

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PSTR Temporarily Suspends Operations Following Discovery of Serious Erosion Port Stanley – January 18th, 2026 —

Post Stanley Terminal Rail has announced the temporary suspension of all operations following the discovery of serious erosion beneath the south abutment of a historic railway bridge in Port Stanley.

The condition affecting the 1908-built Kettle Creek bridge was identified during a scheduled underwater inspection conducted by professional divers on December 11, 2025. The inspection revealed significant erosion under the south concrete abutment, raising safety concerns which required immediate action.

Out of an abundance of caution and with the safety of passengers, volunteers, and staff as its top priority, PSTR cancelled all operations effective December 12, 2025. Passengers who had already booked tickets were advised of the closure and their money refunded.

Bridge engineers are currently assessing the damage and developing a repair strategy. Preliminary estimates place the cost of repairs in excess of \$500,000, representing a substantial financial challenge for the organization.

“This is a serious blow for PSTR,” the organization said in a statement. “The unexpected nature of this damage and the scale of the required repairs will make recovery difficult, but safety must always come first. This is the greatest engineering hurdle we’ve faced in our 43 year history, but we will get this fixed safely, correctly and as soon as possible.”

PSTR will continue to work closely with engineering experts to determine the most effective and responsible path forward. Further updates will be shared with the public @ pstr.on.ca as more information becomes available. **It is PSTR’s intent to be running for Easter but due to the uncertainty of the repair schedule, the railway is not accepting any 2026 bookings at this time.**

The organization thanks its supporters, volunteers, and the community for their understanding and continued support during this challenging time.

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Background

Port Stanley Terminal Rail is a seven-mile volunteer-run railway operating tourist trains between Port Stanley and St. Thomas, Ontario. The railway operates over the former London and Port Stanley Railway (L&PS). The line is one of the oldest in Ontario, with construction beginning in 1853. While promoted to carry coal to St. Thomas and London, it also had a popular passenger service. Originally steam powered, the line was electrified when the City of London assumed operations in 1914. Ridership peaked at 1.1 million passengers in 1943 and passenger service ended in 1957. The L&PS continued to operate freight service until 1965, when CN acquired the route. A major washout north of Port Stanley prompted CN to suspend operations in 1977.

In 1982, a group of local railway enthusiasts approached CN with an offer to purchase the line, make necessary repairs, and introduce tourist train service. CN eventually agreed, and dozens of volunteers set to work to rebuild the route. Crossings were reopened, weeds and trees removed, thousands of crossties replaced, and the washout repaired. Locomotives were acquired to pull the trains and volunteers converted old cabooses into passenger cars. By 1983, trains were running between Port Stanley and the shelter at Union, three miles up the line.

Over the years, operations have been expanded to Whytes and eventually to St. Thomas, and the organization has continued to reinvest in the railway, improving the physical plant. Locomotives were acquired to pull the trains and volunteers have converted old cabooses into passenger cars.

The railway attracts approximately 17,000 passengers annually. Riders come from throughout the local area, across Ontario and around the world to enjoy the scenic trip through the Kettle Creek valley. Special events include Music, Easter, Pumpkin and Halloween trains. These and the ever-popular Murder Mystery trains typically sell out months in advance. The train is also used for weddings, birthdays and school proms. Total ridership since 1983 is approximately three-quarters of a million passengers.

With 43 years of operation, PSTR is the longest-running tourist attraction in Elgin County and a major contributor to the local economy. People come to ride the train and stay to spend time and money at local businesses.

Through it all, the railway has remained a volunteer organization, with a core group responsible for operations, maintenance, and compliance with federal railway regulations.

PSTR is regulated by Transport Canada, which carries out inspections of the railway, equipment and operations.