



Photo: G. Gagné

The Amiral Tourist Train is travelling the entire length of the line, while VIA Rail refuses to send its train east of Matapédia. The Amiral was in New Carlisle on July 3, on its way to Port Daniel, Chandler and Gaspé.

Gaspésie Railway Society submits new proposal

Minister's visit postponed

— Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: - The Gaspésie Railway Society will submit a new proposition to Quebec's Department of Transport, a two-year plan valued at \$33 million. If the proposition is accepted, the company would upgrade the line between Matapédia and Gaspé, concentrating its efforts where the commercial potential is the highest.

Reached on July 10, the president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé, was expecting to submit the plan by July 15. He was also supposed to meet with Quebec Transport Minister Robert Poéti around July 7, but the meeting was postponed, "until the beginning of August," he said.

"We have proposed an orderly set of priorities. We will propose \$33 million for two years and target users, more precisely users we already have or that are expected to use our services, such as the Port Daniel Cement Plant, VIA Rail, Rail GD, and Fabrication Delta," explained Éric Dubé.

He met with Regional Minister Jean D'Amour on July 10 but there was little to report.

"We would like to have an announcement before the end of August," pointed out Éric Dubé.

The railway between Mat-

apédia and Gaspé needs \$107 million over the next four or five years in order to be fully functional over the next 25 years.

Because of the state of the line, especially the bridges, and the use of a saline solution as a defoliant, which temporarily caused trouble to some level crossing signals, VIA Rail ceased serving the Matapédia to New Carlisle stretch in September 2013.

In the meantime, the Amiral, the tourist train owned and operated by the Gaspésie Railway Society, occasionally travels over the entire length of the network, and is currently in Gaspé.

Since the April 7 election, Regional Minister Jean D'Amour has not committed clearly, on behalf of his government, to any financing for the upgrading and maintenance of the line on the Gaspé Coast. In May he stated that he wanted a plan which would take into account the business potential of the line.

The maintenance budget of the Gaspésie Railway Society is currently very limited. Seventeen track maintenance workers were laid off at the end of June.

Meanwhile, the July 5 storm uprooted and broke many trees along the line. "It took two employees to remove the trees between Matapédia and New Carlisle,"

Mr. Dubé pointed out.

The development of a terminal for the Saint-Elzéar Forestry Coop in the New Carlisle yard "has been postponed until some funding is found," by the Gaspésie Railway Society, Mr. Dubé also points out.

The cooperative operates a sawmill that would ship lumber and woodchips outside the region. The sawmill is located 20 kilometres from the line, which forces the construction of a terminal. Although it doesn't require a major investment, the Gaspésie Railway Society doesn't currently have the financial capacity to build it without funding support.