

Ottawa Journal: improving railway safety

Our Government has always made public safety and the health and well-being of Canadian families a top priority. We've passed important measures aimed at cracking down on dangerous criminals, enhancing the safety of household products, and improving food safety.

However, we know there is more we can do. This is why we're continuing to take action to help improve the safety of Canada's railways.

While Canada maintains one of the safest rail systems in the world, our Government understands that even one accident is too many. This is why we're hard at work introducing measures to help protect Canadians.

In the past, we invested in improving the safety of railway crossings to better protect drivers and pedestrians from oncoming trains. We also amended the Railway Safety Act, creating tougher legal and monetary penalties for companies who break the law, increasing protection for potential whistleblowers, and mandating that each railway have an executive who is legally accountable if safety measures are not adhered to.

As a part of the Speech from the Throne, our Government built on this strong record and outlined a number of initiatives aimed at improving accountability and safety. One of the measures will require shippers and railways to carry additional insurance, ensuring they will be able to bear the financial cost of any potential accident while saving taxpayers from having to foot the bill.

The Speech from the Throne also outlined our Government's commitment to enhancing safety measures when dangerous goods are being transported by rail. Recently, we proposed a series of regulations that would help deliver on that commitment.

These proposed amendments would mandate that the tank cars which carry dangerous goods, such as crude oil, be built with thicker steel and other improved safety measures that protect the cargo from leaking. At the same time, our Government is continuing to consult with the United States government, manufacturers and other stakeholders, to enhance the safety of future tank cars and retire tank cars that are no longer safe.

Every year, over 30 million shipments of dangerous goods are made by rail in Canada and 99.999 per cent of them reach their destinations without incident. However, our Government will not be complacent. We will remain hard at work and we will take the necessary action to help keep Canadian families and Canada's railways safe.

Canadians can count on our Government to keep railway safety a top priority.

By David Tilson, M.P.