

Canada safety board urges faster phase-out of old rail tankers

BY [RANDALL PALMER](#)

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(Reuters) - The Transportation Safety Board of Canada renewed its call on Tuesday for the speedy phase-out of older oil-by-rail cars in light of last summer's inferno that killed 47 people in an oil train explosion in the Quebec town of Lac-Megantic.

"A long and gradual phase-out of older-model cars simply isn't good enough," Transportation Safety Board Chair Wendy Tadros told a House of Commons committee examining whether Canada's safety is adequate as much more oil is sent by rail.

This echoed remarks she made on Jan. 23 when her agency and the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board made initial recommendations stemming from the Lac-Megantic crash and other oil-by-rail accidents.

Regulators are focusing on DOT-111 tanker cars which are used to carry oil. New DOT-111s are being built to safer standards but the question is what to do with the large number of older ones. Tadros said all the cars in the Lac-Megantic disaster were older.

"As you can see from this photo, even the cars at the end of the train... - these are the cars that were moving relatively slowly when they derailed - even those cars were very badly damaged, and that has taught us something," Tadros said.

The railways on both sides of the border, which often do not own the tanker cars but which can become liable in an accident, would like aggressive phase-outs of the older DOT-111s.

The U.S. Railway Supply Institute, representing tank car owners and lessors, had estimated in December that modification of the legacy tank cars could take 10 years but in February it suggested the time for addressing the highest risks could be shortened if crude and ethanol tank cars were modified first.

Transport Minister Lisa Raitt has 90 days, till April 23, to respond to the Transportation Safety Board's recommendations.

Because of how tanker cars travel back and forth across the U.S. border, Canadian policymakers want to see safety standards implemented jointly with the United States.

Raitt said in early January that the two countries would introduce new safety standards "fairly soon".

One idea that has been broached has been to force the railways to avoid cities when they move [crude oil](#), but railroads tend to go through cities and the goods sometimes leave from downtown ports.

"These railways were built throughout Canada, and cities grew up along the railways," Tadros said.

"I'm not sure that it's possible to avoid every urban area. We would rather see a systemic approach that would have those older cars phased out." (Editing by [Jeffrey Hodgson](#) and [Chizu Nomiya](#))