

Rail in Gaspé “between five and 10 years”

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ - “It could be ‘between five and 10 years’ before a train reaches the Gaspé terminus.”

That’s what the president and CEO of the Société portuaire du Bas-Saint-Laurent et de la Gaspésie quietly said at a May 17 press conference in Gaspé to announce an investment of nearly \$7.8 million at the Sandy Beach wharf.

“I don’t think the train, for now, is planned, maybe in five to 10 years. The dock antenna (spur) is connected to the main line. The main line has to be completed first. But we would like the spur to be connected to the Port of Gaspé to increase the transshipment of merchandise from the Port of Gaspé,” answered Anne

Dupéré, when asked about intermodality between the rail and the wharf.

That statement surprised some of the stakeholders present who noted that the Minister of Transport, Chantal Rouleau, who had made the announcement for the wharf, did not intervene to correct the statement of the president and CEO.

Unacceptable, according to the MNA for Gaspé

Thus, the window mentioned suggests that the first train to reach the Gaspé terminus would not arrive before 2027 and, at worst, in 2032, which shocks the MNA for Gaspé, Méganne Perry Mélançon.

“It is unacceptable, inad-

missible that we are still postponed at this point in time,” says the elected representative who recalls that not so long ago, there was talk of 2025 and that, subsequently, Quebec indicated that it could no longer set a date because of important technical issues.

“At some point, the government has to give a push and come up with a respectable timeline,” she adds.

Daniel Côté shows his impatience

“I think it’s in the government’s target for four years from now. We were told it would take longer than four years. Five years? Six years? Seven years? I can’t wait to have a timeline,” commented Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté.

According to him, things are moving forward as calls for tenders are underway, adding that the project is back on track. “I can’t wait to see a train arrive in Gaspé,” he says.

Never heard

“These figures have never been revealed to the railroad company,” says Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie. He says he is aware that it will take at least five years, recalling that the target is 2024 for Port-Daniel-Gascons.

“Knowing the extent of the work to be done on the third section, five years doesn’t make me fall off the chair. Ten years has never been mentioned anywhere in our discussions with the ministry,”

Dubé added.

The company and Quebec are currently discussing a way to accelerate the work.

“It’s to get involved to the extent that we are able to do so. I think it’s a good way to work together to advance more quickly the goal of getting to Gaspé,” says the president.

It remains to be defined who could do what.

“We have expertise and manpower. We are on the ground. There are things we can do to go faster,” concludes Dubé.

The office of the Minister of Transport, François Bonnardel, emphasizes that the work is being done to reduce delays as much as possible.