



# Speaking Notes

*Winnipeg May 25, 2012*

**PAUL G. SMITH, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF VIA RAIL CANADA  
DELIVERED AT WINNIPEG  
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Minister Fletcher, Councillor Nordman, VIA colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen.

It is a pleasure to stand here today – almost 100 years after this station officially opened for business – and look to the future.

Passenger rail has played an important role in the history of Winnipeg, and Manitoba, and indeed all of Western Canada. As Union Station's centennial year draws to a close, the work we are announcing today marks the start of a new century. It is an investment in the future for VIA, and for Winnipeg.

It is an investment by the Government of Canada. Since 2007, the Government has committed \$923 million to revitalize passenger rail, including \$407 million from its national Economic Action Plan. And in the 2012 Budget the Government also announced funding of \$60 million for capital projects in the coming year, to support VIA's operations and investments in track, signalling systems, station repairs and information technology.

I would like to thank Minister Fletcher for his continued support, and for the Government's support for passenger rail.

This is the largest facility owned by VIA Rail. Last year, we completed work on the heating, cooling and other systems to bring it up to 21<sup>st</sup> century environmental standards – earning environmental certification from the Building Owners and Managers Association of Manitoba.

Now, we are upgrading and improving the passenger waiting areas, adding larger, more accessible washrooms, completing much-needed exterior repairs, and upgrading electrical, fire and security systems.

We will also carry out repair and restoration work on the magnificent Rotunda – one of the most distinctive features of this heritage railway station.

As you may know, Union Station is not only VIA's Western gateway for passenger rail operations, but a valuable office facility here in the heart of Winnipeg, with more than 120,000 square feet of office space. Our current tenants include Immigration Canada's Citizenship Court and other Government of Canada agencies, offices of the Province of Manitoba, the Council of Ministers of the Environment, and Red River Community College.

As part of the renovation work we are doing here, we will be upgrading this office space to bring it up to the standards of similar office facilities here in Winnipeg, and protect the value of this valuable real estate asset.

Over the years Union Station has been a witness to the growth and development of Western Canada. Hundreds of thousands of people have travelled -- and still travel -- through this station on business, connecting with family, tourists getting their first glimpse of the West -- people whose lives and memories have been touched by this landmark in the city of Winnipeg.

The improvements we're announcing today build on the \$3 million in upgrades completed last year, increasing the overall investment in the restoration and improvement of this historic station to almost \$10 million.

VIA Rail is proud to be part of that history. And we are proud to be carrying that history forward -- building on the partnership between passenger rail and Western Canada at the start of Union Station's second century of service.

Thank you.