

Steam Locomotive and Rail Cars for Freeman Station

Friends of Freeman Station (FOFS) has the opportunity to submit a proposal to acquire a vintage steam locomotive and two passenger/baggage cars from the early years of the 20th Century. This equipment is extremely rare, and in relatively good condition, needing only cosmetic restoration. The passenger car is so rare it may well be the only one left of its type in Canada. The locomotive served the Burlington area at one time, the refrigerated baggage car was of a type, and may have been one, that served the Freeman Station fruit platform, and the passenger car was of a type that served Freeman Station as well.

The railway equipment is currently the property of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission (SLPC) and is located at Crysler Park, near Morrisburg, ON. The SLPC has decided the equipment does not fit its mandate as it is too modern for the era they depict at Upper Canada Village, and they do not wish to restore it. They have put it out to tender with the proviso that it must go to a museum, municipality or other similar entity in Canada, for preservation. The equipment will be granted at no cost, except its removal.

Freeman Station is now virtually complete and is accepting visitors, and school trips. The station is proving to be a popular addition to the public spaces in Burlington. We are now open Saturdays and Public Holidays and have visitor numbers typically between thirty and one hundred, with much larger crowds when we have a special event such as Doors Open. The addition of this rare railway rolling stock will add greatly to the attractiveness of Freeman Station and make it a significant tourist attraction. It will draw visitors from far and wide, and add to the educational experience provided by the station.

FOFS has assembled a team of restoration experts and has the volunteer and sponsor base needed to restore this priceless historic railway equipment, and make it, with the station, a showpiece of which the citizens of Burlington can be proud. Having restored Freeman Station and raised almost \$1 million in funds, services and labour to do so, we can demonstrate to SLPC that we are a worthy candidate to receive their valued artifacts. At the present time FOFS has \$30,000 available for restoration work.

The major issue is the cost of moving these large and heavy pieces to Burlington. FOFS has contacted four highly qualified and experienced movers of heavy equipment and asked each for a proposal. Three of the four have been to look at the equipment. All have given us preliminary cost estimates ranging from \$100,000 to \$300,000. We are now waiting on formal quotes, and will meet with each to negotiate.

To make our proposal to SLPC credible, FOFS needs to demonstrate that we have the financial capability to move the equipment. To that end we are requesting financial backing from the City of Burlington. We would be most grateful if that backing could be in the form of a grant, but if that is not possible, we request a loan that would be provided should we be the successful bidder. A letter from the City guaranteeing funds to move the equipment would form a key element of our proposal and would make it very compelling.

It is our intent to seek other grants, and to embark on a fundraising campaign, to cover the costs of moving and restoring the equipment.

Ron Danielsen
President
Friends of Freeman Station