

MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix gives session report

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ - The Member of the National Assembly (MNA) for Gaspé mentions six main issues in his report on the legislative session that ended on June 14 in Quebec City.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix highlights the suspension of electoral map reform, the ongoing work to rehabilitate the railway, wind power, the fisheries crisis, agriculture and housing.

He is proud to have put wind energy back on the government's agenda, marking a reversal of the Coalition avenir Québec's traditional stance.

Hydro-Québec plans to build 10,000 megawatts of wind power over 10 years at a time when the province is facing an electricity shortage.

"We're very well positioned. We'll have an exceptional business opportunity for our manufacturers. We intend to be there to help meet the energy production challenge and ensure that our communities benefit from the economic spin-offs," says Mr. Sainte-Croix, pointing out that a new transmission line needs to be built to serve the Gaspé Peninsula.

The best wind sites are in the eastern part of the province,



MNA Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

Photo: N. Sergerie

but they cannot be exploited because of the transport line bottleneck at Rivière-du-Loup. Wind farms cannot be built in the eastern Lower Saint Lawrence and the Gaspé Peninsula regions due to this problem, but the MNA avoids setting a date.

"We don't have a precise date, but it's understood. The Minister of Energy has seen it for himself and has said it again and again in various speeches both here and at the government level. We discuss it regularly in the caucus. We are well aware of the issue and it is one of our priorities. We're confident that things will move forward," says the MNA.

The rehabilitation of the

railway has faced setbacks since the launch of four major calls for tenders for section three announced by the Premier last November.

Only one contract has been awarded, a second is still being analyzed after bids were received, a third has still not been opened after a third postponement until July 4, and a fourth was simply cancelled because only one bidder submitted an offer.

"We have two calls for tenders where there was only one bidder, and the Ministry is looking at ways of resolving this issue. We hope to move on to the next stage, given the progress of the work and the expectations for developing business with the arrival of the section," notes Mr. Sainte-Croix.

For the time being, the 2026 target for Gaspé still stands, despite the delays in the process.

"We have not yet had these discussions with the Minister or her team. There will be a deadline, but as far as the work is concerned, we still have room to maneuver and we're still on the same timetable for rail rehabilitation," says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

On the subject of the electoral map, the MNA commented on the legal process

undertaken by municipal councillors in the Laurentians who are contesting the suspension of the revision.

"I'm surprised, but I can understand that there are demographic issues in this region. Once we've said that, we have a law in force that aims to interrupt the revision process until the next election. We're sticking to that reality and leaving it up to the people to decide what to do next," says Stéphane Sainte-Croix.

The proposed reform suggested removing a riding from Gaspésie and Montreal and creating new ones in Centre-du-Québec and Laurentides due to the high population growth in the latter region.

Quebec needs to support shrimp fishermen facing a resource crisis at the same time as the quotas announced for redfish are not attractive for going to sea.

"There is not necessarily any direct direction or support from the federal government for shrimp fishers, which poses particular challenges. One way or another, the federal government is going to have to find short- and medium-term solutions for the fishing industry, which is going through difficult times," says the MNA for Gaspé.

Discussions between Quebec and Ottawa are continuing. As long as Ottawa does not provide support for shrimp fishermen, Quebec must assume loan guarantees.

"We're making sure that payment defaults are covered by our loan guarantee. That's where part of our financial efforts go to ensure that the assets are maintained. We'll have to think about what to do next. We'd like to have long-term solutions for the future," he says.

So far, \$1,232,321 has been allocated to boat owners under the Quebec Department of Fisheries' Protec-pêche loan guarantee program.

The MNA points out that Quebec has granted \$3.8 million to help businesses and establish economic diversification opportunities for Rivière-au-Renard.

On the housing front, the Quebec Affordable Housing Program has provided nearly \$30 million for an 84-unit project in Gaspé and \$12.6 million for 36 units in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts.

In the coming months, the MNA will be looking at several issues, including air transport, where developments will be made in the coming months while continuing to work on health and education.