

The train at the cement plant in early fall

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NEW RICHMOND - After several delays, the train will finally reach Port-Daniel-Gascons in early fall, according to the president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie.

In 2017, Quebec announced \$100 million to upgrade the rail line between Matapédia and Gaspé. In 2020, an additional \$135 million was added to the budget with a promise to reach Port-Daniel-Gascons by 2022.

However, in February 2022, another delay pushed the timeline to 2024. Then last fall, yet another postponement was announced, as some bridges were not quite ready and an issue had arisen with the tunnel near the cement plant. Since the plant itself was not yet ready to receive trains, the delay to spring 2025 was not perceived as a setback at the time.

One of the last remaining



The Caplan Bridge is almost ready.

Photo: N Sergerie

obstacles was the bridge in Caplan.

"The rails have been laid on the bridge. The ballast still needs to be installed on the approaches. Normally, we should be 100% operational by next week at the latest," said Éric Dubé, president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie.

Even though the infrastructure is new, it must still undergo inspection to ensure compliance.

As for the tunnel, the Ministry of Transport has informed the company that the work should allow trains to pass through it to reach the cement plant this fall. Work on the approaches could continue even while trains are running nearby.

"We are hopeful, along with the department, that by early fall we will be able to reach the cement plant, which has been our goal since the beginning of the

year," said Mr. Dubé.

All infrastructure between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons will be inspected before the train is given the green light to travel to the cement plant.

Even if all preparations are not yet complete, the plant will still be able to load cement.

"We have plenty of ways to load cars even if the work is not finished. Our goal is to be operational as soon as possible. The day the rail allows us to get to Port-Daniel, you can count on us to load cement," said Mr. Dubé.

"I can't wait to make the news that the first cement

train is leaving Port-Daniel," said the president after these multiple delays.

Herbicide on the railroad

The ZICO Conservation Society of Baie-de-Gaspé is once again denouncing the use of chemical herbicides to control vegetation along the railroad.

The organization has been fighting against these methods for years, pointing out that alternatives exist, and is once again calling for an end to spraying, as it endangers the health of citizens and the environment, noting that the railroad runs alongside residences with artesian wells, wetlands, salmon rivers, and the Chaleurs and Gaspé bays.

The organization points out that Switzerland and Sweden use hot water to control vegetation, and the White Pass and Yukon Railway, between Skagway, Alaska (United States) and Whitehorse, Yukon, has relied on mechanical means since 2016.

The organization emphasizes that other non-chemical methods are possible and should be prioritized.