

Quebec's latest rail decision receives much criticism

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GASPÉ - The Parti Québécois (PQ) and the mayor of Gaspé deplore Quebec's latest step backwards on the repair of the Gaspé railway.

"The missing amount is roughly the amount announced yesterday (April 22) for the Third link. The Gaspé Peninsula money has probably been returned for the Third link," says the Member for the National Assembly (MNA) for Matane-Matapédia, Pascal Bérubé, referring to this project to connect Quebec City and Lévis.

"Beyond the issue for the Gaspé, it says something about the state of the finances or the priority choices, and it's the Gaspé Peninsula that's paying

today," maintains the MNA.

His colleague from the Magdalen Islands goes further. "There is a formal commitment from the premier (François Legault) to complete the work before 2026, before the next election. What's the premier's word worth in commitments as important as these in a region like the Gaspé?" adds Joël Arseneau.

The mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côte, also expressed some concern after hearing these latest developments.

"It's increasingly worrying. We go from surprise to surprise. I still believe it. Do our MNAs believe it? Does our regional minister believe it? Does Minister Guilbault believe it? I need to hear them because if I'm the only one with a few regional stake-

holders who believe in it, that's not how we're going to resolve the issue," says Daniel Côte.

He further emphasized that businesses also need reassurance. "The official version is 'yes,' but I need to hear the answer from the decision-makers," he continues.

Osisko, which plans to restart Mine Gaspé in Murdochville, says it needs the train to transport copper ore. A functional railroad would be necessary by the beginning of 2030.

"We've been depriving ourselves of development for years because we don't have this means of transportation, which has become essential for exporting and importing components that can be processed here. Should we put our development on hold

again? I'm starting to get seriously fed up," says the mayor.

He recalls the missed opportunity ten years ago involving the transportation of wind turbine blades manufactured at LM Wind Power in Gaspé. The absence of rail transport led the company to haul the blades by truck to New Richmond before transferring them to a train.

"We're starting to get seriously tired of fighting when it should be a given. In the Gaspésie, we always have to fight harder than the others. When we play defence, we're not in attack mode. We can't go into development mode when we always have to fight," comments Mr. Côte.

Yet the situation was clear to everyone when Premier Legault assured, during a



The MNA for Matane-Matapédia Pascal Bérubé.

Photo: National Assembly site

visit to Gaspé in November 2023, that the rail line would be rehabilitated to Gaspé by the end of 2026.