

## MP Kristina Michaud wants to discuss Via Rail's return with the Transport Minister

**O** — Gilles Gagné  
CARLETON — Member of Parliament for the riding of Avignon-La-Mitis-Matapedia, Kristina Michaud, intends to discuss with the Federal Minister of Transport, Omar Alghabra, the acceleration of the return of Via Rail's service in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Ms. Michaud knows that Via Rail serves three of the four MRCs of her riding, one in the Gaspé Peninsula, Avignon (which includes the village of Matapedia), and two in the Lower Saint-Lawrence: (Matapedia and Mitis), she stresses that the service was already insufficient prior to the pandemic.

She is relieved to see that Via Rail will come back on August 11 between Halifax and Montreal but she adds that it could have been faster, and that the train frequency could have been higher. She also states that the service between Matapedia and Gaspé must be put back in place as soon as possible and in stages if necessary.

"It seems that we still have

to convince some politicians of the relevance of the service," she says, when asked to comment on her Member of Parliament geographical neighbour, Diane Lebouthillier, who represents the Gaspésie-Magdalen Islands riding. Ms. Lebouthillier has so far refused to comment the return of Via Rail to the Gaspé Peninsula, "leaving the prerogative to the public transporter," as she recently said.

"We don't have to sensitize the region's people to the necessity of bringing back the service but government officials obviously need to be sensitized. Via Rail's services have been neglected for decades. Now, the government will spend billions of dollars on the High Frequency Train and people from the rural areas seem forgotten in that project. They are always of lesser considerations," criticizes Kristina Michaud.

She affirms that the Via Rail service must come back by stages between Matapedia and Gaspé, considering that the track is supposed to be func-



Member of Parliament Kristina Michaud spent time in the Avignon MRC on July 13 to meet some constituents.

tioning as far east as Port Daniel by the end of 2022, and Gaspé in 2025.

"It is up to the political class to call the shots. People want the train back. It must be part of the (post pandemic) regional economic recovery plan. Government members must realize that the recovery plan cannot be limited solely to the cities," adds Ms. Michaud.

As a resident of Val-Brillant, in the Matapedia Valley, she took the train before the

an essential service here," stresses Ms. Michaud.

She doesn't have clues about the next federal elections date. "We hear the rumors. We know that they can be called any time. The pandemic played a role. The electors don't appreciate the partisan game that seem to influence the election date. It might be held between the end of August and November. We will have to be ready and we will. The municipal elections in November will likely influence the choice of the date."

She doesn't know the identity of her opponents, including the Liberal Party's candidate. "My last opponent (Rémi Massé) has moved to another region (Rivière-du-Loup). I guess that no news is good news. I'll keep working for the riding. I prefer being a Member of Parliament for the constituents than being perceived as a candidate," she concludes.

Photos: G. Gagné