

Northeastern Ontario Rail Network

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Supporting Passenger Rail service in the North is in the 2021 Ontario Budget!!

It took 8 ½ years of advocating for the return of the Northlander.

March 24, 2021

Today the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network (NEORN) is excited to announce the Ontario government has committed to funding the next step to moving forward on the project with \$5M and hopefully then to the final stage: putting ‘bums in seats’ on the train between Toronto and Timmins/Cochrane.

Quoted from Page 106 Ontario Budget 2021 –

(<https://budget.ontario.ca/2021/pdf/2021-ontario-budget-en.pdf>)

*“Ontario is committed to reviewing initiatives to meet transportation needs in the North to optimize bus services and to develop options for passenger rail services across Northern Ontario. In keeping with the draft Transportation Plan for Northern Ontario, the government is accelerating work to examine safety and infrastructure needs for potential future passenger rail service between Toronto, North Bay, Timmins and Cochrane. Ontario is investing **\$5 million** to support planning and design work. An initial business case is being finalized and is expected to be released in spring 2021. “*

Our expectation is the next steps in the ONTC/Metrolinx Business Plan will be to confirm costs and service plans as well as to work with CN on a track audit of the CN line south of North Bay to Toronto and ensure the performance expectations will be met. It is critical for all parties to continue engaging with key stakeholders including municipalities, First Nations, Colleges and Universities as well as the general public.

Howie and I thank all those invested in getting the Northlander back on the track for their ongoing and never wavering enthusiastic support over the last 8 ½ years. As Co-Chairs of the Northeastern Ontario Rail Network advocacy group, we were both holding our breath with this budget – hoping to hear about the return of passenger rail service to northeastern Ontario. And we did! We will continue to follow the MTO closely to ensure we continue to move forward at a good pace.

Next, we look forward to the soon to be published ONTC/METROLINX Business Plan.

Lucille Frith & Howie Wilcox

Co-Chairs

Northeastern Ontario Rail Network

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