



Rail: Transport Minister sows doubt

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GASPÉ – Quebec's Transport Minister is raising doubts about the current provincial government's willingness to continue rehabilitating Section 3 of the rail line between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.

The response came during question period at the National Assembly on February 25, following a question from Liberal Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Enrico Ciccone, spokesperson for Gaspé Peninsula issues.

"In 2020, the Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) promised that the train would reach Gaspé in 2025. Subsequently, the project was postponed to 2026 and then to 2027. In 2025, the project disappeared from the Quebec Infrastructure Plan. The CAQ made promises and, as usual, failed to deliver. I wonder what the Member for Gaspé thinks about this," asks the Marquette MNA.

"I went with my colleague to meet with various stakeholders in the Gaspé Peninsula specifically about the



Photo: National Assembly screenshot

Transport Minister Jonatan Julien during question period on February 25 at the National Assembly.

train. The last section had a business plan closely linked to LM Wind Power with wind turbines. Once this structure goes through maritime transport, we are rethinking the third section. But the others are moving forward," replies Minister Jonatan Julien.

This comments surprised the president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG).

"We must remember that when the government was considering this, it was in the 2025 budget. We are now back in the fall of 2024. LM was producing 107-metre blades for offshore projects that could only be shipped by ship. LM had some issues, but they returned to producing smaller blades that can be transported by rail. That's what we're working on to justify the relevance of renovat-

ing the third section," replies Éric Dubé.

During the meeting with the minister in December in Maria, Mr. Dubé said the issue had already been discussed.

"Yes, there is a large volume with LM. But we also have other companies that we will be able to serve. We often think about what we can export, take out of the region, but it also allows us to bring in inputs for our companies," the SCFG president points out.

The railway company has been working for several years to complete the rehabilitation of the line to Gaspé.

"Politically, this will remain an issue. There is a budgetary challenge for the government, which we understand. But we have all the tools to demonstrate the relevance and necessity of rehabilitation. There will be a budget soon, and the premier will change by April. There will be an electoral campaign in the fall. These are all opportunities that we will seize," says Mr. Dubé.

Work is still underway on

Section 3, particularly on the Grande-Rivière and Douglas-town bridges.

The Quebec government has invested approximately \$150 million in the final section to date.

The railway received authorization from the Quebec government on December 22 to resume service on Section 2 between Caplan and Port-Daniel-Gascons following an investment of nearly \$300 million.

Cement trains have been running between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Matapédia since January.

The Quebec government put the rehabilitation of the stretch between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé on hold in March 2025 due to soaring costs.

The Ministry of Transport had budgeted \$517 million in June 2023 for the final section, but since then, bids came in at between \$150 million and \$200 million higher, according to Bonaventure Member of National Assembly (MNA) Catherine Blouin. The project was sent back to the planning stage.