



## Transport Quebec fails to provide explanation about bridge upgrading slowness

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – Since December 2013, Spec has repeatedly tried to get explanations from Transport Quebec and has also attempted to get an answer from the minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula, Pierre Moreau, about the government's slowness in starting significant repair work on the region's railroad.

In December, the office of Minister Moreau completely ignored an information request from Spec, seven-and-a-half months after Premier Philippe Couillard's announcement that \$100 million was earmarked by the Quebec government for upgrades on the railway between Matapédia and Gaspé.

At the beginning of March, another information request was filed, with Transport Quebec's communications office, and no answer was received. A third attempt

was made on March 13 and a day later, SPEC received an early morning phone call from Martin Girard, from Transport Quebec's media relations office in Montreal.

He took note of the paper's questions regarding that department's apparent slowness in issuing calls for tenders regarding the railroad, notably to upgrade or rebuild some of its bridges. Spec also wants to know the logic and the scientific explanation behind the limit of ten loaded railcars imposed on the Cascapédia-St-Jules bridges.

Mr. Girard was reached at the end of the day on March 14 and notified SPEC that he hadn't received a single answer. He failed to call Spec back the following day and was out of the office on March 15.

The announcement made by Premier Couillard now goes back ten-and-a-half months. The limit of ten



Photo: G. Gagné

*Lumber could be loaded on flat cars in New Richmond too but the limit imposed by Transport Quebec casts a doubt over that potential.*

loaded cars per week on the Cascapédia-St-Jules bridges was imposed at the beginning of December, so three-and-a-half months ago.

Without criticizing Transport Quebec, the director of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Luc Lévesque, points out

that the limit not only complicates operations with existing customers such as McInnis Cement, but it hampers the transporter's growth and its revenue sources.

"We have other transshipment possibilities for New Richmond in the short term.

We have talked about lumber but I can say that at least two other companies are interested. However, that freight is heavy and would be blocked by the limit of ten loaded cars. The problem is not only

**Cont'd on page 11**

Page 6, March 21, 2018 - Spec

### RAILWAY BRIDGE:

**Cont'd from page 6**

linked to the added complexity of operating a railway with all the constraints we must overcome; it will at one point cast a doubt about the possibility of using the railway as a sound transportation means in the Gaspé Peninsula", analyzes Mr. Lévesque.

He also points out that the goal of the Gaspésie Railway Society is not to develop a transshipment centre in New Richmond but to provide a service as close to the customers as possible. "It is the best way to maximise our efficiency and our revenues".