

## VIA RAIL'S 2020 ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING

### Speech of Cynthia Garneau, VIA Rail Canada's President and Chief Executive Officer

Thank you, Françoise for your kind words.

Ladies and gentlemen,

VIA Rail employees and partners across Canada,

Members of VIA Rail's Board and colleagues of the Management Team,

Thank you for joining us.

As you may know, we hold annual public meetings to report to Canadians on the performance and progress of our organization. In order to continue to uphold our duty this year, we have taken the opportunity to revisit the format, while ensuring our speakers can participate in a safe environment given these challenging times.

2019 has been yet another defining year for VIA Rail: on all fronts, our teams have achieved great strides therefore continuing to offer a safe, comfortable and sustainable travel experience to Canadians.

Passenger rail continues to play an indisputable role in our lives as more than five million passengers chose VIA Rail in 2019 – our highest annual ridership in the last three decades. I would like to thank our employees across Canada, without whom this would not have been possible. You play a crucial role in this wonderful performance.

This renewed vote of confidence demonstrates that our customer-centric strategy is proving its merits. When people begin to see the great value in this smart, sustainable and safe mode of transport, the results are tangible...

In 2019, we also continued to lay the foundations of a bright and sustainable future for passenger rail service in Canada by continuing to work on our modernization and by advancing our large-scale projects.

Our Corridor Fleet Replacement Program made great progress in its first year as we successfully completed the concept and design phases.

We also began the Maintenance Facilities Modernization Project which will allow to enhance, upgrade and modernize our maintenance centres to prepare for the arrival of this new fleet and to better service our current fleet. We look forward to introducing our first passenger-ready, state-of-the-art train in 2022.

Simultaneously, we continued this year our Heritage Program, which involves the modernization and refurbishment of HEP fleet train cars destined for use on VIA Rail's various routes.

We also received great news regarding our High Frequency Rail proposal, a project which will transform passenger rail service in Canada by operating on tracks dedicated to passenger trains. Since the Government of Canada and the Canada Infrastructure Bank announced funding in June 2019 to further analyze the HFR proposal in the Québec-City-Toronto corridor, the Joint Project Office has been focusing on key components of the project in order to propose the best option for a more modern passenger rail service in Canada.

Actively transforming the Canadian journey also means creating a more sustainable, accessible and inclusive future for everyone. This is why I am very proud of the headway we have made in 2019.

Our Clear Station pilot project at Ottawa station, designed to help blind and partially sighted passengers navigate our stations autonomously, garnered us many accolades, among them the 2019 President's Award from the Canadian Council of the Blind. This honor recognized not only Clear Station, but also our broader efforts in improving accessibility, including an over \$15 million investment to modernize our now fully accessible Ottawa station. We also undertook other accessibility initiatives including major improvements to our Halifax station, as well as a pilot project at Ottawa station that will make travelling with service animals easier.

In addition, teams across the organization worked throughout the year with passion and commitment to meet the Canadian Transportation Agency's requirements which came into effect in June 2020. As we strive to be Canada's most accessible national and intercity mode of transportation, we remain committed to creating a barrier-free country for our passengers and look forward to continuing on this path.

In 2019, we also continued to be present at events from coast to coast, by for example, sponsoring leadership-building workshops with students and by playing a central role in rail safety awareness events in conjunction with local and provincial law enforcement agencies. In addition, VIA Rail participated throughout the summer in five Pride events, where employees proudly represented our values of diversity and inclusion.

Before giving the floor to Patricia for a review of last year's financial results, I would like to thank VIA Rail's Board of Directors for their expertise and unwavering confidence in passenger rail, which contributed to making 2019 such a successful year. Your support is helping us bring VIA Rail to the next level.

To my colleagues of the Management Team: thank you for your rigour, determination and agility which allowed to lead to fruition smart and innovative projects in 2019, but also to weather the storms we encountered during the first half of 2020.

Because, while we take great pride in what we accomplished together last year, the organization is dealing with many challenges in 2020 and we understand the impact the consecutive crises have had and continue to have on all our employees. Wherever you are across the country, I applaud your commitment and resilience which allowed VIA Rail to continue to provide a stellar service during these trying times.

In the meantime, our focus is to pursue our service resumption plan and provide the safest travel option for our passengers. I remain convinced that once this difficult period is behind us, we will be able to build on our momentum with our many ongoing key projects.

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This speech was given as part of VIA Rail Canada's 2020 Annual Public Meeting

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Thank you and stay safe!