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Parliament recommends Exporail receive national museum status

SAINT-CONSTANT/DELSON, QC - The House of Commons has approved a motion in support of national museum status for Exporail, the President of the Canadian Railroad Historical association said Thursday.

"This motion recognizes the significant achievement of literally thousands of volunteers who have built this museum, rail by rail, into the world class exhibit it is today," said C. Stephen Cheasley. Exporail, or the Canadian Railway Museum, is located in suburban Saint-Constant/Delson, was founded in 1961 by CHRA. A study by Toronto based museums consultant Lord Cultural Resources classified Exporail as being among the leading railway collections in the world.

"This support recognizes the fundamental role the railway industry played in developing and sustaining our country," Cheasley said. "The volunteer members of the CRHA who built Exporail with their own hands and hearts, have taken this museum as far as they can. This status is necessary to continue to maintain this museum as one of the top railway museums in the world."

Cheasley credited the co-operative work of the Heritage Committee, an all-party parliamentary committee, for 'this visionary decision.' Following a report last June by the Auditor General commenting on the condition of Canadian heritage facilities, the House of Commons Standing Committee for Heritage set up public hearings. CRHA submitted a proposal calling for a public private partnership (PPP). The committee agreed and Francis Scarpaleggia, Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Louis, introduced a motion in the House of Commons calling for Exporail to receive national museum status.

Cheasley said. “We are very grateful for the commitment of Mr. Scarpaleggia, who, recognising the important contribution of Exporail, took responsibility to move this file forward. Exporail also thanks Bloc Québécois Heritage Critic, Maka Kotto (MP for Saint-Lambert) and Carole Freeman, (MP for Châteauguay – Saint-Constant).

While the motion shows parliamentary support for Exporail, Cheasley calls this “a major step forward for railway heritage across Canada. People often fail to recognize the critically important contribution of Canadian railways to confederation and the development of our country into one of the leading economic nations in the world,” he said. “Scattered across this country are towns and cities built because of the railway. From Smiths Falls, Ontario to Revelstoke, British Columbia and beyond in both directions, are monuments and exhibits testifying to the important contribution railways have made to Canadian life. Exporail has pieces of rolling stock from its collection on loan in many parts of Canada.

“Recognition as the national railway museum will enable us to work with other railway historical groups across Canada to ensure the restoration, conservation and display of historically significant railway equipment continues.”

Founded in 1932, CRHA members have been dedicated to preserving railway heritage across Canada. Since its establishment, CRHA has amassed, restored and built Exporail into one of the leading railway exhibits in the world. Over the last seven years, they have raised more than \$12 million to house the exhibit in new facilities located on their original site in Saint-Constant, a south shore suburb of Montreal. The collection includes more than 160 pieces of rolling stock and over 250,000 unique artifacts including a working replica of ‘The John Molson’, an 1849 steam engine.

Note: Digital photos of key pieces of the Exporail collection are available upon request.