

MTQ refuses to provide figures on rail investments

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – When asked about the specific amounts invested by the Quebec government since the start of the rail rehabilitation between Matapédia and Gaspé, the Ministry of Transport has no precise figures to provide at this stage.

With trains now operating on Sections 1 and 2 between Matapédia and Port-Daniel-Gascons, SPEC sought to determine the total investment required to restore service along that portion of the line.

“For Sections 1 and 2, the final amounts invested will be known upon the completion of all contracts awarded for each project. The Ministry must wait until that time to finalize the costs due to factors that could increase or decrease them,” the ministry replies in an email.

Questions also remain regarding Section 3, between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

Elected officials have frequently cited cost overruns of between \$150 million and \$200 million compared with the budget initially allocated for that segment. In June 2023, then-transport minister Geneviève Guilbault announced a budget of \$517 million for the work.

“Regarding Section 3, two major calls for bids related to the work were cancelled in



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

The Ministry of Transport declines to provide figures on the amounts invested to date in the Gaspé railway between Matapédia and Gaspé.

2025 because the costs presented in the bids represented a significant deviation from the ministry’s estimates,” the ministry simply states, even though the question was about obtaining a precise figure for the cost overruns in question.

In its email, the ministry reiterates the budgets authorized by the Government of Quebec: \$54.5 million for the section between Matapédia and Caplan; \$299.7 million for the section between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons; and for the section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, “the authorized budget will be specified upon completion of planning,” despite announcements made by Quebec in 2023.

It should be noted that no

specific amount is mentioned in the 2026–2036 Quebec Infrastructure Plan for the rail rehabilitation to Gaspé.

Based on the estimate presented in June 2023 by then-minister Geneviève Guilbault and the cost overruns cited by provincial elected officials, the rehabilitation of the Port-Daniel-Gascons to Gaspé section could reach approximately \$700 million.

Furthermore, various stakeholders note that nearly \$200 million has been invested in Section 3 to date, with the most visible projects being the Grande-Rivière and Douglastown bridges.

The total project budget announced in 2023 was \$817.8 million. Taking cost overruns into account, the final cost could approach \$1 billion.