



Safe Rail Communities

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The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
c/o Conservative Party of Canada
1204-130 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4

Dear Mr. Harper,

We are writing to you today to ask you how your government will protect Canadians living in rail communities across this country. In light of several explosive derailments of volatile crude oil across the continent in recent months, we would like to know what policy and clear steps the Conservative Party of Canada is prepared to implement in order to prevent another tragedy like that of Lac-Mégantic. Please share with us your plan to address this issue of rail safety. In addition, we ask you to share your strategy to address residents' concerns about idling trains that emit noxious diesel fumes and cause property damage as a result of continual heavy vibration.

Safe Rail Communities is a national grassroots initiative established in March 2014 by a few concerned neighbours in Toronto's west end. Our street runs parallel to the CP rail corridor in Toronto's Junction neighbourhood. The recent increase in long unit trains of DOT-111 tanks carrying volatile crude oil on the tracks within metres of our homes has not gone unnoticed. In 2009, there were 500 tank cars carrying crude oil across Canada. In 2014, the number was 140,000. The projected number for 2016 is 510,000.

Safe Rail Communities advocates for greater transparency and safeguards with respect to the transportation of crude oil and other hazardous materials along rail lines throughout Canada. We are committed to raising awareness at local and national levels, and seek to support Canadians, living in rail communities, around this pressing issue. We expect our government to make public safety a priority, but we bear all the risk in this situation while industry profits.

After a year and a half of intensive research, we have identified the following reasonable recommendations to make the transportation by rail of volatile crude safer:

- Stabilization of volatile crude oil at point of departure

- Increased government regulation and enforcement
 - Monitoring and enforcement of train speeds
- Increased transparency and accountability
 - Unlimited liability and sufficient insurance to cover the full cost of a derailment in a densely populated area
 - Real-time data for First Responders
 - Publication of railway risk assessments, already provided to Transport Canada
- Reversal of recent cuts to the rail safety budget
 - Implementation of mandatory rail safety technology (Positive Train Control, Automated Track Inspection, Automated Rail Car Monitoring)
- Effective Tank Car Improvements
- Independent Risk Analysis

We would be happy to answer any questions you have about our recommendations above. Both the Ministers of Health and of the Environment have confirmed to us that no studies have been done or are planned regarding the impact to our health or our environment of such large quantities of crude oil travelling so closely to our homes, schools, hospitals, and playgrounds.

After speaking to hundreds of concerned Canadians on this matter, we believe that an open dialogue between government and all stakeholders on meaningful solutions is the best way to truly move us towards greater protection. We look forward to hearing from you soon on this important issue that affects thousands of Canadians.

Sincerely,

Patricia Y. Lai
Helen Vassilakos
Co-founders, **Safe Rail Communities**

CC: The Honourable Lisa Raitt, PC, MP, Minister of Transport;
Conservative Party of Canada