

Environmentalists pursue idea of an electric train

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GASPÉ - The environmental group Together for the Sustainable Future of the Greater Gaspé is now depending on the return of the train to Gaspé Peninsula in order to improve the balance of greenhouse gases in the region.

After a decade of debating the issue of hydrocarbons, the group has accepted the invitation of the Citizens Committee for the Development of Gaspé and Solidarité Gaspésie to develop the environmental aspect of the railway in the wake of the report *Le réseau ferroviaire gaspésien* (The Gaspé Railway Network) tabled last June 15.

"The train is much more ecological. It only emits, ac-

cording to the authors of the report, 2 to 4% of greenhouse gases. However, we want to go further and look at what we could do to get an electric train instead of using fuel," says the president and spokesperson of Together for the Sustainable Future of the Greater Gaspé, Lise Chartrand.

The organization estimates that the use of railroads represents about 40% of freight hauling, but only 1.9% of greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation. One tonne of freight, over 200 kilometres, with one litre of fuel, can be transported while a heavy truck does it over 2 to 4 kilometres.

This project of the return of the train in Gaspé Peninsula is

a priority because of the current climate emergency, according to the environmental group.

The organization will call on experts to document the issue.

In addition to the electric train, the ecological management of grass on the railroad is also a concern. "Some companies have made advances in these areas. We would not want glyphosate to be spread all over the Gaspé," notes the president.

The issue of noise, especially in the railyards, and the nature of the materials that will be transported will be part of the group's concerns as well as passenger transportation.

"The option is to make the

train available to people on a daily basis. Is it possible to have a train to go from one place to another on the Gaspé Peninsula? There are certain medical needs where people may have to travel a lot," says Ms. Chartrand.

It is "a big file," she says, which will take several months to present green solutions.

The rail line will be repaired to Port-Daniel-Gascons in 2024 and Quebec still has no timetable for Gaspé.

"The sooner we get it done, the better for the environment. There are a lot of trucks on our roads. That's a lot of greenhouse gases. That's a lot of damage to our roads. The sooner we act, the better," says Chartrand.

In the document presented in June, just for the transport of cement between the Port-Daniel cement plant and New Richmond, we were talking about 5,000 trucks over the next two years, as rail transport is not anticipated in Port-Daniel until 2024.

With the adoption of the law putting an end to hydrocarbons in Quebec, the train became an interesting file for the group.

"It is a file that must be looked at. We would not want anything to happen to the train. It is better to do it in the right way and in the most ecological way possible," says the president who emphasizes that with an election in the fall it is "the right time to act."