

## RAILWAY:

# Waiting for government action

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The Member of the National Assembly for the riding of Gaspé, Gaétan Lelièvre, admits “not knowing what to think, considering the slowness showed by the Quebec government regarding the repairs that must be carried out on a line it has owned for close to three years,” he emphasizes.

“One must wonder if the \$100 million announced for the railway is virtual or real (...) It is a line that has been studied over and over by engineering firms. No substantial work has been carried out

since 2013. I question the political willingness to solve the problem. I have reached a point where I question the words of Premier (Philippe) Couillard. The positive thing is the arrival of a new Transport minister to the file, André Fortin. I met him on December 7 and he seems willing to commit himself, comments Gaétan Lelièvre.

Premier Couillard announced \$100 million on May 5 in New Carlisle for the betterment of the Gaspé Peninsula railroad all the way to Gaspé but that budgetary envelope was not touched during the year, despite numerous studies completed since 2008

and pertaining to the work that must be undertaken, especially on the bridges, in order to put the line back in shape for decades.

Gaétan Lelièvre emphasizes that such inaction puts the competitive capacity of LM Wind Power and McInnis Cement at risk, “two plants that have a combined output value of over half-a-billion dollars annually.” The two plants also employ 650 people.

SPEC asked the office of the regional minister Pierre Moreau for an interview about the railway situation but the request was never answered.

The VIA Rail passenger

train service has been suspended between Gaspé and New Carlisle since December

2011 and between New Carlisle and Matapédia since September 2013.

## Chart about the freight traffic on the Matapédia to Gaspé line\* over recent years\*\*

2008:	589 cars
2012:	1,233 cars
2013:	1,537 cars
2014:	1,545 cars
2015:	1,624 cars
2016:	1,741 cars
2017:	2,786 cars

\*The line has been closed east of Caplan since March 2015.

\*\* The numbers for 2009, 2010 and 2011 are not available.