

Gaspésians working together for the future of the train surpass their goal

Gilles Gagné

PASPEBIAC: – Gaspésians working together for the future of the train, the group trying to bring VIA Rail's passenger train back, have reached their goal of sending 1,000 letters to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The last count was 1,101 letters, as of January 25.

Despite attaining the initial objective, the coalition formed by Bernard Babin, Gilles Lamy and Anthony Bernard Prince is keeping the pressure on the federal government and is asking citizens to continue sending letters.

"We still need all possible support in order to move forward and get our passenger train back. We are constantly receiving messages from people stressing how important the train is to them. Thanks for your continued support," writes Bernard Babin on the group's facebook page.

John Felker, of St

Catharines, Ontario wrote a heartfelt message on January 21.

"It used to be "VIA Rail" from St. Catharines, Ontario to Montreal, then the Gaspé train to my son's place in Shigawake, in the Gaspé. Now with no VIA train in the Niagara Peninsula and no Gaspé train, we can't visit my son and granddaughters anymore. It is 1,800 miles to drive it. My wife and I are now too old to drive that far anymore. Please do something about these problems. Thank you," said John Felker in his letter.

Anthony Bernard Prince also pointed out the contribution of a Hope resident, in a January 19 message.

"Today, we would like to stress the special contribution of Mrs. Anne Macwhirter of Hope, Quebec, who gave 50 letters out to teachers and staff, the majority of whom use the train to travel to Montreal for conventions."

Thank you everyone. Please continue to support us.

This is proof of the importance of the passenger train service on the Gaspé coast," mentions Mr. Prince.

The Coalition is trying to convince the federal government that Ottawa has to contribute financially to the betterment of the rail line in the Gaspé Peninsula, as some bridges need repairs.

The federal government has not allotted money for the Matapedia to Gaspé line since 2011. VIA Rail is a public corporation owned by the federal government.

Bernard Babin, Gilles Lamy and Anthony Bernard Prince are favouring the use of a light train, formed by Budd automotive cars, as a first step in the resumption of the service between Matapedia and Gaspé. The service was suspended in September 2013 mainly due to the state of the bridges.

The medium term objective is the return of a conventional train, like the one used until 2013.