



Gaspésie Railway Society gets fourth court protection delay

— Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: — The Superior Court has granted the Gaspésie Railway Society with another period of protection, this time until March 20, in order to secure a restructuring plan that was announced March 2.

Lemieux Nolet, the trustee of the Gaspésie Railway Society, was asking for more than a protection extension when he appeared in front of the Superior Court on February 25. He also had a letter from Transport Quebec requesting the same thing.

“The government could have requested 45 days but apparently, 23 days will be sufficient. It’s a good sign,” points out Éric Dubé, President of the Gaspésie Railway Society on February 26. The railway company filed for court protection on November 21, after a creditor threatened to seize the company’s locomotives. The society’s payables amount to \$3.6 mil-

lion.

Gaspésie Railway Society’s restructuring plan is based on two outside interventions. The first, from a proposal submitted by a business group spearheaded by Gilles Babin. He and his associates want to buy the line between Matapedia and Caplan, Gaspésie Railway Society’s rolling stock, including the Amiral Tourist Train.

The other intervention will come from the Quebec government and would likely deal with the infrastructure work needed on some bridges located along the Matapedia to Gaspé line. The two portions likely to be invested in are the stretch targeted by Gilles Babin’s group, and the Gaspé to Percé section, where Escale Gaspésie wants to assure Amiral operations, based on the cruise ship clientele.

As SPEC went to press, Quebec’s Minister of Transport Robert Poéti was presenting the main aspects of the Quebec government financial

support earmarked for the Gaspésie Railway. Transport Quebec failed to provide substantial aid to the line in 2014.

In the project submitted by Gilles Babin, the line between Caplan and Percé is to be placed in a dormant state until a project calls for using it, points out Éric Dubé.

“Things could change rapidly. Before long the Port Daniel Cement Plant might need it. Actually, it will be up to the region’s potential users to ship by rail,” he stated.

Under the model submitted to Transport Québec, the MRCs on the southern part of the Gaspé Peninsula would remain owners of the stretch of track not wanted by Gilles Babin’s group.

The line between Matapedia and Gaspé needs extensive repairs, especially to its bridges. The cost hovers around \$105 million. A step-by-step approach based on the busiest sections has reduced that cost to about \$35 or 40 million over the medium term.