

Quebec adds \$135 million for the railway

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GASPÉ: – Between now and 2022 Quebec will add \$135 million for the railway, bringing the total amount to \$235 million to rehabilitate the railway to Gaspé, while maintaining the target of 2025. This announcement surprised all the elected officials present on February 25 at the Ministry of Transport garage in Gaspé.

The money will be mainly invested between Caplan and Port Daniel-Gascons while studies are still underway for the Port Daniel-Gaspé section. The line between Gaspé and Percé should be ready in 2024 for the tourist train.

"We really want to speed up the work. We want to make sure that there is enough money for the transformation to take place and that it will be operational by 2025," says the minister responsible for the region, Marie-Eve Proulx.

"We realized that the state of the situation was worse than we thought," she stated when asked the reasons for the additional funds.



Minister Marie-Eve Proulx surprised everyone with new money for the railway.

Photo: N. Sergerie

"The \$135 million will be mainly allocated to the second section (Caplan-Port Daniel). This is because we have completed the preparatory studies. Some work will be done on Section 3. We are starting and we will continue the preparatory studies," says the manager of the rail file at the Ministry of Transport, Mathieu Grondin.

Section 3 requires sub-

stantial work: 24 bridges and 269 culverts to fix, 17 retaining walls to redo and 15 km of track near the sea to protect as well as the Gascons faults and some rail segments that have to be moved.

"During the course of the year, we will have a better estimate of the costs for Section 3," says Grondin, who does not want to speculate on the amounts to come.

The president of the *Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie* hesitated the day before about whether to participate in the press conference in Gaspé or not. Accompanied by the mayor of Gaspé and prefect of the Côte-de-Gaspé MRC, Daniel Côté; and his colleague from Carleton-sur-Mer and prefect of the Avignon MRC, Mathieu Lapointe; Éric Dubé displayed a broad smile when the minister unveiled the envelope dedicated to the Gaspesian rail network.

"We knew it was going to take money of this magnitude. Surprised to hear this announcement this morning and very happy," says Mr. Dubé.

He hopes that Quebec will complete the line to Gaspé before 2025.

Once the work is finished, the VIA Rail train can return. "The end goal is to bring the track down to 286,000 pounds (for freight purposes) to allow passenger trains to return. From the start, we have maintained this line. We did not want to fix it in a hurry and end up with the

same problem. When the project is finished, I hope to have a rehabilitated railway for the next 75 or 100 years."

A study by the firm Aecon carried out on behalf of the Ministry of Transport previously mentioned a sum of \$300 million to rehabilitate the entire railway between Matapédia and Gaspé.

In August Ottawa announced \$46 million in funding to protect the railway in the face of coastal erosion and climate change on Section 3.

In total, Quebec intends to invest \$307 million in transportation for the region in 2020-2022. \$169 million will be for the road system, \$8 million more than the period 2019-2021. Among the main projects is the reconstruction of the Moffet Creek culvert on Route 132 in Ristigouche-Partie-Sud-Est as traffic has been alternating in this sector for several weeks. This work is valued between \$5M and \$10M. The Transports Québec will also complete phase 1 of the reconstruction of Route 132 in the Pabos Mills and Newport sectors.