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Notes for Remarks by Martin Imbleau

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VIA HFR – VIA TGF Inc.

to

**Commons Standing Committee on
Transport, Infrastructure and Communities**

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Ottawa, Ontario

Introduction

- Thank you, Mr. Chair.
- While I am only two weeks into my new role as CEO, I'm looking forward to embarking on this journey together.
- It's the next generation of public service aspect that convinced me to develop a modern service to link communities in the Québec - Toronto Corridor.
- As much as I am here to speak, I am also here to listen. Openness and collaboration are key to its timely development.
- The success of our project depends on many factors, but firstly on its social acceptance.
- Acceptance requires that we listen to everyone, including Indigenous communities, stakeholders, and our future passengers.

My Outlook for VIA HFR

- As you know, we are a new Crown corporation, almost ten months old.
- Our mission is to revolutionize travel by delivering a superior railway service in the Corridor.
- Our mission is to bring people closer together and open the doors of opportunity.
- It is provide an environmentally sustainable, punctual, and affordable service to improve the passenger experience.
- Because it is required. For tomorrow, and for generations to come.
- Required to bring three capital cities closer together, to strengthen the connection between Canada's two largest economic lungs, and to serve 15 million people in a growing corridor.

- We will reduce distance between friends and families, between cities and communities, between population growth and opportunities.
- Allow me this one personal comment – I’ve been developing large infrastructure for more than 25 years, mainly near the project corridor. And I’ve been using my car to Québec City and to Ottawa. And the plane to Toronto.
- Why? The train was simply not frequent enough, not on time enough, not fast enough.
- And we cannot simply add trains. We don’t own the tracks. Freight railroads do. And more freight congestion is not good for the economy.
- Doing more of the same is not our mandate. Offering an appealing solution is!

The Project

- This project provides choice by shortening travel times and connecting communities.
- It’s about running twice as many trains, faster, and on time.
- Many people ask about speed. We will reach high speed where it is feasible, safe, and affordable.
- In the current procurement process, each team bidding for this project must provide two solutions.
- First, they must achieve speeds up to 200 kilometres per hour.
- Second, bidders will propose services that go even faster, and take less time.
- The objective is not speed for the sake of speed – but saving time.
- And faster average speed, which shortens travel time, is the way to go.

- You already know how frustrating it is to get here to Ottawa by car or plane. Crowded airports. Congested highways.
- Ultimately, this project is all about a more flexible, faster and convenient way to travel.
- Passenger transportation will remain an important source of GHG emissions as the population grows – unless we offer a better, sustainable choice that truly affects Canadian citizens’ behaviour. This is central to our mission.
- As well, putting passenger trains on dedicated tracks provides more capacity for freight. Oil and grain will reach ports faster.
- In our solution, we benefit people, the economy and the planet.

Momentum

- I know this project is undeniably complex.
- It is also ambitious. But with the participation of the private sector, we think that we have a good approach.
- Our project is gathering momentum.
- The government is leading a procurement process to find a best-in-class team that will work with us to design, finance, build, operate and maintain this passenger railway.
- In July, three bidding teams qualified for the government’s Request for Proposals. The goal is to select a partner next year with whom we will optimize the project.
- Projects are people. So we intend to bring the best talents on board!
- At this time, the project is on track, and it is my job to deliver it on time.

Looking ahead

- As I mentioned I am fresh in my new role, so I am dedicating my time to listening to our team and advisors; Indigenous Communities, stakeholders; and Canadians.
- I intend to deliver this project in full transparency, and this committee will be kept informed of our progress regularly.
- Thank you for hearing from me and I welcome your questions and comments.