

The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
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Dear Minister:

The recent derailment of a CP Rail train in your mid-town Toronto riding highlights the urgent need to improve rail safety in Canada. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the incident and emergency crews were able to contain the spill of diesel oil.

We may not be so fortunate next time.

Tens of thousands of tank cars containing dangerous goods, such as crude oil, ethanol, chlorine, ammonia and propane, travel on the CP Rail line that passes through the heart of Toronto and other communities. Now is the time to take steps to protect the lives and properties of Canadians living within a 1 km radius of the rail line.

Transport Minister Marc Garneau has declared rail safety to be his top priority. It is time for the good will shown by the Minister and a number of Members of Parliament to be translated into action.

There are a series of steps that could be taken in the short term, such as lowering the speed and length of trains travelling through densely populated neighbourhoods. As well, the phase-out of unsafe, outdated tank cars, currently set for 2025, needs to be accelerated and new safety technologies, like Positive Train Control and electronic brakes need to be mandated to help stop accidents before they occur.

Of course, the long-term solution is to relocate the transportation of dangerous goods outside of densely populated areas. This is something that was recommended earlier this year in the review of the Canadian Transportation Act by David Emerson. Ottawa needs to work with the railways, provincial and local governments and transportation agencies to identify bypass options and implement them as soon as possible.

I welcome the opportunity to hear how you are taking real action on this issue. For more information on the issues involved and some possible solutions, please look at railsafetyfirst.com.

Yours sincerely,