

Gaspesian mayors ready to give new cabinet members a chance

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND – The mayors of New Richmond and Gaspé, Éric Dubé and Daniel Côté, are ready to give the cabinet members of the new Coalition Avenir Québec government a chance to prove their good faith and ability to act over the next months.

Daniel Côté and Éric Dubé will keep a close eye on two ministers, Marie-Ève Proulx and François Bonnardel, who each represent territories with strong rural content.

Marie-Ève Proulx, the Côte-du-Sud riding Member of the National Assembly is the new minister responsible for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands, as well as delegate minister of Regional Economic Development. She is also responsible for the regions of Lower Saint Lawrence and Chaudière-Appalaches. Those three regions cover 24 MRCs. Her riding covers the west extremity of Lower Saint-Lawrence and the Montmagny area.

François Bonnardel is



Photo: G. Gagné

Traffic has been increasing steadily on the line since 2014 and the mayors of New Richmond and Gaspé think that the up-grading of the railway will continue.

Quebec's new Transport Minister. He represents the riding of Granby. He has been a Member of the National Assembly for 11.5 years, first for Action démocratique du Québec in Shefford, and then for Coalition avenir Québec.

"Overall, we have to give them a chance. As the minister responsible for three regions covering a territory as big as three countries, she (Ms. Proulx) is preparing to run three marathons. We will

provide her with information about our stakes. We are extending a hand. What is reassuring about her is that she was a mayor and she served two other terms as a councillor. She knows the field and she hails from a rural region," says Daniel Côté.

"A lot of people will try to contact her but she will have a good knowledge of the subjects, as a former mayor. She

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was also a coaching consultant. She has trained manpower," adds Éric Dubé.

Regarding François Bonnardel, both men have expectations that the new Transport minister will maintain the budget earmarked for the upgrading of the railway, especially between Cascapédia-Saint Jules and Gaspé. The Matapédia-Saint-Jules section is now upgraded.

"Mr. Bonnardel must understand that the train is a priority, a necessity. The decision, we hope, is no longer politically attached, as the Société Québécoise des infrastructures, which manages the \$100 million announced last year for the our railway, is at one point independent from politicians. However, we don't know if it has reached that point of no return," states the mayor of Gaspé.

Also president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé is reassured regarding the \$100 million earmarked for the Matapédia to Gaspé line.

"Politicians can always back up on the railway file as long as work is not completed but it has never happened to a project conducted by the Société Québécoise des infrastructures. I don't expect

problems. I would be more worried if a wind farm was supposed to be built in New Richmond, as is the case on the North Shore with the Apuiat project," states Mr. Dubé. He refers to the CAQ lack of enthusiasm regarding

wind energy.

"The new government has a strong economic flavour (...) Numbers talk favourably for our railway file. Our traffic statistics are increasing rapidly, we hire people and we invest," concludes the mayor

of New Richmond.

The Matapédia to Gaspé line was acquired by Quebec's Department of Transport in 2015 but the Gaspésie Railway Society, its former owner, remained as the operator of freight trains.