

## \$350 million for transportation infrastructure over three years

Nelson Sergerie

GASPÉ: An unprecedented amount of \$350 million will be invested over the next two years in the Gaspé Peninsula and the Magdalen Islands road, rail and airport networks.

This is the third year that the Quebec government has announced investments of over \$300 million for the region for a two-year period.

“Since our arrival in government, more than \$850 million has been invested in the region, about \$400 million more than the previous Liberal Government. It’s for com-



Minister of Culture and Communications, Nathalie Roy, was delegated to make the announcements.

Photo: N. Sergerie

parison,” launched the Minister of Culture and Communications, Nathalie Roy, who

travelled to Gaspé on the afternoon of April 7 to make the announcement on behalf of

her colleague from the Transport Ministry, François Bonnardel.

No fewer than 74 projects are planned for 2022-2024.

Unsurprisingly, the lion’s share goes to the repair of the railway: \$144 million will be spent on this major regional project, but no new sum has been announced by Minister Roy. The envelope remains at \$235 million.

“For section three, we expect to have additional sums while the costs for section two are higher than what had been originally thought,” underlines Frédéric Bouthilliette who is in charge of the rail-

way file at the Ministry of Transport.

Ottawa also announced \$45.8 million in August 2019 for the Port-Daniel-Gascons-Gaspé section.

### Still no date for Gaspé

The minister didn’t have any “good news” for when the rail will reach Gaspé considering that last winter Quebec reneged on its word that it would happen by 2025.

“As for this small detail, I don’t have a date to give you today,” says Ms. Roy.

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### TRANSPORT:

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This isn’t preventing the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie from remaining optimistic, even if there’s no planned budget for this year.

The president of the Société, Éric Dubé, mentions that preparatory work, in particular engineering, is being done on section three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

“When we know the real costs, that’s when we will have claims to make. But in the meantime, we have always had signs that the government would invest the necessary sums,” says Mr. Dubé, who remains confident that the new date of 2024 to return the train to Port-Daniel-Gascons will be respected.

“With five calls for tenders on the section that will go out by the end of spring, everything is going according to plan. The work will be able to start this summer and finish next year,” believes Mr. Dubé.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté, is always looking forward to having a date for the rail to return to his backyard.

“I understand the technical issues and I am not an engineer. Above all, I want the govern-

ment’s commitment for repairs of the rail to Gaspé to be maintained. This is the case until now. I hope this will be the case in a sustainable way,” says Mr. Côté.

While galloping inflation causes surprises when opening bids, the regional director of the Ministry of Transport, Yves Berger, cannot move forward.

“It’s a bit difficult to answer. There are projects in call for tenders that arrive under the estimates. There are others that are above our estimates. It depends a lot on the time of year when we make our calls for tenders and the contractors. There is a fluctuation, we admit. But to give precise figures, we will wait to move the season forward,” says the director.

#### Pointe-Navarre Boulevard

Among the other projects, Gaspé had been claiming work for several months to correct the roadway on Boulevard de Pointe-Navarre near the Saint-Majorique crossing.

Work planned for this summer on the crossing and the boulevard is estimated between \$1M and \$5M for each of the projects and 5.4 kilometres of asphalt from the bridges to the

town centre.

“That road is a minefield, and it is one of the busiest roads in Eastern Quebec. Excellent news,” says Daniel Côté, who recalls that this is a sector that “works a lot.”

#### Elsewhere in the Gaspé Peninsula

There are no major announcements regarding the issue of coastal erosion and the fragility of Highway 132 in Haute-Gaspésie. “They are aware of it. Everything still depends on future studies. We hope that it will be done as quickly as possible to do work to protect the population and keep our only link,” notes the prefect of Haute-Gaspésie, Guy Bernatchez.

Major works are planned at La Martre, Marsoui and Anse-Pleureuse.

In Rocher-Percé, the redevelopment of Highway 132 in the Pabos Mills sector between rue de l’Église up to the new connection of Highway 132 in Chandler is in the plans.

In Cascapedia-Saint-Jules, the bridge over the Trout Brook will be rebuilt. The construction site is estimated between \$5M and \$10M.

Erosion protection struc-

tures will be built along Route 299 in Rivière-Bonaventure and Chemin Saint-Edgar in New Richmond.

The York west and York south intersection and York Boulevard south will be redesigned.

A traffic light will be installed at the intersection of Chemin Saint-Edgar and Highway 132, as will the bridge over the railway on 3rd range west

in New Richmond.

Finally, a protective wall will be erected at the cove along Highway 132 in Shigawake, a stretch of 200 metres. In addition to the \$144M for rail, \$56M will go for roadways, \$57M for structures and \$6M for airports, notably that of Bonaventure.

In 2021, the protection of Highway 132 at Pic de l’Aurore in Percé was completed.