



SCFG stands out in North America by winning CN's Short line railroad of the year award

GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND - The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) has received Canadian National's inaugural Brandon C. Rudnikoff Short line partner of the year 2025 award.

This award recognizes the railway that has most distinguished itself in North America through its commitment to developing new rail traffic and maintaining strong business relationships.

The award was presented at the Short line Railroad Conference held in Montreal by Canadian National (CN) on May 21.

"Considering that nearly 100 short line railroads do business with Canadian National in North America, it is a tremendous recognition to be nominated and recognized for this award! This award is the culmination of more than ten years of work and commitment by a team dedicated and mobilized to develop rail transportation in the Gaspé Peninsula!

Seeing this achievement recognized by such a major partner as CN, and across North America, is a source of great pride," reacts Éric Dubé, president of the SCFG.

The SCFG is one of the very few railways with non-profit status and a regional administration composed of elected officials. This unusual status still allows the SCFG to stand out, and even perform remarkably, among comparable private companies, while prioritizing regional development, adds Mr. Dubé.

Including an annual grant given out by Quebec's Department of Transport, the owner of the Matapedia to Gaspé line, the SCFG generates revenues of over \$20 million annually, more than 90% of which is invested regionally.

"It is a fantastic and unique lever for regional development in the Gaspé Peninsula. Management would like to dedicate this recognition to its entire team, thanks to whom the SCFG was able to achieve this distinction. And of course, all



Canadian National's Patrick Lortie, senior vice-president and strategies manager; SCFG marketing and sales representative Lucie Rioux; SCFG director general Luc Lévesque; and CN's James Gunther, director of network strategies and partnerships, took part in the award ceremony on May 21.

Photo: Courtesy of the SCFG

of this is thanks to CN, our first and major partner in our rail transportation operations," concludes Éric Dubé.

An effort deployed over more than a decade

Luc Lévesque, director general of the SCFG, was asked by CN prior to the award ceremony to determine some elements of its business relation

with Canada's biggest railroad company, which takes all the traffic from the Gaspé Peninsula at the interchange point of Matapedia. CN then delivers it to its final destination, sometimes with the assistance of another railway company.

"The windmill blades, the cement traffic initiated in 2017, the upcoming regular use of the railway between Bathurst to Moncton for cement hauling to Moncton, and some other upcoming ventures were put up and are being organized with the collaboration of CN," explains Mr. Lévesque.

Sometimes, the SCFG carries out technical mandates outside its own line, as shippers want some advice about how to organize the logistics of a hauling opportunity.

"It is currently happening with a lumber company located in the Lower Saint Lawrence region which is about to resume woodchip traffic. We can provide advice about how and where to lay out tracks, about loading operations, the rules applying to such operations and safety measures," stresses Mr. Lévesque.

"Sometimes, organizing such clients will lead to increased traffic for our line, sometimes it will just bring in some consulting revenues but it helps CN. We are a smaller organization with the capacity of being flexible for such projects," he adds.

In 2024, the SCFG hauled 2,066 freight cars between New Richmond and Matapedia. The number will increase in 2025 because at the end of the summer or beginning of the fall, cement will be shipped out from the Port Daniel cement plant instead of being trucked from Port Daniel to New Rich-

mond and then transshipped to railway cars.

The elimination of the transshipment step will make the railway more competitive than the current operational mode. Moreover, CN's decision to haul the cement to Moncton will eliminate a fair share of the trucks currently transporting that commodity. In order to do this, CN will reinstate a regular freight train between Bathurst and Miramichi. Such a train will also bolster the numbers of the current freight train linking Miramichi and Moncton.

Luc Lévesque doesn't know yet how many additional cement cars it will generate for the Matapedia to Port Daniel stretch. "It is a significant volume, based on the number of trucks that are passing on Highway 132 loaded with cement," he says.

Over the last decade, the peak traffic year for the SCFG occurred in 2021, with 4,636 cars. At that time, there was an intense windmill blade traffic between New Richmond and Matapedia. The blades were trucked at a high cost from the LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé to New Richmond. Hauling them by train from Gaspé would have saved a lot of money for LM customers. However, the line was not fit at that time for railway traffic. Its reopening east of Port Daniel remains unknown, time-wise, as Transports Québec is trying to find ways to finish the work for less money than the last calls for tenders revealed.

Windmill blade traffic was stopped in May 2022. Blades are currently transported to the south part of the United States by ships, a mode used between December 2016 and May 2021.