



Track repairs have begun in the Chandler area

Gilles Gagné

CHANDLER: – During the last full week of June, a small crew of the Gaspésie Railway Society employees started to put in place the rails and ties that were washed out during the December 30, 2016 storm.

The repairs are minimal for now. The rails and ties are put back so that a hi-rail maintenance truck can inspect the line east of Caplan and all the way to Gaspé. The operation so far has cost a little over \$20,000 for the most damaged spot, near mileage 42, which is located between the Chandler train station and the bridge spanning over the Grand Pabos River.

“It is remarkable what three guys can do with a loader used over three days, a bulldozer for half-a-day and 15 truckloads of gravel,” summed up Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society, showing SPEC the result of his crew’s work. He was also involved in most of the work.

The funds came from the Gaspésie Railway Society even if the line belongs to Transports Québec.



Photo: G. Gagné

Luc Lévesque shows part of the work his crew carried out for a paltry budget of \$20,000.

On May 5, the Quebec government announced \$100 million for the upgrading of the Matapédia to Gaspé line, including the repairs that have to be carried out on many bridges. The announcement was made by Premier Philippe Couillard, however, no time frame was provided by him.

“We are taking our own funds without knowing if we will be paid back. Transport Québec was informed of the work we are doing here, and

they gave us a go-ahead. To me, putting the line back in place is a matter of safety. It also looks better,” adds Mr. Lévesque.

A train would not be allowed to pass on the tracks considering the minimal state of repair they were in after the end of June chores. However, Luc Lévesque considers that adding \$75,000 over the fall, and before the big storm season, would complete the repair task of the spot that was hit the hardest in Decem-

ber, a 2,000 foot stretch that had not received valuable protection since 2010.

“We need 2,000 to 3,000 tonnes of ballast and between 1,000 and 1,500 new ties. We will bring the temper machine to level that stretch of tracks and it will be repaired for trains,” points out Mr. Lévesque.

Following the December storm, he prepared a document for Transports Québec describing the list of works that would have to be carried out in order to repair the six spots that were then damaged. The total bill for the six spots amounted to between \$700,000 and \$900,000.

When the minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula, Sébastien Proulx, stopped in Chandler on January 12, he was seeing track repairs in that area as an almost insurmountable task, notably expressing that the line was in such bad shape that some spots were not reachable.

Luc Lévesque doesn’t know if Transport Québec will agree to earmark money over the fall for the protection of the stretches that are currently repaired. He is revising his first cost assessment.

“If the most affected spot can be repaired for \$75,000, and considering that there are five other spots, math tell us that it won’t cost \$900,000,” he simply says.

The other damaged spots are located in Pabos Mills, two places near mileage 41, in Pabos, near mileage 48, in Corner-of-the-Beach, Barachois, and in Douglastown.

“In Pabos, the rocks protecting the track were not washed out but some of the ballast was, due to the waves. It is minor. In Pabos, the work is comparable to Chandler’s but the spot is shorter. The tracks are also protecting highway 132 and we will, in all likelihood, get some assistance there from the road division of Transports Québec because of that aspect. In Barachois, there is very little erosion. In fact, we have to clear the sand on the track. In Douglastown, we have to do some protection work for the track but that’s it,” explains Luc Lévesque.

So far, there is no information about the way the sum of \$100 million announced on May 5th will be invested or when some of the money will be available