

In Canada the coasting trade laws restrict the operation of ships from one point to another to Canadian or British ships, depending upon the area. To enable a ship of any foreign country to engage in such operations, application has to be made to the national revenue minister to obtain a waiver of the coasting laws. The commission then advises the minister as to the availability of a suitable Canadian ship.

Rail transport

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Canadian railway transport is dominated by two transcontinental systems, supplemented by regional railways. The government-owned Canadian National Railway system is the largest public utility and operates the longest trackage in Canada. It serves all 10 provinces as well as the Great Slave Lake area of the Northwest Territories. It also operates a highway transport service, a fleet of coastal steamships, a chain of large hotels and resorts, a telecommunications service, and as an autonomous subsidiary a scheduled Canadian and international air service, Air Canada. Canadian Pacific Ltd. is a joint-stock corporation operating a railway service in eight provinces. Similar to and competitive with the Canadian National Railway system, it is a multi-transport organization with a fleet of inland and ocean-going vessels as well as coastal vessels, a fleet of trucks, a chain of year-round and resort hotels, a telecommunications service, and a domestic and foreign airline service. Through a major subsidiary, Canadian Pacific Investments Ltd., interests are held in mining (for example, Cominco Ltd.), oil and gas, forest products, real estate and related operations, hotel and food services, and steel production and associated services. The British Columbia Railway operates a 2063-kilometre route from North Vancouver to Fort Nelson in northeastern British Columbia. The Northern Alberta Railway, jointly owned by CP and CN, serves the area north of Edmonton with a 1485-km system. Northern Ontario is served by the provincially owned Ontario Northland Railways with a 925-km system stretching from North Bay to Moosonee, and by the privately owned Algoma Central Railway operating over 516 km of line between Sault Ste Marie and Hearst.

In addition, a US-Canada passenger service inaugurated by the National Railroad Passenger Corp., AMTRAK, is operated between Seattle, Wash. and Vancouver, BC and between Montreal, Que. and Washington, DC via New York City, Springfield, Mass. and resort areas in Vermont.

The largest contributors to Canada's total 1977 railway revenue were Canadian National (53.9%) and Canadian Pacific (36.0%). The Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway, built to transport ore and concentrates from the iron mines of the Schefferville and Wabush areas of Quebec and Labrador to water transportation facilities on the St. Lawrence River, accounted for 2.1% of the revenues. Other individual railways contributing 1% or more were the British Columbia Railway (2.3%) and the Ontario Northland Railways (1.2%).

In recent years, railways have faced strong competition from highway and air transport. Still indispensable for carrying bulk commodities, railways are necessary to the development of natural resources in isolated areas. Only pipelines have competed with them by providing an alternate economical means of transporting the products of oil and gas fields for long distances overland.

The rapid growth of containerization has made the integration of railway, highway, shipping and other modes of transport of growing importance. Canada's two major railways are already involved in several forms of transportation. They have evolved from a virtual monopoly, through a highly competitive stage to co-operation and co-ordination with other modes of transport.

VIA Rail Canada Inc. was incorporated on January 12, 1977 with a mandate to revitalize passenger rail services in Canada and to manage and market them on an efficient commercial basis, reducing the financial burden on the government. VIA operates under contract with the federal government to provide designated passenger rail services, entering into contracts with the railways for the operation of trains. It operates as an autonomous Crown corporation. Its income is derived from passenger revenues and payments received from the federal government under passenger rail services contracts. With the exception of commuter services, VIA is totally responsible