Beat: Travel

VIA Rail Will Be Temporary Laying Off

1000 Unionized Workers

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USPA NEWS - Via Rail operates nearly 500 trains each week across 8 Canadian provinces and 12,500 kilometers (7,800 mi) of track, most of which is owned and maintained by other railway companies, mainly CN. VIA links many rural communities throughout the country and many people depend on the train as a vital link for delivery of supplies along with a connection to larger urban areas.

Via Rail Canada has announced that it is temporarily laying off 1,000 unionized employees, which will take effect on July 24th, 2020. The passenger rail service provider attributes the layoffs to a strong decline in bookings due to travel restrictions amid the Covid-19 pandemic. VIA Rail Canada CEO Cynthia Garneau said in a media release, “We have had to make difficult decisions to deal with the situation as we gain a better understanding of the impacts of the pandemic on our operations.“

2020 has already been a very turbulent year for VIA Rail. Back in February, most routes had to be temporarily suspended when CN was forced to shut down its infrastructure due to protest blockades throughout the country. This also resulted in 1,000 temporary layoffs. Once CN reopened their infrastructure, service resumed, and employees were brought back to work.

VIA Rail Canada CEO Cynthia Garneau also noted that "Via Rail had previously reduced and suspended services in March, based on a ridership decrease of more than 95 percent, and that the company doesn´t anticipate ridership to rebound in the foreseeable future." As this story continues to evolve, updates will be provided as information becomes available.

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