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RTG to hand over reins to Ottawa LRT by early August, service to launch in September: mayor

By Christopher Whan • Global News

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OC Transpo aims to have Ottawa's light-rail transit system up and running by September, the mayor says.
City of Ottawa



-A A+

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson says OC Transpo customers should expect to ride the city's light-rail transit system by the time school starts up in the fall.

The mayor spoke to media after a meeting with members of the Rideau Transit Group, which manufactures the trains. RTG expects to have the trains fully completed by July 7.

According to RTG, this would mean the deadline for handing over the keys for the Confederation line to the city would fall somewhere in the second or third week of August.

At the meeting, the mayor voiced his displeasure with the state of the project's progress and repeated delays.

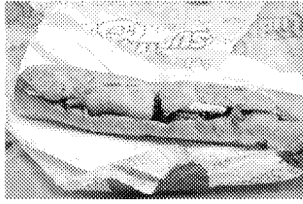
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“We were polite but firm that we were not satisfied with the progress this city building project has met so far,” said Watson. “I said at this point I could not give any kind of a glowing reference to any other city that could be dealing with this until we have the keys handed over to us.”

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While this is the fifth deadline presented by RTG to the city — the group has missed four previous deadlines with a \$1-million penalty each time — RTG president Peter Lauch says all the problems with the system have been identified, and there is a clear outline of what is left to be done, especially when it comes to the train manufacturer Alstom.

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"We don't want to disappoint again; we want to be precise," said Lauch. "We want a few more weeks to continue to track Alstom's progress. They've been doing extremely well. They're trending in the right direction. The metrics are very positive."

The repeated delays have caused frustration with riders, and even OC Transpo boss John Manconi has acknowledged that service has taken a hit due to delays.

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As a result of the diminished service, city hall [voted last week](#) to freeze transit fare increases until the Confederation line is up and running.

With the May 31 deadline, the city would have had time over the slower summer to work out any kinks that could occur with a new system. Now, with this delay, the city is set to open the system at the beginning of September — the busiest time of year for OC Transpo, as kids are set to go back to school and the vacation season ends.

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However, Watson says the city has planned for this, with concurrent buses being run as the system finds its legs.

“Obviously, the beginning of September brings with it lots of challenges — people back from their holidays, students are back to high school, college and university — and we would prefer to have it before that long weekend,” said Watson.

“We will have parallel bus service for three weeks, which will take some of the pressure off the train system.”

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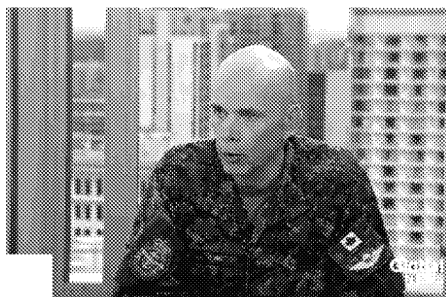
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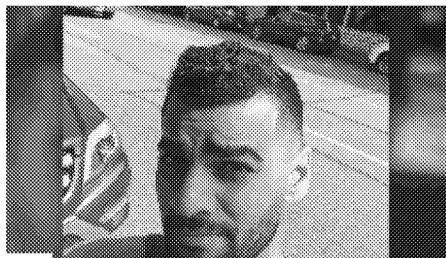
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