

VIA riders await decision on service

Georgetown's VIA Rail service is in no immediate danger but things could change if a federal government mandate to reduce or cancel service comes down this June.

An average of four arrivals and departures from Georgetown to Toronto and London leave the Georgetown station each day. The service is used by 67 people per day, departing from and arriving at the Georgetown station.

And things will remain the same until a VIA report comes out in June. Following that report, federal Transport Minister Benoit Bouchard could decide to cancel or reduce services.

Mr. Bouchard "is the one person who knows" if VIA service will continue after a 20-year prediction comes out in VIA's June report, said VIA spokesman Richard Gauthier.

VIA Rail is a fully tax-funded federal crown corporation.

Georgetown is connected to the rest of the province, and ultimately the rest of the country, by VIA Rail transfer points at Toronto and London. The service runs to and from Georgetown seven days a week. Slight arrival and departure changes show up on Sunday, where early morning trains are cancelled.

Despite a federal government threat to close down the service

with its 30-year-old equipment and zero-profit margin, the public has reacted strongly in favor of maintaining VIA, said Mr. Gauthier.

While recognizing VIA's weaknesses, he says past annual reports have requested funding for updated equipment to replace trains built in the 1950s.

"The equipment is safe - very safe - but (using it) is like a regular person driving a 1957 Chevrolet and using it to commute from London to Toronto every day. How often would you have to get that car fixed?" he said.

Mr. Gauthier added that replacement parts often can't be found.

Meetings held by the National Transportation Agency, a federal government regulatory body are planned for April in Windsor and Toronto and should drum up support for VIA.

The government will have to take public opinion into account, said Mr. Gauthier.

"The federal government will have to take a very hard look at things if they are thinking of eliminating VIA Rail, he said.

There will be little impact on local employment in Georgetown if service is cut or reduced because there's only one person employed on a commissioned basis, according to VIA Rail. A sales agent sells tickets 30 minutes before departure time.



Anti-Poverty Marchers

Five anti-poverty protesters spent day 14 of their 16-day march on Highway 7 in Halton Hills. The marchers are part of a 80-member group meeting in Queen's Park Saturday at 2 p.m. for a rally. Left to right are Don Kent, Tim McLeod, Rennie Elms, Lena Seigers and John Clarke. (Herald photo)

Protesters march on Queen's Park

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benefit increases from 10.1 to 22.5 per cent.

The anti-poverty group included marchers from London, Guelph, Hamilton and the surrounding areas.

They have been marching since Good Friday, stopping only to sleep and have meals and coffee breaks.

"We're all tired but the response has been absolutely terrific," said Mr. Clarke.

The group began in Windsor and proceeded west on Highway 2 to Guelph.

After travelling west on Highway 7 through Acton to Georgetown, the group was to proceed south on Mississauga Road

where they were to stay in Streetsville overnight.

From Mississauga Road they travelled to Eglinton Avenue west to Islington Avenue, where they were to proceed south to the Queensway. They will follow the Queensway, Queen Street and Queen's Park, their final destination.

The rally began at 2 p.m. today.

Activity evening for parents

Excitement is mounting as plans for the first ever professional activity evening for parents begin to fall into place. This unique event will take place at Acton High School on Friday, April 21 from 6 p.m. until 10 p.m. The program includes a dramatization by the Lord Elgin Players; an informal dinner; guest speaker Fiona Nelson, former Chair of the Toronto Board of Education; and a wide variety of workshop selections.

Fiona Nelson is in her seventh term as a school trustee for a downtown ward in Toronto, and has been elected Chair of the Toronto Board three times. She has had memberships on the Toronto Planning Board, the

Toronto Historical Board, and the Toronto Board of Health.

For 1986, 1987 and 1988 she was elected President of the Association of Large School Boards in Ontario. She is an active member of committees developing educational materials about AIDS for the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Board of Health.

For many years she has had speaking, writing and broadcasting assignments across Canada. Her presentation for the parent evening will focus on "Partnerships for Success," a fitting introduction to the celebration of Education Week in Ontario.

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