

Possible Horne smelter closure by Glencore: No Impact for Osisko

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NEW RICHMOND – The announcement of the potential closure of the Horne smelter in Rouyn-Noranda in March 2027 does not change Osisko Metals' game plan, which aims to re-launch operations at Mines Gaspé in Murdochville around 2030.

Glencore, the smelter's owner, announced it was suspending investments to reduce emissions in Rouyn-Noranda after the Quebec government declined financial assistance. The Legault government has said it wants to find a way to avoid a closure.

Osisko's chief executive officer, Robert Wares, says it would be "tragic" to see the only Canadian copper smelter



On December 18, 2008, this train delivered ore to the Horne smelter, recovered from cleanup following the April 2002 closure of the Murdochville copper smelter.

Photo: David Morris

close and hopes for an agreement with the Quebec government to maintain operations beyond the date set by the metallurgical giant.

The Horne division also

processes copper ore from Sudbury, Ontario. Osisko has an agreement to sell the ore produced in Murdochville to the multinational firm, whose head office is located in Switzerland.

The potential closure would not affect Osisko's economic plan, since the product could be shipped from Gaspé to Europe rather than by rail from Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Mr. Wares de-

clined to give an interview at this stage.

Impacts on the SCFG

Osisko had indicated before the Christmas holidays that it needed rail to send copper to the smelter in Rouyn-Noranda. Should the Horne smelter close, such a decision will have an impact on the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG), which would have gained a valuable ally in convincing the Quebec government of the need to complete the rehabilitation of the railway between Port Daniel and Gaspé.

"When we saw it in the news, it added another layer of

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uncertainty. We see how interdependent we are with what's happening in the province. We don't want to get too alarmed. We understand that discussions are underway. The smelter isn't going to close tomorrow morning. We're hoping for an agreement so that we can work on developing ore transport," comments the SCFG president, Éric Dubé.

Even if Osisko were no longer a potential customer, the rail rehabilitation remains crucial.

"There's more traffic than that. LM Wind Power is still there and could put blades on the train. There are several

discussions with others. The more potential there is, the better the chances. That's what Transport minister Jonatan Julien told us in December when they sent the ministry back to do its homework for the feasibility study. That's what we're working on. It doesn't just depend on one company, but it (the potential closure of the Horne smelter) will certainly have an impact," he says.

Mr. Dubé notes that the economy is experiencing upheaval, particularly in the last year with the arrival of American president Donald Trump.

The SCFG president points out that rail travels in both directions, so inputs for businesses could also come to the Gaspé Peninsula by rail.