

# Regulations ensure transport is safe despite derailments, says Raitt

BY JESSICA BARRETT, POSTMEDIA NEWS JANUARY 13, 2014 VANCOUVER SUN

Federal Transport Minister Lisa Raitt assured Canadians Sunday that rail transport of hazardous materials is safe, despite mounting instances of high-profile derailments and the introduction of new safety regulations.

"The transportation system is safe," Raitt told Global's The West Block on Sunday.

"We have transported dangerous goods across this country for the last 100 years. But the reality is that the type of dangerous good can change and we want to ensure we're doing everything we can to ensure there's safe travel."

Raitt's comments came the day after 150 evacuated residents of Plaster Rock, N.B., were finally allowed to return to their homes after a train carrying crude oil and liquid petroleum derailed and burst into flames last week. Also on Saturday, a coal train derailment in Burnaby sparked concerns over environmental contamination after the hazardous cargo spilled into a protected waterway.

The new rail safety regulations, developed in response to the Lac-Mégantic, Que., disaster last July and published Saturday in the Canada Gazette, require increased record-keeping, testing and inspection of hazardous materials being transported.

They also require improved safety requirements for new DOT-111 rail cars, the type most commonly used to ship hazardous materials. Going forward, the cars will need thicker shells and "top-fitting protection," in accordance with regulations already in place in the United States, according to the Gazette, while new design requirements will come into play for tank cars carrying liquefied natural gas or ethylene refrigerated liquid.

The regulations will not apply to the older model DOT-111 cars involved in the Lac-Mégantic, Que., explosion and the Plaster Rock derailment. But Raitt was

adamant the older cars, which have been identified by the Transportation Safety Board as particularly prone to puncture during derailment, are not cause for concern.

"These cars are safe. They can transport the goods and they do so safely 99.997 per cent of the time. What we want to do is get it better and do it right in consultation with all parties, the shippers, the rail companies and of course our cousins in the United States."

She added there would be "more to come" regarding regulations for DOT-111 cars.

Critics warn the lag time before getting new and improved cars on North American railways will leave communities vulnerable for the foreseeable future.

Jeff Rubin, a CIBC economist, warned the older-model cars, which carry 70 per cent of hazardous goods shipped in Canada, are anything but safe.

"They are the tanker cars that have been involved in virtually every explosion," he told The West Block.

With oil transport projected to double along North American rail lines in the next several years, Rubin said it is only a matter of time until an accident occurs in a large urban area, such as Toronto or Chicago.

"I think what it underscores is that the Achilles heel of the North American energy revolution - this huge increase in oil production from the oilsands and shale (gas) - is that we don't have the transportation infrastructure to move it."