



Backgrounder

VIA Rail Canada – A Historical Perspective

2008

- Tender issued for the upgrade of LRC passenger cars used in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor
- The *Canadian* recognized by The Society of International Railway Travelers as one of the “World’s Top 25 Trains”
- VIA announces Canadian Forces Appreciation Fare for current and retired members of the Forces, Department of National Defense employees, and their families
- New mid-day departure added between Montreal and Ottawa

2007

- The Government of Canada announces an investment of \$691 million over five years to revitalize passenger rail services in Canada
- A \$100 million contract is awarded to upgrade the F-40 locomotive fleet
- Enviro Expo is launched
- VIA launches the *Snow Train Express* between Edmonton and Jasper
- VIA is awarded First Place for passenger rail services in the 8th annual Agent’s Choice Awards
- New youth fares introduced for travellers aged 18-25
- VIA introduces the new *Spa Train Route* in Ontario
- As of September 2007 VIA becomes subject to the federal *Access to Information Act*
- VIA launches the *Bike Train* between Toronto and Niagara Falls
- VIA introduces enhancements to its *Hudson Bay* service for polar bear season

2006

- VIA marks the 150th anniversary of passenger rail service in central Canada
- VIA celebrates the *Year of the War Bride* with a special departure of the *Ocean* from Montreal to Halifax
- Ottawa station celebrates 40 years
- VIA operates the Chinese Redress Express, bringing Canadian Chinese Head Tax payers, their families and descendants from Vancouver to Ottawa for an historic apology
- In June VIA begins serving only fair trade certified coffee to its passengers

2005

- VIA is ranked first in the transportation industry in Canada
- For the first time, VIA ridership breaks the 4 million mark
- With VIA's Keep An Eye Open program and the RCMP's Jetway program, VIA employees improve their techniques for identifying security risks
- The *Canadian* celebrates 50 years of service
- The *Maritime Learning Experience* launches in *Easterly* class onboard the *Ocean*
- VIA commemorates *The Year of the Veteran* with the Remembrance Day train
- Flexi Fares are introduced
- Wi-Fi Internet access is offered in *VIA 1* in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor
- VIA receives the Environmental Protection Award from the Railway Association of Canada

2004

- All VIA trains are non-smoking since January
- Celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the *Ocean* between Montreal and Halifax in July

2003

- 25th anniversary of VIA Rail
- Station renovations in Bathurst completed in February
- Self-serve kiosks introduced in the Corridor in July
- VIA begins testing wireless internet onboard the Corridor trains
- VIA's Environmental Management System launched in December
- ISO 9002 certification obtained for all VIA'S maintenance centres

2002

- Renovations completed at Kitchener, Oakville and Brantford stations
- Transport Minister David Collenette announces construction of a second station at Fallowfield, a western suburb of Ottawa
- VIA takes delivery of the two first sets of Renaissance cars
- New Panorama lounges open in Quebec City and London
- The first of a series of *VIA 1* cars with completely redesigned interiors go into service
- The *VIA Pr f rence* Reward program welcomes its 300,000th member.
- The Vancouver and Winnipeg maintenance centres obtain ISO 14001 certification

2001

- VIA takes delivery of the first of five refurbished railcars.
- VIA announces the introduction of new Genesis P-42 locomotives.
- Extensions to the Panorama Lounge at Montreal's Central Station completed
- VIA's new web site and ReserVIA reservation system go on-line
- The Montreal Maintenance Centre obtains ISO 9002 and ISO 14001 certification
- Major enhancements to *Silver & Blue* class on the legendary transcontinental train, the *Canadian*
- VIA's new Renaissance cars arrive at Thunder Bay, where they will be modified to comply with Canadian standards and regulations
- VIA launches *VIA Destinations* magazine
- VIA's Safety Management System implemented
- The station at London, Ontario is imploded, marking the start of major renovations. The new station, a \$7 million investment, officially opens in the fall

2000

- In December VIA announces the purchase of 139 cars from European manufacturer Alstom, which will increase VIA's car fleet by one third. The cars are planned to be introduced progressively in the Québec City-Windsor Corridor and on Eastern routes
- The *VIAPAQ Courier* service is set up to serve the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor
- VIA launches *eSchedule*, the country's first complementary application giving access to train timetables from portable computers or handheld computers running the Palm OS
- *Northern Spirit* cars introduced on the Winnipeg-Churchill route in Manitoba
- The Canadian government announces a \$402 grant to VIA Rail spread over five years. VIA delivers to the government a business plan calling for equipment purchases, improvements in infrastructure and station renovations
- The Montreal-Toronto overnight train the *Enterprise* is introduced
- The Pierre Elliot Trudeau funeral train travels from Ottawa to Montreal in October

