

March 27, 2026

Via Email: [mark.carney@parl.gc.ca](mailto:mark.carney@parl.gc.ca)

The Right Honourable Mark Carney  
Prime Minister of Canada

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2

**RE: Canada's Long Distance, Regional and Remote VIA Rail Fleet Procurement**

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of 320,000 Unifor members across Canada, including those in the manufacturing and transportation sectors. Our members proudly build and operate transit vehicles, buses, autos, heavy-duty trucks, planes and ships. Our union has long advocated for procurement policies and decisions that benefit Canadian workers and strengthen our own economy.

Unifor members work in national and regional transit services, including at Via Rail. Transit and transportation services serve as a vital backbone for the country, moving people and goods across our vast nation while supporting local and regional economies. Such transit systems are critical to defend the strength and integrity of our economic sovereignty.

Recently, this economic sovereignty has been under sustained attack by the trade war launched by the United States. Unifor members have been on the front line of this trade war since day one. As U.S. President Trump doubles down on national security tariffs and attempts to circumvent the verdict of the U.S. Supreme Court overruling his illegal tariffs, Canada finds itself at a critical juncture, with large segments of our economy at real risk of further damaging tariffs.

At this very moment, Canada should be reinforcing protections for Canadian workers and ramping up our industrial base. Yet we are facing a situation where the federal government may hand over a \$3 billion procurement contract to a company manufacturing in the United States, denying Canadian workers the economic benefits of this opportunity.

The federal government is in the process of selecting a winning bid for the replacement of VIA Rail's long-distance fleet. This project is more than just a procurement contract but amounts to a generational investment in Canada's national transit system.

Unifor supports the Government of Canada's recent establishment of an ambitious Buy Canadian policy. The policy should present many opportunities for Canadian workers.

Unfortunately, since the policy only affects federal procurement solicitations launched after December 16, 2025, and since the VIA Rail tender process started in 2024, it is our understanding that the new Buy Canadian rules will not apply. It defies logic that the federal government would announce a Buy Canadian policy and then immediately exempt the largest rail procurement in recent memory.

There is too much at stake in the current economic climate to risk such an outcome. What's at stake is the creation of highly skilled, good-paying jobs at a time when thousands of manufacturing jobs have been lost due to Trump's tariffs. What's at stake is boosting demand for Canadian-made aluminum and steel, along with the long-term survival of a railway car building industry that has been a cornerstone of Canadian manufacturing for more than a century. And what's at stake is the kind of resilient economy Canadians have demanded and want to build.

A failure to apply Buy Canadian rules to the VIA Rail contract runs the risk of repeating the deeply flawed 2018 procurement, which saw a \$1 billion fleet contract go to a foreign manufacturer over domestic alternatives. This process led to an expensive fleet that has been marred by its inability to handle Canadian winters, contributing to frequent VIA Rail cancellations and travel disruptions. Our members have experienced first-hand the challenges of working in trains that simply do not work.

Despite these problems, the federal government could now repeat the same mistake.

Canada is facing an unprecedented crisis, with our sovereignty being threatened on a daily basis by a U.S. administration that has shown zero appetite for compromise or reciprocity. Buy America policies aggressively protect U.S. railway car manufacturing, restricting the access of Canada-built rolling stock to the American market.

To effectively confront threats to our economic security, indispensable tools such as the government's Buy Canadian policy must be adaptable. That means applying them to procurements like the one for VIA trains, ensuring that Canada builds its domestic manufacturing capacity while workers in Canada reap the benefits.

Prime Minister, your government is faced with a clear choice: prioritize made-in-Canada transit manufacturing or ship jobs to the United States.

Let's not allow arbitrary timelines and operational technicalities to stand in our way of good Canadian jobs. Let's not allow \$3 billion in procurement funds to flow south of the border. Let's keep our tax dollars here, so that Canadians can build the railway cars that connect Canadians from one end of the country to the other.

We believe there has never been a better time to expand our manufacturing capacity and supply chains right here in Canada, and to protect Canadian jobs. By opting to build the VIA Rail fleet here in Canada, you will be investing in the strength and reliability of a national passenger rail service that will serve generations of Canadians to come. And you will be investing in building a more resilient Canadian economy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lana Payne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lana" being more prominent than the last name "Payne".

**Lana Payne**  
**National President**

Cc: Steven Mackinnon, Minister of Transport  
Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry  
François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Finance

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