

PQ proposes regional development funding for transportation

Gilles Gagné

CARLETON – At the beginning of the electoral campaign, Parti Québécois leader Paul Saint-Pierre-Plamondon announced that if his party would form the next government, it would inject \$11 billion in 10 years for regional development initiative. That is \$1.1 billion per year.

While in Carleton, asked by the SPEC what his party would do to improve the transportation situation in the Gaspé Peninsula, Mr. Saint-Pierre-Plamondon replied that the Parti Québécois would use its regional development fund to improve that situation, considering that transport is a vital aspect for the region's population.

"This amount, \$11 billion in 10 years, must translate into structuring projects. We see that there is a clear shortage of transportation means in the region. If we are elected, we will double the current bus services. The development fund targets areas like the Gaspé Peninsula," says Mr. Saint-Pierre-Plamondon.

Bonaventure riding candidate for the Parti Québécois Alexis Deschênes is quite incisive about the Coalition avenir Québec record of the last four years regarding public transport in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"A Parti Québécois government will restore the passenger and freight trains between Matapédia and Gaspé faster than what we see now. The freight train was supposed to be back in Port Daniel by 2022 and it is not there. It was supposed to be back in Gaspé by 2025 and there is no longer a deadline! It is unacceptable that Via Rail is not serving the Matapédia to New Richmond portion of the line, considering that the corporation receives hundreds of millions of dollars in grants yearly," states Mr. Deschênes.

"We want Via Rail to come back gradually when the line is serviceable. It should be New Richmond, then New Carlisle, then Port Daniel and so on as the line is repaired and reopens. It is technically feasible and the region needs it. Via Rail must stop finding excuses

to refrain from coming back and when they do, let's not accept that they come every fourth day or so," adds Mr. Deschênes.

He expresses the same criticism for Keolis-Orleans Express' bus service, which was basically cut by 65 to 70% at the beginning of 2015.

"The day will come for the permit renewal hearings of Keolis and I will be there," he points out.

The president of the Gaspésie Railway Society, Éric Dubé, recently told Carleton-based CIEU-FM that he is not pushing much for a return of Via Rail's passenger train because he thinks it will already be hard to convince the public transporter to resume its service between Matapédia and New Carlisle, in a first step towards a full resumption of the service to Gaspé.

"We are not divided on the matter. I met Mr. Dubé recently and we talked about the issue. There is no contradiction there. It is just that our expectations are not the same," concludes Mr. Deschênes.