1999

- Information systems successfully upgraded to handle the transition to the year 2000
- Two VIA employees, Don Blain and Kevin Lihou, lose their lives in an accident at Thamesville, Ontario. In 2001 the two men's exemplary bravery is recognized when the Transportation Safety Board of Canada releases its report on the causes of the accident
- *Air Connect* service is launched to provide a rail link to Dorval International Airport in Montreal
- VIA introduces its new safety policy, "Safety First and Foremost"

1998

- VIA completely redesigns and modernizes its facilities in Montreal Central Station and rebuilds Dorval Station
- VIA launches *VIAnet*, a state-of-the-art computerized reservations system, enabling employees to offer faster and better telephone service to customers
- VIA opens a new, modern station in Edmonton, providing better access for passengers and greater visibility for VIA
- VIA's new *Romance by Rail* package on its overnight trains through the Rockies, offered in partnership with Canadian Pacific Hotels, proves to be instantly popular

1997

- Launch of *VIA Magazine*, a bilingual monthly with a 60,000 print run distributed free to all VIA passengers on board. The magazine is also available in all train stations, at the Chambers of Commerce and Boards of Trade in partnership with VIA along the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor, and in all Radisson Hotels across Canada
- VIA launches *VIA Resermet* Interactive, a service that enables customers to access VIA's reservation system directly from anywhere in the world via the Corporation's web site (www.viarail.ca)

1996

- VIA launches the IC3 Flexliner and new long-haul commuter services in the Ontario market's Quebec City-Windsor corridor for a four-month trial run
- Creation of the *VIA Pr  f  rence* Reward Program
- VIA introduces new uniforms for its 1,800 customer service front-line employees. The design of these uniforms later wins a Brunel Award for excellence in international railway design
- VIA wins ACTA Qu  bec Award as the province's best ground carrier

1995

- VIA goes on-line, offering information on products, services, schedules, fares and reservations over the Internet
- VIA becomes the world's first rail system to gain full access to an airline computerized reservation system, thus increasing its sales network by 28,000 travel agents worldwide, for the benefit of the Qu  bec City-Windsor corridor
- Last of VIA's steam-heated cars replaced by fully modernised stainless-steel cars, to serve southwestern Ontario routes

1994

- VIA achieves international recognition, in the form of a Brunel Award, for the refurbishment of its stainless-steel fleet
- Access to intermodal services expanded at Quebec City and Woodstock train stations

- Toronto-Windsor travel time reduced by 34 minutes thanks to infrastructure improvements that increase top speed to over 150 kph (95 mph)
- Fax-on-demand information service introduced for corridor train schedules and fares
- VIA-AMTRAK weekend night-time route inaugurated between New York and Toronto, via Niagara Falls

1992

- VIA wins the prestigious *Global Award* at the Gala opening of *World Travel Market* in London for the most significant contribution to Canadian travel and tourism in 1992
- The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) and the International Standards Organization (ISO) award their certifications to five VIA maintenance centres
- Newly constructed VIA station at Sainte-Foy inaugurated
- Burlington, Hamilton and Dundas train station services grouped together at a new station in Aldershot
- 22 weekly departures added to the Quebec City-Windsor corridor
- Montreal Central Station's first-class Panorama Lounge opened for *VIA 1* passengers

1990

- VIA's *Style & Steel* travelling exhibition inaugurated at Montreal's Old Port, with on-site presentation of the first line of stainless-steel cars
- A new, more flexible fare structure adopted based on the market, rather than on distances travelled
- Official opening of the Halifax and Vancouver Maintenance Centres

1988

- Toronto Union Station's first-class Panorama Lounge inaugurated
- Three new stations are opened in the East of Canada: Halifax, Kentville and Stellarton

1987

- Opening of the Montreal Maintenance Centre

1986

- VIA launches its on-board magazine

1985

- Quebec City's historic, fully-restored Gare du Palais Station reopens its doors, marking the return of passenger rail service to downtown Quebec City

- Opening of the Maintenance Centre in Toronto

1984

- VIA welcomes Pope John-Paul II on board the Great Papal train

1981

- Delivery of the first LRC trains to Windsor station
- October 27 marks the 125th anniversary of the first passenger train service between Montreal and Toronto

1980

- Inauguration of *VIA 1* (first-class service)
- Introduction of Reservia, VIA's computerized reservations and automated ticketing system

1979

- Restructuring of all CN and CP passenger services
- VIA is the largest wholesaler of Canada tour packages
- Creation of tag line: "People Moving People"

1978

- VIA becomes an independent Crown corporation, responsible for operating all passenger services formerly operated by CN and CP

1977

- VIA Rail Canada Inc. set up as a subsidiary of CN

– 30 –

For more information:

Montreal:

Malcolm Andrews
Corporate Communications
(514) 871-6604

Toronto:

Catherine Kaloutsky
Corporate Communications
(416) 956-7683