

# WINDSOR-ESSEX REGIONAL Chamber of Commerce

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November 1, 2011

The Honorable Denis Lebel  
Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Lebel:

The Transportation Committee of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce recently reviewed and discussed the report "Updated Feasibility Study of a High Speed Rail Service in the Quebec City – Windsor Corridor," which was made available on the web site of High Speed Rail Canada. With regard to that study, we wish to make three suggestions.

The first suggestion is that you release the report without any further delay. The debate over high speed rail in Canada has for too long been put on hold in anticipation of this report. Now that the contents of the report have been made public we believe it is time to let that debate begin.

Our second suggestion is that a significant revision of the economic analysis in the report be undertaken to incorporate the effects of cross-border passenger rail service. The current study's terms of reference limit it to analysis of service among domestic origins and destinations. This is an unreasonable restriction given the strength of connections in the Quebec – Windsor corridor with destinations in the United States. Specifically, the Obama administration has committed substantial funds to upgrade tracks in anticipation of high-speed rail service between Chicago and Detroit.

A connection using the existing rail assets between Windsor and Detroit could open a rapid passenger rail link between Toronto and Chicago, significantly enhancing ridership on the Toronto-Windsor segment of the Canadian system.

The Committee is heartened by a recent letter from Amtrak to the Director of Transportation to the State of Michigan (October 21, 2011, attached) pointing out that the completion of the new freight tunnel between Windsor and Detroit provides "a key component in establishing of new cross border passenger rail service."

This type of information should be incorporated in any future study and/or analysis of passenger rail whether it is high speed rail on new infrastructure or higher speed rail which uses existing track and rolling stock.

Our final suggestion is that the planning process for enhanced passenger rail in Canada not be limited to the diesel and electric high-speed options considered in the report. Other diesel options with somewhat lower maximum speeds should also be considered. These *higher-speed* rail options can significantly reduce intercity travel times with much lower cost, especially in terms of capital expenditures on corridor improvements. They also provide the potential to improve service to a large number of medium sized communities that could not be economically served by the highest speed options.

The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce stands ready to participate actively in the effort to enhance and modernize passenger rail service in Canada. We urge you to make this a priority in the Government of Canada's transportation agenda.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Jones  
Chair of the Board



Bill Anderson  
Chair, Transportation Committee

Cc: Hon. Bob Chiarelli, Ontario Minister of Transportation  
Eddie Francis, Mayor, City of Windsor  
Tom Bain, Warden, County of Essex  
Brian Masse, MP, Windsor West  
Joe Comartin, MP, Windsor Tecumseh  
Jeff Watson, MP, Essex  
Teresa Piruzza, MPP, Windsor West  
Hon. Dwight Duncan, Ontario Minister of Finance, MPP, Windsor Tecumseh  
Taras Natyshak, MPP, Essex  
Hon. Perrin Beatty, President & CEO Canadian Chamber of Commerce  
Len Crispino, President & CEO Ontario Chamber of Commerce