

Railfax



December 18, 2009

VIA Rail Bargaining Update

The CAW and VIA Rail continued bargaining the week of December 14 to 18 in Montreal.

The Council 4000 Bargaining Committee, which represents VIA Agreement 1 and 2 members, reports that bargaining this week was more productive than the previous two bargaining sessions with the corporation. VIA removed some of their demands off the bargaining table.

The Local 100 Bargaining Committee, which represents Agreement 3 members, used the week to continue bargaining on improvements to the Apprenticeship provisions in the collective agreement and have continued to make progress on work rules. VIA did remove a number of concessionary demands from the bargaining table.

The union was unable to begin negotiating on any of its monetary demands common to both CAW Bargaining Committees. VIA informed the union on December 14th that the government has not approved a budget for VIA Rail, meaning they are not in a position to discuss any monetary issues. VIA says that they are in a "very difficult situation", as they are in need of additional funding from the federal government to bridge its current shortfall in operating funds. The corporation is uncertain as to when the government will approve a budget. This will undoubtedly delay our negotiations until the New Year.

The union did press VIA on the rumours of reduced train service in eastern and western Canada. VIA said that there have been no discussions as of this date on reducing frequencies to their service. Moreover, VIA says that the Federal Minister of Transport has not tabled any measures to reduce service in any areas of the country, with the exception of the recent reduction in service in northern Manitoba. The CAW also remains concerned about future funding for VIA. It is a consistent battle in our attempts to convince the government, to properly fund this important passenger rail service that links our country together. We are urging our members to contact their Federal MPs and raise the concern of the lack of funding for VIA. Our members across the country must add their important voice to ensure that we protect the jobs and prevent privatization of this important passenger service.

As we expected negotiations will be very difficult but we are determined to reach a solid settlement on behalf of our members at VIA Rail on Agreements 1, 2 and 3. We continue to remind VIA of the solid service that our members provide and that they absolutely deserve a fair and equitable agreement. We will continue to communicate with our members through the Railfax and we would ask you to communicate with your local CAW representative as we move through the process.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our CAW members in the rail sector best wishes as we approach the holiday season and we wish you and your families a very happy New Year with good health and prosperity for the year 2010!

CAW VIA Rail Master Bargaining Committee

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