

The SCFG tripled its traffic in 2025, thanks to Maria's aggregates trains

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NEW RICHMOND – Freight traffic increased threefold in 2025 for the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) compared to 2024. The municipally controlled entity hauled 6,395 railcars last year instead of 2,066 the year before, including 4,700 generated by the transport of construction aggregates between Nouvelle and Maria for the latter town's beach replenishment work.

The director general of the transporter, Luc Lévesque, is satisfied with the results, even if for now the aggregates traffic is not expected to be repeated elsewhere along the coast. However, he notes that he did not know about that contract before June 2025, so surprises can happen.

"It was a good year. Our transportation revenues increased from \$4 million to \$6 million between 2024 and 2025. However, we lost some wood chip traffic starting in April due to the closure of the White Birch paper mill in Riv-



Photo: Gilles Gagné

SCFG aggregate train, fall 2025: Aggregate trains alone have tripled SCFG's traffic by 2025.

ière-du-Loup. Our diversification is saving us. We're demonstrating opportunism. You have to reach out to clients from the outset, when they're organizing themselves. That's what we did when Béluga (a contractor) called us for aggregates," explains Luc Lévesque.

Despite losing the woodchip traffic coming from the Groupe Lebel sawmill in Nouvelle, the SCFG also benefited

from revenues generated by the acquisition of 256 woodchip cars from Canadian National Railway (CN). Some of these cars, as well as the 32 cars already owned by the SCFG, are circulating elsewhere in Quebec and in Ontario. Some of them also hauled woodchips in New Brunswick in 2025.

"The closure of the Rivière-du-Loup paper mill, temporary at first and permanent in De-

cember, made us lose some woodchip traffic. The lumber industry is also going through a difficult period. However, the sawmills are looking for other paper mills to sell their woodchips and at one point, that traffic will pick up. When sawmills have to sell their woodchips far away, railways are at an advantage," analyzes Mr. Lévesque.

He is also confident that more traffic will be generated by the Saint Mary's Cement plant in Port-Daniel now that some of the production is loaded directly into railcars at the facility. It is too early to assess the situation because the first loaded cement train circulated towards New Richmond and Matapédia at the end of January.

"We are still using our temporary loading system while waiting for Saint Mary's Cement's system to be ready," says Mr. Lévesque. Certain cement cars, functioning by gravity, are still loaded in New Richmond, with trucks shuttling from the Port-Daniel fa-

cility.

There was a small increase in the lumber traffic generated by Groupe Lebel in Nouvelle. However, the SCFG does not reveal per-client traffic details, at the request of its customers.

Since the SCFG began providing freight services along the coast in 2007, its best year for operations had been 2021, with 4,636 carloads, which coincided with the peak of windmill blade transportation.

Luc Lévesque is favourably welcoming VIA Rail's stated intention, announced on March 11, to resume service in the Gaspé Peninsula, either between Matapédia and New Carlisle or between Matapédia and Port-Daniel. Between 2019 and March 2026, the management of this public rail carrier maintained that it would only return east of Matapédia once the network was repaired all the way to Gaspé.

"This is good news. No one was expecting VIA Rail," notes Mr. Lévesque, aware that it will still take a few months before the service resumes.