

Update on VIA Rail passes

As our membership is aware, VIA Rail has not properly implemented the arbitrator's award of CROA 4409 regarding VIA's unilateral changes to the longstanding Rail Pass Policy. This change represented significant material changes to our members' free pass privileges.

As a result of this, the parties - Unifor, VIA Rail and CROA Arbitrator Christopher Albertyn – held a conference call on the matter on August 24th. Unifor, specifically Brother Abe Rosner who presented the case at CROA before Arbitrator Albertyn, asked the arbitrator to order VIA Rail to comply with the arbitration award.

The arbitrator agreed and ordered VIA to advise all employees, as well as retirees, that their family members' free pass privileges have been reinstated. The exact wording of the order is still being worked out. There are other issues regarding the Rail Pass Policy that needs to be determined, such as tax issues.

It was also clearly confirmed that the Union never asked, and the arbitrator never ordered, that VIA has to remove the new "perks" it had implemented, such as Business and Sleeper class for employees and retirees, and 50% discounts for friends. If VIA goes ahead and removes those provisions, it would be unfortunate, but it is strictly VIA's own choice.

The Corporation has also claimed, for the first time in its history, that members and retirees must pay tax for family members' travel. The Union is vigorously opposing this position and wonders why VIA would do this now, when the tax law hasn't changed in this regard since the 1980s at least.

The parties will be meeting with Arbitrator Albertyn again on the morning of September 9th in the CROA offices in Montreal with respect to VIA's application to the arbitrator for a "reconsideration request" of CROA 4409. All of these other issues will be discussed further at that time.

We will post any new information of this matter as it becomes available.

In solidarity,

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