



Backgrounder

Spring 2007

VIA Rail in Eastern Canada

Passenger rail has been part of transportation in Eastern Canada for 170 years, since the New Brunswick and Quebec Rail Road Company was incorporated in 1836. Home to the *Ocean*, VIA's Eastern transcontinental service and the oldest scheduled train service in the country, the Eastern provinces are also the focus of *Easterly Class*, VIA's newest innovation in rail service. Passenger rail here has continued to evolve as a uniquely Eastern service, to meet the needs of Eastern Canadians.

Train services in the Gaspé Peninsula, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia are managed by VIA's Eastern service team, responsible for developing, marketing and delivering services in partnership with the people, communities and businesses served by passenger rail. Some 300 VIA employees live and work in Eastern Canada. With many stations and passenger facilities across the region, a train maintenance facility in Halifax, and a telephone sales office in Moncton, staff work closely with, and listen to, the people they serve. VIA is dedicated to continually improving the level, quality and financial performance of passenger rail services in the East.

Connecting people and communities

VIA's core mandate is to provide the people who live and travel here with safe, affordable, reliable transportation, 12 months a year. Passenger trains connect Halifax to Moncton and Montreal, Gaspé to Matapedia, the Maritimes to central Canada and beyond.

Three times weekly in each direction, the ***Chaleur*** travels 1,031 kms from Montreal, through the small towns of the south shores of the St. Lawrence, to the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula, with stops in Charny, Rivière-du-Loup, Rimouski, Mont-Joli, Matapedia, Carleton, Percé and Gaspé. *Comfort Class* service provides travelers with comfortable, affordable transportation, while *Comfort* sleeper class offers the option of a private or semi-private bedroom for the overnight journey.

The ***Ocean*** travels the 1,346 km between Montreal and Halifax six times weekly in each direction. It travels the same route as the *Chaleur* along the St. Lawrence to Matapedia before heading south through Campbellton, Bathurst, Miramichi, Moncton, Amherst and Truro. Like the *Chaleur*, the *Ocean* offers affordable basic transportation with the option of an economical sleeper service.

During the summer months the *Ocean* also offers VIA's new *Easterly Class* service launched in 2005 – an innovative tourism service combining comfortable accommodations, dining, entertainment and culture in a unique Maritime learning experience.

Working with *Acadian's* intercity bus services, VIA's stations at Halifax, Truro, Moncton and Miramichi provide convenient connections for communities throughout the region to and from the passenger rail network.

Community Partnerships

VIA plays an important role in the life of the communities served by passenger rail. Especially in smaller communities, VIA's passenger stations are often not only historic landmarks, but centres for commercial development and activity. Working with local businesses and community organizations, VIA has invested \$80 million in recent years to upgrade and modernize passenger stations throughout the region, with major redevelopment projects in Halifax, Moncton, Campbellton and Bathurst. In Moncton this investment included new facilities to house one of VIA's Telephone Sales Offices (TSO). Staff at the Moncton TSO handle travel inquiries, reservations and ticket sales from customers throughout central and eastern Canada and the eastern United States.

VIA's Halifax maintenance facility carries on a long tradition of high quality train maintenance and engineering expertise. In fact, on June 17th 2007, VIA's Eastern Services Equipment Maintenance team will mark a safety milestone that will set an example for the entire country: ten years without a single work-related injury requiring time off from the job.

Partnerships for the future

VIA's Eastern Service Team regularly consults with local organizations, businesses, tourist agencies and others to enhance the value of rail passenger service to the region. In some cases, these partnerships help address a specific need – like the creation of a special Remembrance Day train in November that brought veterans from Halifax to Ottawa to take part in the 2005 *Year of the Veteran* ceremonies. The response to this initiative was so positive that VIA once again collaborated with local organizers to host the 2006 Troop Train and 2006 War Brides train.

These consultations also help to shape the very future of passenger rail service in Eastern Canada. VIA recently asked tour operators, customers and tourism partners how passenger rail could best support the needs of the region. VIA found a significant demand for a high-quality tourism service that would support the regional tourism industry. The result is VIA's new *Easterly Class* service on the *Ocean* – a travel service that is not only introducing more travellers to the region's tourism opportunities, but will increase revenues on the *Ocean* itself.

These revenues, in turn, help to improve the bottom line for all of VIA's Eastern services, allowing VIA to fulfill its basic mandate -- providing affordable, year-round transportation to Eastern Canadians, and improving this service for the future.

VIA Rail Canada's Eastern Transcontinental, **The Ocean** provides safe and reliable transportation six times a week, 12 months a year between Halifax and Montreal. VIA offers direct access to 13 communities throughout New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and intermodal connections from Moncton, Truro and Halifax to communities within the two provinces as well as PEI, Newfoundland and Labrador. During peak summer months, **Easterly class** on board **The Ocean**, caters to discriminating leisure travelers by delivering *A Maritime Learning Experience* that unveils the culture, economy and people that make up Eastern Canada.

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