

Contact: Jodi Tinson  
Shawn Morgan

## **Chrysler Group Chairman and CEO Returns to Belvidere Plant to Celebrate Dodge Dart Production Launch**

- Sergio Marchionne tours plant, meets with employees
- Visit coincides with one year anniversary of repayment of government loans
- Dodge Dart to start arriving in dealerships in June

May 23, 2012, Belvidere, Ill. - Nearly four months after his first visit to the Belvidere Assembly Plant (Ill.) when he announced the addition of 1,800 new jobs, Chrysler Group LLC Chairman and CEO Sergio Marchionne returned to the plant to celebrate the launch of the all-new Dodge Dart with about 1,000 employees. His visit coincided with the one year anniversary of when the Company repaid its U.S. and Canadian government loans, six years early.

"The repayment proved what could be achieved by hard work and determination, by not giving in when the going is tough, but rather finding the strength to get back on one's feet and move forward," Marchionne told Belvidere's first shift employees during a town hall. "That day marked an extraordinary achievement, and a new beginning, once again free to chart our own future."

The future for Chrysler Group is represented by the new Dodge Dart, which officially rolled off the assembly line on May 7, 2012, and will begin arriving in dealer showrooms in June. The Company invested nearly \$700 million in the Belvidere plant to make it the first assembly plant to build a Fiat-derived architecture on a Chrysler model. In addition, Chrysler Group is adding nearly 1,800 jobs to support Dart production and add a third shift in the third quarter.

"The Dart is really a bellwether of how well Fiat and Chrysler can make this partnership work," said Marchionne. "This first child is the start of a big family that is going to grow, that will explore new experiences, will become more capable and more aware of its possibilities as its horizon grows wider and brighter."

During his visit, Marchionne toured the plant, hearing presentations from employees about the changes that have been made to integrate the Dart on the same assembly line as the Jeep<sup>®</sup> Compass and Jeep Patriot and how they have implemented World Class Manufacturing (WCM) to improve safety, quality and productivity.

Marchionne told employees during the town hall that his visit was meant to celebrate the start of production, but "more importantly, it is important for me to recognize all of you for your efforts and a commitment that has guided us to this remarkable point."

The Dodge Dart blends Alfa Romeo DNA with Dodge's passion for performance and style. The new Dart will be available with 12 exterior colors, 14 interior color and trim options, three powerful, fuel-efficient engines, three transmission choices, unsurpassed safety features and world-class aerodynamics, setting a new standard for the compact car class.

"From all reports, it has been an outstanding production start," Marchionne told employees. "In fact, the body build is the best that our executive team has ever seen."

"I want to thank you for having embraced the philosophy and the mission that are at the core of our company; putting what made this nation great into what you do every day, pride and integrity in what you produce, the culture of doing things and doing them well," said Marchionne. "I'm here to convey congratulations to each and every one of you for a job well done."

### **About the Belvidere Assembly Plant**

Plant was constructed in 1964-65. The first car was produced on July 7, 1965. The product line from 1965 to 1977 included the Plymouth and Dodge two-door and four-door models, and station wagons, and the Chrysler Town & Country station wagon.

In 1977, the plant was converted to front-wheel drive production. From 1978-1987, the product lines included Plymouth Horizon and Dodge Omni.

In 1987, the plant underwent a \$367 million state-of-the-art, 16-week model changeover to produce the Chrysler New Yorker and Dodge Dynasty, the company's full-size front-wheel drive four-door sedans. Two years later, the plant underwent a \$72 million model changeover for production of 1990 models that included the Chrysler Imperial and New Yorker Salon.

In 1994, the plant was converted to produce the Plymouth and Dodge Neon. Production of the Neon ended in September 2005. The Dodge Caliber was launched in December 2005, followed by the Jeep Compass in May 2006 and Jeep Patriot in December 2006. The last Dodge Caliber rolled off the line on Dec. 19, 2011.

In October 2010, Chrysler Group announced that it would invest \$600 million to support the production of future models in 2012. The investment includes the construction of a 638,000-square-foot body shop as well as the installation of new machinery, tooling and material handling equipment.

In January 2012, the Dodge Dart was revealed at the North American International Auto Show, showcasing the combined engineering and technologies of Chrysler Group and Fiat. Production of the new Dart began on April 30, 2012.

On Feb. 2, 2012, Chrysler Group announced that the original \$600 million investment had increased to \$700 million and that the plant would add 1,800 jobs by the third quarter of 2012, which includes nearly 500 for production of the all-new Dodge Dart.

-###-

Additional information and news from Stellantis are available at: <https://media.stellantisnorthamerica.com>