



CORPORATION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF ESQUIMALT

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August 5, 2022

The Honourable Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transport
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Honourable Minister:

I am writing to you today to provide with a copy of the resolution the Township of Esquimalt has passed supporting immediate action be taken on the former E&N Rail Corridor.

That Council support the Island Corridor Foundation to encourage the governments of Canada and BC to make infrastructure grants to restore train service on the E&N rail corridor and to specifically, as the first priority, to establish commuter train service from Langford to Victoria

The rail corridor is owned by the Island Corridor Foundation, a not-for-profit partnership between First Nations and local governments. The corridor runs the extent of Vancouver Island providing the only connection between the CRD and communities north of the Malahat other than Hwy 1.

As you are aware rail operations all but shut down in 2011 due to poor track conditions. Since then, there has been a consistent effort and calls for the rehabilitation of the line to restore rail service to the island. The line is still considered an active railway however the courts have determined that without significant investment rail service is not likely to be restored. While the corridor is currently being held for railway purposes it cannot be held indefinitely; the courts have directed the Federal and Provincial governments to make a determination about the future of the corridor by March 2023.

The rail corridor bisects the township of Esquimalt and runs alongside the Federal properties of Esquimalt Graving Dock and the Department of National Defence. The corridor can and should play a key role in transporting the over 5,000 federal employees to and from their homes to work each day. This is of particular importance for many of our military personnel who are challenged to afford homes in the Capital Regional District (CRD). Rather, they are forced to commute from areas outside of the CRD each day, often over the single highway connecting the CRD with the rest of island. Last fall we saw a graphic

display of the fragility of that highway and the risks associated with our reliance upon it when washouts from heavy rains closed the highway for several days.

This is a complex challenge with many stakeholders including the many First Nations members of the Island Corridor Foundation. It will necessarily require engagement, consultation, and reconciliation with those Nations as a first step in moving forward. The importance of the corridor to our island today and our future, cannot be understated and if lost the cost to recreate it would far exceed the cost to restore what we have.

We implore you to work jointly with the Province and the Island Corridor Foundation to make the restoration of rail service to the island a reality.

Please don't let us lose this corridor.

I look forward to your response.

Respectfully,


Barbara Desjardins
Mayor, Township of Esquimalt

cc: Regional Mayor and Councils
[Island Corridor Foundation](#)
[Songhees Nation Chief and Council](#)
[Esquimalt Nation Chief and Council](#)
[Capital Regional District Board](#)
[Capt\(N\)/Capv J. Jeffrey Hutchinson, Base Commander, CFB Esquimalt](#)
[Laurie Hurst, Chief Administrative Officer, Township of Esquimalt](#)
[Debra Hopkins, Manager of Corporate Services, Township of Esquimalt](#)

BD/sc