



Transport Steven McWhirter obtains sizable cement hauling contract

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – After a call for tenders, a New Richmond company, Transport Steven MacWhirter, recently won a significant cement hauling contract awarded by the Gaspésie Railway Society. The trucking company will haul the cement from Port Daniel that is needed at the New Richmond and Nouvelle terminals to load rail cars.

Company owner Steven McWhirter's bid edged six other tenders. He is not discussing numbers publicly, but he is confident that the contract will allow his company to grow.

"I have seven drivers now and I will need six or seven more. They are coming. There is a shortage of drivers but I am confident to find them. People are coming," points out Mr. McWhirter.

The eight trucks he owns are sufficient for now to fill the hauling needs of McInnis Cement between Port Daniel, New Richmond and Nouvelle.

"I am no longer hauling wood, only cement. Wood hauling was only needed four days a week. It was not enough, with all the costs like insurance and so on," explains Steven McWhirter.

The Gaspésie Railway Society was forced to open the New Richmond and Nouvelle terminals in order to cope with Transport Quebec's de-



Photo: G. Gagné

The trucks of Transport Steven McWhirter started hauling cement recently.

cision to put the line east of Caplan in a dormant state in 2015, even if the McInnis Cement plant was under construction since May 2014. The railroad passes through the middle of the site.

Transport Quebec acquired the line in March 2015 after the Gaspésie Railway Society experienced financial difficulties. That municipal body remained the line operator and is guaranteed to fill that role for at least five more years.

Since the line between Caplan and Port Daniel has not been repaired since 2015, and given the relatively limited capacity of the Cascapédia-St-Jules railway bridges, the Gaspésie Railway built a transshipment terminal in New Richmond in 2017, and added the Nouvelle one in

June of this year to cope with McInnis Cement's growing needs.

The cement cars receive two-thirds of their load in New Richmond and the load is completed in Nouvelle. It takes three truck trailers to fill a cement car. Close to 40 cement cars are now loaded weekly in New Richmond and Nouvelle, the equivalent

of 120 truck trailers. The trailers are rented by the Gaspésie Railway Society.

Since July 2017, a company from Matane, Transport Normand, was in charge of bringing the cement to New Richmond or Nouvelle. Steven McWhirter is happy to have won the call for tenders.

"It will be good for the

economy down here. It will provide salaries for 12 families of the area. That's better than paying people from Matane. It will support our economy," says the man who has owned his trucking business for 10 years.

The president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé, expects cement traffic to rise before the end of 2018.

"There is a clause in the contract signed with Steven McWhirter that makes provision for a traffic increase. Matane's Transport Normand is staying around for the transition period," says Mr. Dubé.

The duration of the contract between the Gaspésie Railway Society and Transport Steven McWhirter is three years. The realization of line repairs between Caplan and Port Daniel, as well as the replacement of the Cascapédia-St-Jules bridges, are not expected to reach completion before the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021.