



Photo: N. Sergerie

Cynthia Patterson has been fighting to maintain rail service in the Gaspé Peninsula for 35 years.

Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of the VIA Rail passenger train is disappointed

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PERCÉ - The Coalition of Gaspesians for the return of VIA Rail's passenger train says that the rail carrier has chosen to put intermodality aside with the redesign of its reservation site.

This decision forced the Gaspé Peninsula Magdalen Islands Intermunicipal Transportation Board (RéGÎM) not to offer the VIA rail shuttle this summer. That service allowed users to meet the train in Campbellton.

"It's difficult because here, in Gaspésie, we are in a horrible situation in regional public transport and now it's even worse," says the spokesperson for the coalition, Cynthia Patterson.

For the Coalition, it is inconceivable that, in 2023, the VIA Rail's new reservation system is less efficient than the former one, considering that we are in a time of phenomenal technological development.

"It's a choice. If there is a will from VIA Rail and the federal government, VIA Rail can take a different option. It's not that the technology doesn't exist, it's their choice, and that choice is not acceptable," says Ms. Patterson.

In the context of climate change and Canada's commit-

ment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the situation is inconceivable.

"Our federal government has made national and international legal commitments to make choices (and VIA Rail's decision) prevents people from taking the train or the RéGÎM. This is not acceptable," adds the spokesperson.

She appeals to both entities to correct this aberration.

The Coalition is currently campaigning for the return of the VIA Rail train to New Carlisle as soon as infrastructure permits, as a first step towards restoring full service to Gaspé.

A possible regional bus carrier will then be necessary in order to optimize this public transport service by bringing passengers to the train stations east of New Carlisle. The rail carrier has been repeatedly saying for years that the Chaleur train service will only resume to Gaspé once the rail is rehabilitated and safe.

Quebec has promised that the railway will be renovated to Port-Daniel-Gascons in 2024 but has still not submitted a budget or timetable for the Port-Daniel-Gascons-Gaspé section.

In early April, the coalition started an online petition. As of May 5, just over 14,800 signatures had been collected.