

# SPEAKING NOTES:

## ERIC STEPHANSON, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Good afternoon, welcome and thank you to everyone for joining us today at VIA Rail's Annual Public Meeting webcast. Once again this year we are holding our public meeting by webcast, so that people from all parts of the country can be a part of this event. Over the course of the webcast we will be discussing our results from 2014 and the first quarter of 2015, as well as our plans for the future.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the fine work done by my predecessor, Paul G. Smith, who stepped down from his role on the Board of Directors in August of 2014. Mr. Smith served on the Board of Directors for 8 years, 4 of them as the Chairman. During that time, VIA Rail modernized and evolved almost every aspect of its operations, thanks to the over \$1 billion investment made by the Government of Canada in VIA Rail. Mr. Smith also worked to strengthen our relationship with stakeholders in Ottawa as well as with the communities we serve across our network. In many ways, we are a better company now than we were when he began his mandate and I, along with everyone at VIA Rail, thank him for his service.

Since Paul G. Smith's departure, and until such time as new Chairman is appointed, I was asked to step in as interim Chairman of the Board of Directors; a position I was honoured to accept.

In terms of governance, the Board held a productive strategic planning session in 2014 to discuss VIA Rail's future and put positive actions into place to ensure its success. This will be followed up by another strategic planning session later this year. In 2014, there was also full review of our Board committee structure. The number of committees was reduced from five to four, and each of the committees' mandates was realigned for maximum effectiveness. Of particular note is the Governance, Risk and Strategy committee which is a means for the Board to rate its own effectiveness. VIA has become,

and continues to transform into a more transparent organization. We are owned by the citizens of Canada, and are here to serve Canadians. Therefore, we recognize that being open and forthcoming with information about governance is important. We recently updated the Board of Directors' section on VIA Rail's website with detailed information about the Board committees and what they do.

2014 also saw the appointment, by the Government of Canada, of two new members to the Board: Deborah Robinson of Toronto and Melissa Sonberg of Montreal. Their impressive credentials and knowledge have already been a great asset to VIA Rail. With these new appointments, our board, excluding the President and CEO, has reached gender parity. It is composed of 5 women and 5 men, placing VIA Rail at the forefront of board gender equality for both public and private corporations in Canada. We would like to acknowledge the Minister of Transport, Lisa Raitt, for her leadership in this regard.

Before continuing with the rest of the meeting, there are a couple more acknowledgements to be made. First of all to Steve Del Bosco who, following his 37 year career at VIA, retired in January of this year. Capping an amazing career in the train industry, Steve graciously stepped in as interim President and CEO for the first few months of 2014. Steve exemplifies the very best of VIA Rail: integrity, respect, and dedication to serving Canadians. We wish him the best in this next phase of his life. Finally, though you have probably all seen, heard or met him already, I welcome Mr. Yves Desjardins-Siciliano, who was appointed President and CEO of VIA Rail in early May of 2014. The first year of his mandate has been busy, to say the least. Having already worked at VIA as the Chief Corporate and Legal Officer, Yves hit the ground running and hasn't stopped since. His first year has been productive and progressive. I will leave it to him to tell you more about his first year and the many projects VIA completed and launched both in 2014, and in the first quarter of 2015.

We are excited to have Yves at the helm of VIA Rail, and on behalf of the Board, we thank him for his first successful year as President and CEO.

Our appreciation also goes out to all VIA Rail employees, for their ongoing dedication to and passion for their work, and of course to our passengers, for whom VIA Rail exists. Thank you for your continued support and trust in VIA.

Thank you