

## PASSENGER TRAIN: Questions remain unanswered following private meeting

**NELSON SERGERIE**

**CARLETON-SUR-MER** - On July 4, the prefects of the Gaspé Peninsula had the opportunity to meet privately with the Federal Minister of Transport following his announcement of \$10 million to protect a 600-metre section of the railway in Port-Daniel-Gascons.

The elected officials, however, did not obtain further details about the eventual return of the passenger train.

"The topic of the hour is really the return of the passenger train with the announcements we have had regarding the railway. We wanted to make sure we had the support of the minister."

explains the president of the Regroupement des MRC de la Gaspésie, Mathieu Lapointe.

Omar Alghabra, Federal Minister of Transportation did not commit to a partial return of VIA Rail to New Carlisle as a first step next year.

"His willingness is sincere. He wants the passenger train to return to Gaspé. He will make representations in this sense. However, he could not advance further on the outcome of these representations, nor commit on behalf of VIA Rail because it is an independent organization," adds Mr. Lapointe. As an independent body, the decision regarding the return of passenger rail service will rest with VIA Rail.

On additional federal fund-

ing for the railway, Mathieu Lapointe believes that the necessary amounts needed to be invested are already available to refurbish the railway to Gaspé.

"If there's a shortage of money, there may be representations made either by the region or directly by Quebec. They've shown openness. But it's not an issue for the region's elected representatives. We think the funding is tied up," says the president.

In addition to Ottawa's \$10 million for Port-Daniel-Gascons, the federal government had already announced in 2019 an amount of \$46 million for Section three, which is located between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé.