



For Immediate Release
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Government Must Take Action on Railway Safety: Liberal Transport Critic

Ottawa – The Conservative government must act immediately to ensure stronger safety measures on Canadian railways, Liberal Transport Critic Joe Volpe said today.

“The Conservative government must implement an immediate action plan to improve railway safety, including more inspectors, increased audits, safety and awareness initiatives, and stronger measures against non-compliance,” said Mr. Volpe. “This government must realize it is accountable to the Canadian people and must take the safety of its citizens seriously.”

Mr. Volpe noted that Canadian National Railway (CN) lines experienced almost one derailment every three days in 2005. This statistic, along with the 32-car derailment of a CN train in Kingston on March 12, 2007, highlights the need for stronger safety measures.

He also noted that the Conservative government has shown a complete disregard for the gravity of the situation, as well as a distinct lack of transparency and accountability, by refusing to release reports demonstrating CN’s lack of compliance with safety standards.

Under the instruction of the former Liberal government, Transport Canada’s Rail Safety Directorate developed a two-phased Action Plan in August 2005 to assess overall compliance and safety of CN. Phase 1 of this Action Plan was an analysis of safety trends and targeted safety inspections to determine the railway’s level of compliance with applicable safety requirements. The second phase was an audit of CN’s safety management practices consequent to the first audit. This second audit found CN well short of its own safety practices.

It was only after Mr. Volpe’s demands during a Parliamentary debate and an Access to Information request that these devastating reports were finally released.

“The recent formation of an advisory panel to review the Railway Safety Act is nothing but a stall tactic and the opportunity for the Conservatives to make partisan appointments for political purposes,” said Mr. Volpe.

“The government has had over a year to act since it received the first report, and has done nothing. The safety of Canadians should be a priority. Instead, all that Canadians receive from this government are delays and inaction. Canadians deserve better.”

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For more information contact:

Office of the Hon. Joe Volpe, P.C., M.P.
Eglinton-Lawrence
(613) 992-6361