

Spur at Port Daniel cement plant under construction

● GILLES GAGNÉ

PORT DANIEL – Groupe Gilbert, through a subcontractor called A&B Rail, has started constructing Saint Mary's Cement's small yard that will allow the company to load cement cars once the line is reopened to that part of the Chandler subdivision. The plant is located 25 miles east of New Carlisle.

The contract signed over the fall of 2022 by Groupe Gilbert, a Saguenay-based firm, stipulates that the cement plant track must be completed before the end of summer 2024. A&B Rail is also working on reinstating the main line back in place towards the east.

The contract primarily involves relocating the railroad a few dozen metres to the north over a distance of close to 0.9 mile. However, building the railcar loading track and two storage tracks at Saint Mary's Cement was also included in the agreement. The track had to be moved to the



Photo: Anthony Bernard Prince

The subcontractor has started rebuilding the main line, on the right, along with the beginning of the small yard, on the left.

north to increase the distance from the cliff overlooking the sea and the new track location.

The idea is to stay away from landslide, which was a factor when the line was closer to the cliff. No train has

passed there since the Amiral, the tourist train, in June 2014.

“The cement plant management and Transports Québec have opted for a single track with only one switch at the west end. (...) Two more tracks will be used to

put loaded and empty cars,” says Luc Lévesque, director general of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, the municipal entity that owns the locomotives and employs the staff operating the freight train on the Gaspé

Peninsula line east of Matapédia.

Currently, the cement produced in Port Daniel and delivered by rail to Saint Mary's customers is first trucked to a transshipment facility in New Richmond. Loading cement railcars at the plant will generate significant savings for customers and is expected to diversify the clientele buying the plant's production and using the railroad. It will also be possible for Saint Mary's to receive input by rail

The contract for moving the track and building the Saint Mary's spur was valued at \$15.2 million when it was signed.

In principle, the line between New Richmond and Port Daniel is supposed to reopen before the end of 2024. The SPEC has recently asked Transports Québec, the department that has owned the Matapédia to Gaspé line since 2015, to reconfirm the reopening date. However, the answer was not received by the newspaper's deadline.