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**Attention: Gerald Flood, Comment Editor**  
**Op Ed from Merv Tweed, President, OmniTRAX Canada**

**OmniTRAX: Committed to safe transportation in the north**

Recently there have been discussions in the press about OmniTRAX's intent to ship light sweet unrefined oil from The Pas to Churchill, and then on to markets in eastern North America and western Europe. I recently left public service to take on a new calling here at home because I was compelled by the potential for growth and prosperity in northern Manitoba. It's in that spirit I want to share some information about OmniTRAX Canada and our plans.

OmniTRAX Canada is a Manitoba company, run by Canadians. We live in Manitoba, and have employees who live and raise their families here. OmniTRAX bought the Hudson Bay Railway and the Port of Churchill in 1997 because we believed in the promise of the north. Since then we've invested \$110 million into the rail line and port, which is in addition to the \$40 million that Manitoba and Canada have invested in the rail line.

Much of that investment has come within the last five years. As a result, we have seen a dramatic reduction in rail incidents, while also achieving significantly improved travel times along the Bay Line. Most importantly, the improvements to the rail line between The Pas and Churchill stabilized the Bay Line and made it safer.

There are those who are trying to give the impression that shipping oil and gas along the Bay Line and through Churchill is a new concept. That's simply not true. What they don't acknowledge is that petroleum products have been shipped up to Churchill safely for over 50 years.

For the concern expressed about safe transportation of oil and gas along the Bay Line and through Churchill, here's one simple fact: there has never been an oil spill along the Bay Line or in Churchill. It's not credible to claim, as some have, that it's certain this will happen. It's also a disservice to our employees who work hard every day to ensure that we safely move passengers and product through the north.

We have extensive training and contingency measures in place. We meet, and in many cases exceed, all government regulations. Our company has significant experience transporting petroleum products using leading rail safety procedures that we regularly review. We partner with leading industry health, safety and environmental experts to advise on all areas of the business, including the safe handling and transportation of petroleum. We will continue to make every effort to ensure that safety comes first.

Two years ago the federal government legislated the end of the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly, creating an entirely new grain market. Since then, OmniTRAX has redoubled its efforts to diversify the commodity mix the railway and port handle. It is clear that transporting just grain will not be enough to sustain our business. In the *Federal-Provincial Task Force on the Future of Churchill* published in January of this year, both the federal and

provincial governments recognized that shipping light sweet crude is an opportunity worth exploring.

We're committed to getting this right. We share the view that this project must be done giving safety and the environment foremost consideration. We have already met with and listened to community leaders and citizens in towns located on the Bay Line, including The Pas, Thompson, and Churchill, with First Nations, with representatives of towns and hamlets in Nunavut, and with first responders. We will continue to listen to and meet with all those concerned.

Merv Tweed  
President, OmniTRAX Canada