

Transports generate six times more gas emissions than trains

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – If the federal program announced by Minister Marc Garneau is serious about curtailing gas emissions linked to transportation, the upgrading of the Gaspé Peninsula line and the resumption of traffic east of Caplan should qualify for some funding.

According to Statistics Canada, one tonne of freight hauled over one kilometre by train generates six times less greenhouse emissions than being hauled by transport. That tonne generates 17.85 grams of carbon dioxide in a train compared to 114 grams per tonne when pulled by a truck. Ships are emitting less carbon dioxide per tonne, at 5 grams over a kilometre but they can't be used much inland, unless there are seaways.

Gaspésie Railway Society president Éric Dubé is confident that the transporter will haul 5,000 carloads in 2018.

"We just would like to haul that traffic over the longest stretch possible along the line, the whole line in the case of Gaspé, for the windmill blades, or a longer distance, like Port Daniel for cement. That is not counting other types of traffic that will arise if we offer a service east of Caplan. Overall, the progress we have made since the spring of 2015 is staggering," says Mr. Dubé.

The situation of the Gaspésie Railway Society appeared quite bleak between November 2014 and March

2015, as the municipal body filed for the protection of the court due to financial difficulty.

In 2015, the number of carloads nevertheless reached 1,624, a record since the creation of the Gaspésie Railway Society in 2007, which started with a volume of 400 cars. The 2015 numbers were surpassed by the 1,741 carloads of 2016, the difference being mainly attributable to the first windmill blade train of December.

The Gaspésie Railway Society management is expecting to haul 3,000 carloads this year, a rise largely stemming from the traffic generated by the LM Windpower activities in Gaspé.

The \$2-billion fund announced on July 4 will go to projects that will have the biggest impact on more easily moving goods and people around the country and over borders. Proponents will be able to provide their proposals by Sept. 5, with funding to start coming out at the beginning of 2018.

The program is included in a \$10.1 billion expenditure plan over the next 11 years on trade and transportation corridor projects. Close to 50% of that amount, about \$5 billion, will be allotted to projects through the soon-to-be-created infrastructure bank. The bank is supposed to use federal funding to try and leverage private investment slated to help pay for projects that can generate revenue and profits to private investors.



Photo: G. Gagné

Sending all of LM Windpower's blades by rail from Gaspé instead of New Richmond would greatly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Quebec's Department of Transport put that portion of the line in a dormant state in 2015.