



Blockade Effects: Significant and Destructive

By the time this newsletter is published, hopefully the blockades and closure of the rail system will be resolved. If not, then everyone will clearly understand the enormous importance of a working rail system to our economy and every Canadian's daily life.

Media coverage of the recent strike identified many key commodities that quickly become scarce in Atlantic Canada when rail service is unavailable. The more lengthy blockade has added to the list of crippling economic impacts that occur when our single rail connection to the rest of Canada is severed.

In addition to quickly depleting supplies of propane that heat homes and power farms and businesses, other commodities like airplane de-icing fluid are becoming scarce. Demonstrating the interconnectedness of our transportation systems, the lack and recent unreliability of rail service is threatening short- and long-term shipping volumes throughout our region's port system.

The list continues to grow, prices climb, and the urgency to remove the blockades accelerates. While patience is a prerequisite of reason over force, it is essential our elected leaders be reminded of several facts that underlie the need to quickly establish rules to avoid future disruption to our economy.

In relation to the impact of disruptions, it should be recognized our transportation systems are mutually reliant and the removal of one will eventually affect other modes. Following the resolution of disruptions, the return to normal operations extends well beyond resumption of service. It is estimated that after 10 days, it will take up to 6 weeks to clear the backlog of goods and commodities stranded at manufacturers and ports that are reaching a breaking point.

All of this contributes to shrinkage of the economy as a whole. Sales lost due to lack of efficient shipping options are unlikely to be regained. Investment decisions based on a reliable transportation system will likely be lost or at minimum delayed until the root causes of the disruptions are addressed.

Our current federal government appears to have committed philosophically to the very laudable goal of reconciliation, but this commitment has not translated into a workable solution. Without a path to respectful and reliable consultation and informed consent, whether with First Nations or environmental activists, our court decisions will become increasingly ineffective and our attractiveness as a good place to invest will diminish, to the detriment of job creation and economic growth.

ACC has participated in communicating the concerns of Atlantic Canadians to the Prime Minister and Atlantic members of parliament via letters and the media. However, the message is often overshadowed by the more provocative actions of protesters. The chamber network urges its members and all Canadians to lend their voices to the message that our future prosperity depends on a regulatory environment that accommodates dissent and creates a balance that embodies the desires of all Canadians, not simply those who assume they can impose their will on the nation through civil disobedience.