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Transportation ministers raise concerns over rail safety

By Staff The Canadian Press Global News

TORONTO – The transportation ministers of Ontario and Quebec are expressing concern to their federal counterpart over the increasing number of train derailments.

Steven Del Duca and Robert Poeti sent a letter to Transport Minister Lisa Raitt on Saturday over what they call the growing number of “very serious and unacceptable train derailments” in the province and across Canada.

The two provinces are calling on the federal government to do more to improve rail regulations.

On Saturday Del Duca visited the site of a fiery CN train derailment just outside of Gogama in northern Ontario.

He says while Transport Canada is responsible for the transportation of dangerous goods, all levels of government must work together to ensure that a similar incident does not happen again.

The [derailment on March 7](#) caused numerous tank cars carrying crude oil to catch fire and spill into a local river system.

It destroyed the track and a bridge and causing undetermined environmental damage. There have been three recent CN derailments in northern Ontario, including two along a 40-kilometre stretch of track about an hour south of Timmins.

On Wednesday, the Canadian government [proposed tough new standards](#) for rail tank cars used to transport crude oil. The proposal would require the cars to have outer “jackets,” a layer of thermal protection, and thicker steel walls.

Del Duca and Poeti also want Raitt to set up a meeting to provide an update on the action Transport Canada is taking on the issue and the implementation of

recommendations made in the Transportation Safety Board's report on the 2013 Lac-Mégantic disaster in Quebec.

"There have been a number of very serious train derailments, including the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, and most recently in northern Ontario," the letter states.

"We understand that some new safety regulations have been implemented recently by the federal government. This being said, we urge the federal government to further strengthen safety practices on rail lines, particularly for the transportation of hazardous and flammable goods, especially crude oil and ethanol."

The letter states that the two ministers are concerned that more must be done to better protect communities and the environment, calling it "a growing issue for our provinces."

Oil shipments moved by Canadian railways went from 500 car loads in 2009 to 160,000 in 2013, according to the Railway Association of Canada.

The letter also highlights the fact that the Transportation Safety Board of Canada has warned Transport Canada that the upgraded standards for new tank cars built for the transportation of flammable liquids are not sufficient, and that more needs to be done to prevent dangerous fires and explosions when accidents occur.