

Woodchip cars are in, cement silo ready for tests

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – Chandler track repairs are not the only progressing file at the Gaspésie Railway Society. Twenty-five woodchip cars were delivered on June 26. The cars are leased for four years, with the option to buy. The construction of the silo that will be used to ship out part of McInnis Cement Port Daniel's plant output was also completed over the third week of June.

"Sixteen of the 25 woodchip cars are already in New Richmond and the others are in Matapédia. They will be put in service gradually. They have to go to the Rail GD shop for minor repairs and checked before being put back in service," explains Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society, the operator of the Matapédia-Gaspé line.

All of the 25 cars, built in 1979, will be in service before the end of the summer. "They will replace the cars leased from CN. That will improve our profitability and secure that traffic which was put in



Photo: G. Gagné

Some of the woodchip cars leased in Oregon by the Gaspésie Railway Society arrived in New Richmond on June 26.

jeopardy at times over the last three years," adds Mr. Lévesque without further explaining.

Éric Dubé, president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, has stated on several occasions that CN was charging too much for woodchip cars. Number-wise, woodchip cars represent a significant amount of traffic for the GRS, which is under municipal control. The rates charged by CN were nullifying the profits that could have been made for woodchip hauling.

Approximately 1,000 woodchip cars are loaded annually at the Temrex sawmill in Nouvelle and delivered to the White Birch paper mill in Rivière-du-Loup. This year, in New Richmond, more than 1,000 cars will be loaded with windmill blades, a traffic that is becoming number one on the Gaspesian line.

As for hauling cement, Luc Lévesque points out that tests have to be carried out on the silo before the track is re-installed under it. "We will use a truck for the unloading and

loading test. Then, we will put the track back in place under it. We will start as soon as we get a signal from McInnis Cement," he says.

The Gaspésie Railway Society is also ready to load lumber in New Richmond, near the Fabrication Delta plant, a bit to the northwest. The lumber is produced by the Association coopérative forestière de Saint-Elzéar sawmill.

"We are waiting for a call from the Saint-Elzéar mill broker. Maybe the lumber dispute (between Canada and the

United States) is slowing down the process but we are ready," says Mr. Lévesque.

The next windmill blade train is scheduled for July 22nd. It will be the eighth such train since that new traffic materialized in December. The blades are made by the LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé and trucked to New Richmond because the railway is closed east of Caplan. That situation contributed heavily to the Quebec government's decision to allot \$100 million for the Gaspé Peninsula railway.

