be part of it. Best wishes for a Happy New Year.

*David Jeanes
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MELISSA'S JOURNEY

On 19th September 2007 Melissa Northe our Prairie Region Director-Disability Issues embarked on a personal travel odyssey to address the T2BC AGM. The financial support of T2B.C., T2 Prairie and T2 Canada together with encouragement and physical support of certain members of the organization from Melville, SK to Vancouver riding our flagship transcontinental train "The Canadian".

Melissa (who suffers from a combination of medical conditions) had multiple objectives by making her journey. These included the following:-

- A personal challenge to overcoming accessibility obstacles
- To draw the widest possible attention to the restrictions encountered by disabled citizens in accessing public transportation by media coverage, interviews and speaking engagements.
- To demonstrate the need and develop support for a Canadian Disability Act (CDA). Similar to the already enacted American Disability Act(ADA), during media interviews and meeting presentations.
- To illustrate the necessity for the recent Supreme Court of Canada (SCOC) ruling, on improving access to the British built Renaissance equipment used primarily in the links between central Canada and the Maritimes to be extended to the Budd built stainless steel rolling stock.

Melissa encountered numerous practical challenges to the concept that transportation should be accessible to all

Canadians, including the disabled community as a universal right. The need for a CDA to guarantee a commitment to universal rights of access to public transportation modes linked to the Charter of Freedom and Rights and provincial legislation was reinforced by the journey.

The journey was enabled by the ability of Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) to provide a wheelchair accessible bus (by advance request) and the VIA on board staff at Melville assisting with the boarding process. Melville has the dubious distinction of having a wheelchair accessible train station but no equipment for assisting the boarding process. Additionally George Wooldridge was available to act in the capacity of Melissa's attendant in both directions of the journey.

The T2 Prairie Executive offer their vote of appreciation to Melissa for undertaking this challenging mission. Without VIA's assistance with travel, the expedition would have been impossible. Our thanks are extended to VIA for their help.

The intent of the journey was not to act as a critique of VIA, which has been so severely financially challenged until the long overdue recent announcement of additional funding, but to draw attention to the fact that additional funding should be granted by government. Specifically the need to address the cost of complying with the SCOC decision as well as the costs associated with extending accessibility to the rest of the passenger car fleet.

Martin Wooldridge

FUNDING FOR HUDSON BAY RAILWAY ANNOUNCED

Early October saw the first visit by Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to the northern Manitoba community of Churchill to make an announcement which Transport 2000 has been wanting for some time.

\$60 million dollars, equally split between the Federal government, the Province of Manitoba and Omnitrax (the parent of the Hudson Bay Railway) will be spent on the railway to hopefully bring it to a state of good repair. Beneficiaries of this improved rail line include the farmers of the Prairie provinces and VIA Rail Canada. The farmers use the rail line to ship their grain to Europe and recently received a shipment of fertilizer imported from Russia through the port. VIA operates the Hudson Bay (pictured on the cover) from Winnipeg to Churchill linking the many communities along the line which have no other ground transportation link.

Transport 2000 Prairie region called for funding to bring the timekeeping and reliability of the railway back to where it should be. Over the past few months, the railway has had a large share of derailments which cut communities off from their neighbors and VIA has had to contend with trains being upwards of 12-14 hours late due to numerous slow orders along the battered line.

In addition to the \$60 million for the railway, the port itself is receiving \$8 million for upgrades and to allow shipping to proceed without delays and to ease imports taking place through the port.

Jon Calon

COMMUTER TRAINS IN CALGARY GARNERING TRACTION

From Rick Bell's column in the Calgary Sun on December 21st, there are rumblings of implementing heavy rail commuter trains in Calgary and surrounding towns.

The Calgary Regional Partnership is working towards an overall plan for the area reaching north to Airdrie, south to High River and Okotoks and west to Cochrane, and that plan will discuss trains for commuters into Calgary's downtown core, in an attempt to reduce traffic congestion and make the commute for the outer residents a lot easier and faster. Cochrane Mayor Truper McBride won his election this past fall by putting commuter trains front and centre in his campaign and said the travel time could be close to 15 minutes compared to an hour for over half of his constituents who work in Calgary. Airdrie Mayor Linda Bruce is also enthusiastic saying Deerfoot Trail is over capacity for the morning rush.

I've said and will say again. Let's make it happen!

Jon Calon.

CALGARY TRANSIT OPENS EXTENSION OF NORTHEAST LRT, PLANNING MORE

On Monday, December 17th, Calgary Transit started service to McKnight-Westwinds station, the first extension of the northeast leg of the city's LRT system. Construction on the adjacent Oliver Bowen Maintenance Facility is continuing through to late 2008 and will provide much needed space for storage, cleaning and maintenance for the trains.

The station was planned to be a terminus station for some time as seen by the size of the parking lot, however, it's not going to hold that status for long. As part of his re-election campaign, Mayor Dave Bronconnier promised to extend the northwest and northeast lines of the LRT to Tuscany / Rocky Ridge and Saddletowne respectively. The latter station and its companion station in Martindale weren't expected to see LRT service for another 15-20 years, but are now slated for completion in 2010. Thankfully, the corridors for the two extensions are already in place and ready for construction.

Jon Calon.

SANTA CLAUS RIDES CALGARY TRANSIT!

The secret's out. Santa Claus takes the bus! Calgary Transit buses have been transformed into reindeer sleighs just in time for Christmas Eve.



Beginning at 7:45 a.m., 10 Calgary Transit buses driven by volunteer transit drivers, will carry Santa Claus and his many Elves to deliver to less fortunate families the Christmas gifts provided by the generosity of both private and corporate citizens of Calgary.

Photo by Jon Calon.

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"Transport 2000 represents the interests of consumers or users of public transport services in Canada and is involved with a variety of transport issues."