



Speaking Notes

Montreal, May 28, 2013

**PAUL G SMITH, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
VIA RAIL CANADA
DELIVERED IN MONTRÉAL – 2013 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING
CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

I would like to welcome all of you who are participating in VIA's third annual public meeting, from all parts of Canada, by means of the Internet. It is remarkable how quickly innovations like virtual meetings and webcasts have become a normal part of our daily lives.

I was reminded of this earlier this month, when the Bank of Canada unveiled two new bank notes. The first announcement was for the new five dollar bill, which will celebrate Canada's contributions to space exploration. And Canadian astronaut Mark Hadfield – who was the Commander of the International Space Station at the time – joined the ceremony via satellite, while orbiting more than 350 kilometres above the earth.

I was there because the other new bill announced, the new ten dollar bill, will feature a striking image of The *Canadian*, our passenger train journeying through the Rocky Mountains. It represents the enormous feat of engineering that linked Canada East and West by rail and helped to forge a new country. The *Canadian* still makes that legendary journey across our native land today. But the passengers on board that first journey across Canada could not have imagined how much things would change over the years.

And it is certain they could not have imagined a Canadian, or any human, talking to us from space.

They could not have imagined riding the train while chatting with friends and family back home on Facebook – something they can do today thanks to VIA Rail's world-class onboard Wi-Fi service.

They could not have imagined that the original, smoke-belching locomotives would eventually be replaced by clean-running, highly efficient engines. In fact, today VIA Rail operates one of the most fuel and energy efficient locomotive fleets in North America, thanks to the Government of Canada's investment in modernizing passenger rail.

They would never have imagined that passenger rail would become part of a vast, interconnected network of transportation services – highways, bus lines, commuter railways and airways, serving densely populated metropolitan centres, and connecting communities right across the country.

For the past few years at VIA Rail, we have been reinventing passenger rail to meet the needs of the future. 2012 was a pivotal year in this evolution.

- We completed many major capital projects to renew and modernize passenger rail equipment and infrastructure – our locomotives, trains, track and stations right across the country.
- Better track and equipment allowed us to make essential adjustments to schedules and frequencies. We added new, faster and more frequent services in markets where they are needed. We adjusted services on less busy routes to better align with market needs and customer demand.
- We implemented new marketing, ticketing and customer service technologies that allow customers to integrate train travel more easily into their daily lives. And we offer a broader range of travel options to integrate train travel with other modes of transportation in Canada's evolving transportation network.

Major transitions like this are challenging. They are often slow in producing the long-term benefits we hope to achieve. But we are already seeing positive results.

We see clear signs of improving market performance in the last quarter of 2012 and into the first quarter of 2013. We are confident that the changes we implemented in 2012 will make VIA Rail a more commercially viable and sustainable passenger service for the future.

As VIA Rail continues to work hard to increase the “train culture” in Canada and we get more people to take the train, passenger rail will continue to benefit Canada’s environment, its economic growth, and the quality of life for Canadians.

As we approach Canada’s 150th anniversary just four years from now, the new ten dollar bill reminds us of the role of passenger rail in Canada’s history and its place in today’s efficient transportation network.

Thank you.