

Safety work underway on Haldimand railway bridge

● GILLES GAGNÉ

GASPÉ – Quebec’s Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility is carrying out safety reinforcement work on the Haldimand railway bridge over the next several weeks. The work involves reinforcing one of the bridge’s foundation units. The contractor began the work on September 17.

The Ministry is asking for the public’s cooperation in respecting the designated work zones and reminds everyone that travel on railway tracks is prohibited at all times, regardless of the mode of transport, the infrastructure’s condition or the presence of trains or construction work.

“The railway bridge near Haldimand Beach in Gaspé presents safety concerns, as the foundation unit at the western

support shows signs of damage requiring short-term repairs,” writes Sophie Gaudreault, spokesperson for Transports Québec.

“Following an inspection last May, the Ministry needed to carry out safety-related work to preserve the structure’s integrity. This work is unrelated to the Gaspésie railway rehabilitation project. It will involve reinforcing the foundation unit,” she adds, in a written response to SPEC’s questions.

Work began on September 17 and is expected to be completed in early November. The project is being carried out by the company SEMA, with an estimated cost of \$1.1 million. Sophie Gaudreault did not use the words “emergency measure” despite SPEC’s question to that effect.

The Haldimand bridge

crosses the Saint John River and links the Haldimand and Douglastown beaches. It is arguably one of the bridges most exposed to the elements along the Matapedia-to-Gaspé railway, along with the Barachois bridge.

Both bridges were targeted for major upgrades through a \$10.5-million grant announced in May 2013 by then-Quebec premier Pauline Marois. The project was not completed by the following government of Philippe Couillard, elected in April 2014. The materials, including galvanized steel plates and beams, were left near the bridge and eventually vanished.

The deterioration resulting from nearly 13 years of inactivity, coupled with inflation in the construction sector, will greatly increase the cost of repairing both bridges.