

VIA Rail rejects Alexis Deschênes' request for partial service

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NEW CARLISLE - VIA Rail maintains its intentions that service will only resume once it's deemed safe for passenger train operations and that the infrastructure will allow service to Gaspé with competitive travel times.

This is the answer received on November 3 by Bonaventure riding Parti québécois candidate, Alexis Deschênes, who was defeated in the October 3 election. Alexis Deschêne sent a notice to the interim president and chief executive officer of VIA, Martin Landry, requesting a meeting in order to plan the return of the passenger train

service. The notice provided until November 1 for a response.

The Senior Director of Public Affairs and Government Relations for VIA, Philippe Cannon, says that since 2015, Quebec carried out rehabilitation work on the track in order to eventually allow a return of passenger service.

In the response to the legal document, Mr. Cannon says that the carrier's position has not changed, adding that VIA will not offer partial service between Matapédia and New Carlisle, as mentioned by Mr. Deschênes in a notice.

Mr. Cannon says that VIA Rail recently publicly reaffirmed its position in its 2021-

2025 Corporate Plan Overview, as well as in the responses to questions received during its 2022 Annual Public Meeting on its intentions in the Gaspé Peninsula.

Mr. Deschênes shared Mr. Cannon's letter on Facebook. "This refusal is neither surprising nor disheartening. This is only the beginning of a long battle because Gaspésians will have to fight hard if they want the return of the Chaleur train," he wrote regarding the response received from VIA.

In the formal notice, Mr. Deschênes mentioned that VIA Rail ceased operating its service in the Gaspé Peninsula in 2013 due to the obsolescence of the rail network in the re-

gion.

The candidate added that trains could run between Matapédia and Caplan since 2021 and the carrier still hasn't announced a plan to resume service, despite numerous requests made by Gaspésians.

In his formal notice, Mr. Deschênes pointed out that the National Transportation Policy provided for in section 5 of the Canada Transportation Act requires that the national transportation system be accessible to all and that it promotes a sustainable environment because it is essential to the well-being of citizens and promotes economic growth in rural areas.