

Transports Québec sticks to the December railway deadline

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW CARLISLE – Quebec’s Ministry of Transport maintains that the refurbishment of the railway between New Richmond and Port Daniel will be completed in December, despite several incomplete works along the route.

A major retaining wall located east of the Port Daniel tunnel has been progressing slowly, and three retaining walls along the New Carlisle to Paspebiac railroad stretch passing along the Bay of Chaleur, remains incomplete. A fourth wall in the same area has been completed.

The three uncompleted New Carlisle-Paspebiac retaining walls are also the subject of discussions between Transports Québec and the general contractor in charge of the works, Pomerleau, regarding their design.

“The section between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons is still scheduled to be put into service in 2024. All possible efforts are being made to achieve it. The Ministry has experienced some delays on some of its construction sites, however, at present, there is no indication that the track will not be ready by the end of the year,” says Jean-Philippe Langlais, Trans-

ports Québec’s spokesperson.

New Richmond construction site ignored by Transports Québec

The SPEC informed Mr. Langlais that despite his mention of Caplan suggesting that the line is entirely repaired between Matapedia and Caplan, a major construction site remains to be completed in New Richmond where the track is moved north over a length of 300 metres, under an \$8.4 million contract.

Mr. Langlais is not the first spokesperson from Transports Québec to use Caplan as the

easternmost point where the line is supposedly in service, even though trains cannot go further east than the Black Cape part of New Richmond. Mr. Langlais, like Nicolas Vigneault, another ministry spokesperson before him, ignored SPEC’s question about the fact that trains have not reached Caplan since November 2023.

Questioned about a possible legal recourse initiated by Pomerleau because of a possible misconception of the plans and specifications of the work to be carried out in New Carlisle and Paspebiac, Jean-Philippe Langlais pointed out

that “the Ministry does not comment on any contractual clauses that it holds with its contractors. There are currently no legal cases related to any contractor involved in the project.”

The SPEC also asked Mr. Langlais if the New Carlisle station and yard will be available to trains before December, considering that both are located west of the New Carlisle-Paspebiac track section upgraded by Pomerleau, and he also ignored the question.

The major retaining wall under construction in Port

▶ *Cont'd on page 11* ▶

Page 10, September 11, 2024 - Spec

RAILWAY:

▶ *Cont'd from page 10*

Daniel goes weeks without being worked on, as noted by SPEC in August. The contractor in that area has primarily been working on the tunnel recently. Explanations regarding this part of the railroad were also ignored by Transports Québec.

The president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, Éric Dubé, recently asked questions to Transports Québec about the possibility of a delay in the delivery of the railroad between New Richmond and Port Daniel before the end of 2024.

“I am waiting for answers from Transports Québec. I also asked questions about the Black Cape situation, where the track is moved,” says Mr. Dubé.

As a company under the control of the MRCs of Avignon, Bonaventure, Rocher-Percé and Côte-de-Gaspé, the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) needs to know when freight service will resume east of New Richmond for operational reasons, says Éric Dubé. Once the line is operational to Port Daniel, where its most



Photos: Anthony Bernard Prince

Three of the retaining walls along the New Carlisle to Paspebiac shoreline still require significant work before completion.

important source of revenues, Saint Mary’s Cement, is located, the SCFG will operate trains over 125 miles of track instead of 70.

Currently, the SCFG loses important traffic because cement must be transferred from trucks to railcars in New Richmond due to the line not servicing the cement plant directly.

The transshipment step often favours trucks, because the cost attached to it makes the railway less advantageous,

especially over short distances. Some of the Port Daniel input will also come to Port Daniel by rail once the cement plant has direct access to trains.

The rail yard near the cement plant is under construction and is expected to be completed in just days or a few weeks.

The entire upgrade of the railway between Matapedia and Gaspé is being carried out for \$872 million.