

TRAIN SERVICE: Cynthia Patterson isn't stopping

Nelson Sergerie

BARACHOIS - Leading a battle for the improvement of rail services for more than 35 years, Cynthia Patterson of Barachois is saddened to see that the issue of transportation is not progressing in the Gaspé Peninsula.

While Quebec announced last winter a postponement of the arrival of the train in Port-Daniel to 2024, while no longer providing a time frame for Gaspé, the activist still believes in the cause.

"I hope. I am an optimist. I believe in the power of community. It is the community that has saved the service we have and is fighting for the future of the train. I think we will finally win," says Ms. Patterson.

For her, public transit must be taken into account in order to protect the environment. Ms. Patterson notes that the region



Cynthia Patterson continues her battle to improve rail transport in the Gaspé Peninsula.

is only losing assets.

"One of the biggest things for the environment in the Gaspésie is public transit. It's ridiculous that it's worse than 100 years ago," she says bluntly.

She believes that there should be better coordination

between the different modes of transport.

"There is no cohesion, no coordination. For example, it is not possible to travel by bus to the Maritimes. It is not possible to travel by bus to catch the train in Campbellton outside of the summer season. Why not

improve everything," she says. She also notes that since 2015, after the abolition of several departures between the Gaspé Peninsula and Rimouski by Orléans Express, the bus service no longer serves small communities.

"The bus stops in Percé, but not in Barachois. I have to drive 18 kilometres to pick up friends in Percé and follow the bus back to Barachois. It doesn't make sense," criticizes Ms. Patterson.

Ms. Patterson asks that the railway be repaired from west to east, regardless of some who are asking for the repair of the rail between Gaspé and Percé in order to circulate the tourist train.

"I don't want to take the train between Gaspé and Barachois. I am against that. We have already experienced this with the Admiral. To me, that doesn't make sense.(...) It is only beneficial for tourists. Not

for the permanent population," she claims.

Asking for the return of the passenger train at least to New Carlisle when the rail is repaired is a primary objective for now.

"Why not start a shuttle between Gaspé and New Carlisle?" she asks once VIA Rail has been convinced that the Régie intermunicipale de transport Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine organizes this type of transport during the summer and holiday season.

In June, Member of Parliament Diane Lebouthillier indicated that VIA Rail's return to the Gaspé Peninsula remained a priority after she had obtained assurances from the passenger rail carrier in 2016 that the train would go to New Carlisle once the track was repaired.

Without promising a return in 2024, she says that she will certainly have discussions with the management of VIA Rail.