



Photo: G. Gagné

The two cars will be delivered by early spring.

Rail GD carries out major repairs on two Rocky Mountaineer passenger cars

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: - Rail GD, the New Richmond shop which repairs rail cars, is currently rebuilding the interior of two double decker passenger cars. The cars are owned by Rocky Mountaineer, the British Columbia company which operates one of the top tourist trains in the world.

The two cars arrived in New Richmond on October 20 but at that time Rail GD could not reveal the name of its client, in conformity with a confidentiality agreement signed with Rocky Mountaineer. Effective January 20 the tourist train owner has decided to lift that stipulation.

"We are certainly happy to work on the cars of a world leader in the operation of a tourist train. There is a lot of prestige attached to that client. It represents an extraordinary

asset for our company. We are working on one of the top five tourist trains in the world, according to National Geographic," said Joey Cyr and Gilles Babin, respectively director general and president of Rail GD.

The two cars have to be delivered by March to the Vancouver-based company. Between November 2013 and March 2014, Rail GD had also worked extensively on the refurbishment of a first Rocky Mountaineer passenger car.

"The story goes like this. Rocky Mountaineer hired a designing firm, Morelli Design, based in Montreal, to modify the interior look of its cars. Once the design was made, Rocky Mountaineer hired an engineering firm to custom fit the design in its cars. Rocky Mountaineer selected Canarail as its engineering firm and Canarail picked us to do the work.

Our direct business relationship is with Canarail. We are paid by Canarail and Canarail is paid by Rocky Mountaineer," explains Gilles Babin.

The changes made to the Goldleaf cars, the name given by Rocky Mountaineer to its double-decker observation cars, are major. On the first car, Goldleaf 9507, a total of 10,571 hours of shop work was required to upgrade it. The two current cars will require just as many.

"Rocky Mountaineer gathered comments from its customers following the use of the first car. They wanted improvements. So we are making a few changes," points out Gilles Babin.

Canarail is a good contact for Rail GD. "They are on all five continents. We complement one another. They have other projects that we are interested in," he adds, before tak-

ing a deep breath.

"In the not so distant future, two or three years down the road, I firmly believe that we will be making railway cars, from A to Z," he stated, meaning that it could also be freight cars.

"It's the normal progression for the company. There is a small-scale market for railcar building. The big players like Bombardier won't start-up a production chain for four cars. We can. We have reached a level of competence whereby we are now able to receive a package and we can follow the instructions. We can make railcars," points out Joey Cyr.

Rail GD can actually do way more than just follow instructions. The company has created a division in its New Richmond shop to make furniture and seat frames.

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RAIL GD:

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"It's practical. Rocky Mountaineer wants top quality in every object installed on the train. It's not always easy to find. The quantities are not always high. We also realize that some suppliers simply back out of our tenders because we ask for top quality. So here, we control the quality of the furniture. We only have to walk 40 feet to do so and we ask Canarail to approve it," states Joey Cyr.

The size of the company is an advantage most of the time,

but occasionally a drawback. At the present time, 36 people work for Rail GD. The company opened its own shop in May 2012.

"Many companies cannot keep up with the quality we deliver, because we are small and flexible. Bombardier is not a competitor because we're not going to bid on 100 cars for a metro. The disadvantage, because we are small, our orders are also small. We have to order way ahead of our delivery date, because a company ordering 1,000 items will be served ahead of us when we just want a few," concludes Mr. Cyr.