

Cement silo to be ready soon in New Richmond

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – The installation of a cement silo near the New Richmond passenger and freight train stations is progressing well, although slightly slower than expected, but it will be ready on time for the production start of the McInnis Cement plant in Port Daniel.

The Gaspésie Railway Society staff and its three contractors are still working underground on the base of the silo. That silo was made by Fabrication Delta, located next door.

“The installation should be completed in a matter of days. The underground structure is not completed. It was a bit more laborious than anticipated. The soil offered a bit of a challenge and we had to run more tests but it will be ready soon. Once the underground base is completed, the silo will be quickly installed and we will be ready to load railcars,” explains Luc Lévesque, Director General of the Gaspésie Railway Society, the operator of the freight train.

The silo is necessary because the railway line is currently closed east of Caplan, due to a decision made in March 2015 by the owner of the Matapédia to Gaspé line, Quebec’s Department of Transport. Repairs are needed on four bridges located between Caplan and Port Daniel, where the McInnis Cement plant is located. That facility is situated right next to the railway line.

Trucks will haul cement between Port Daniel and New Richmond until the bridges are repaired between Caplan and Port Daniel. A first customer has agreed to buy 28,000 tonnes of cement annually for five years from McInnis Cement and use the New Richmond silo before the line is fixed. A fleet of 25 brand new covered hopper cars will be used for that traffic. The cars arrived in the Gaspé at the end of March.

Meanwhile, the Gaspésie Railway Society will take delivery of 25 woodchip cars at the end of May or beginning of June, in order to replace the cars belonging to CN and used

at the Temrex sawmill in Nouvelle. CN’s car lease agreement was not profitable for the Gaspésie Railway Society.

The replacement cars are leased at a more advantageous cost from an Oregon-based company and could eventually be bought by the Gaspésie Railway Society. They are used cars.

“We have a buying option agreement regarding those cars. They will be sent to Rail GD upon their arrival for

minor modifications and then brought in our operations,” says Mr. Lévesque.

From now on, the Gaspésie Railway Society will also accelerate the frequency of its windmill blade trains from one monthly train to two. The last such train left New Richmond on May 6. The next one will leave on May 27 while the next empty train will come in three days later for departure around June 10.

The blades also have to be

trucked, in this case from LM Windpower’s Gaspé plant to New Richmond because of the condition of the railway. Trucking fees are significantly higher than rail transportation costs for that traffic, and it is the same case for cement.

Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard announced on May 5 that the Gaspé Peninsula railway will be upgraded and repaired over its whole length but the time frame remains unknown.



Photo: G. Gagné

As soon as the underground work is finished, the silo will be installed quickly.