



Photo: N. Sergerie

In August 2019, dozens of people demonstrated in Gaspé to speed up rail rehabilitation.

Citizens committee from Gaspé is once again calling for a quick return of the train to Gaspé

NELSON SERGERIE
LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ - The slowness in drawing up plans and repairing the rail on section 3 between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé is being criticized by the Citizens' Committee for the Development of Gaspé.

The call for action comes following the Regional Road, Airport and Rail Investment Program for the Gaspé Peninsula and Magdalen Islands

which was announced by the Minister of Transport, Geneviève Guilbault on April 17 in New Richmond

"I understand that there is approximately \$285 million allocated and only \$142 million spent since 2017. It's not going fast," says the president of the Citizens' Committee for the Development of Gaspé, Mauril Minville.

"The minister says she is waiting for the studies. Imagine! In August 2019, we had a

gathering of people waiting for the rehabilitation of the train. At the end of August 2019, the premier received the mayors and prefects, and the minutes of the meeting say that the premier had hinted at 2025. We were very happy in 2019," he adds. By February 2022, the schedule no longer existed, the Coalition Avenir Québec government did not dare to announce any date for

RAIL PROTEST:

▶ *Cont'd from page 11*

the return of the train to Gaspé.

"We are told in April 2023 that they are not able to give a deadline for the completion of this work because they are awaiting studies? Listen! Seven years to do \$100 million of work and no studies for the rest! There is someone sleeping on the job," says Mr. Minville.

According to him, the committee's patience has reached its limits.

"The CAQ government adopted, under a gag order in December 2020, a law for the acceleration of major works, that is to say all those exceeding \$50 million. They identified 150, including the construction of the Gaspésie train... And we are told 'we cannot give a deadline because the studies are not advanced enough,'" says the president.

Mr. Minville believes that the Minister of Transport has a great opportunity to make the decision to

modify the third link project between Quebec City and Lévis and to prioritize rail in the Gaspé.

"One (the government) must admit that there is no desire to finish this project," explains Mr. Minville following last week's announcements in the Gaspé Peninsula.

"There is a neglected sector and we will not give up," he says, maintaining that after years of waiting on the part of industry stakeholders and the strong consensus emerging in the Gaspé Peninsula rail file, the disappointment is great.

For the committee, the very vulnerable situation in which Gaspésians have found themselves in for many years, when it comes to passenger transportation, should nevertheless meet the criteria of logic, prioritization and consideration retained by the Government of Quebec.

The committee adds that Gaspésians travelling alone over very long distances by car for medical reasons, school, family and business, justify the prioritization of the file.

▶ *Cont'd on page 13*