

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

## **CAW Opens Negotiations with VIA Rail**

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(Ottawa) - The CAW has opened contract talks with VIA Rail today in Ottawa, with a goal of reaching a new collective agreement for the three bargaining units covered by the union contract.

“VIA Rail offers an important service to Canadians, connecting us from coast to coast to coast – but without the work performed by CAW members, VIA would not be the quality rail line that it is,” said CAW President Ken Lewenza. “A fair agreement on job security will be imperative to reaching a new contract.”

The current agreement expires on December 31.

“There are real challenges facing our bargaining committees in light of the current restraints crown corporations like VIA Rail are experiencing,” said CAW Council 4000 President Barry Kennedy, representing on and off-board customer service, baggage and clerical workers. “Nevertheless, we remain optimistic that the experience of our bargaining committees and having the full support of the union will allow us to negotiate a fair agreement that meets the needs of our membership and VIA.”

“Part of the goal in this round of negotiations will be to secure work for CAW members on maintenance and infrastructure programs implemented through capital improvement funds that came about in part from lobbying efforts by the CAW to properly fund VIA,” said CAW Local 100 President John Burns, representing skilled trades members working in maintenance. “We believe this work should not be contracted out, but performed by CAW members who have the necessary skills for the job.”

The CAW represents more than 2,000 workers at VIA in the on-train and clerical services, including ticket vendors and maintenance.

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