



Railway bridge proves dependable

Gilles Gagné

RISTIGOUCHE SOUTH EAST – The Gaspésie Railway Society, Transport Québec and a Mont-Joli company, Sema Railway Structures successfully united to change an old railway bridge between September 23 and September 28 at Ristigouche South East, between Pointe-à-la-Croix and Matapédia.

The previous mileage 9 bridge dated back to the 1890s and has been hit with slow orders since at least 1989. The replacement of the bridge was initially scheduled for the fall of 2015 but it was postponed several times by the owner of the Matapédia to Gaspé line, Quebec's department of Transport.

"The bridge was made in Mont-Joli by Sema Railway Structures and that company also carried out its installation," points out Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society,

the operator of the line.

The last train to pass on the old bridge was the September 23 windmill blade train. Traffic resumed on September 28 with a train hauling woodchips, lumber and cement.

"The cost of replacing the bridge amounted to \$1 million," adds Mr. Lévesque. That amount was taken from the annual envelope earmarked by Transport Québec for line improvements and maintenance work over the functional stretch of the railway, between Matapédia and Caplan.

Luc Lévesque doesn't know when a portion of the \$100 million announced on May 5 by Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard will be available for improvements on the Matapédia to Gaspé line.

He also doesn't know if the nomination of a new minister responsible for the region, namely Pierre Moreau, will

Cont'd on page 5 ▶



Photo: G. Gagné

Freight trains such as this windmill blade train can now pass at a fair speed on the bridge spanning the Kempt River at Ristigouche South East, after decades of slow orders.

BRIDGE

▶ **Cont'd from cover**

will accelerate the assessment process pertaining to line improvements.

In the meantime, three of the four windmill blade trains

scheduled between the end of October and the Christmas break will be delayed until the beginning of 2018, due to the impact the September rain storms had on the installation of windmills in Texas.

The Gaspésie Railway Society staff remains very busy. They have completed the replacement of close to 20,400 ties between Matapédia and

New Richmond, the spreading of 20,000 tons of ballast, the addition of cement traffic to the freight train, the integration of the leased woodchip cars to Nouvelle's Temrex sawmill activities, and the upcoming addition of the Saint-Elzéar sawmill to the freight clients, something that should take place before the end of the year.