

Railway demonstration: Organizers satisfied

NELSON SERGERIE

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE

GASPÉ – With nearly 400 people from Matapédia to Gaspé calling for the resumption of refurbishment work on Section 3 and the partial return of VIA Rail to the Gaspé, the Gaspésie Rail Transportation Mobilization Roundtable believes the ball is now in the Quebec government's court.

"We are very satisfied. More than 400 people from Matapédia to Gaspé; 400 people who took the trouble to come. This gives us momentum to continue the mobilization," notes the roundtable's

spokesperson, Carol Saucier.

Will the message be heard by the Quebec government? "We hope so. We have very specific demands. The idea behind Saturday's event was to put pressure on both Quebec and Ottawa. We intend to continue to exert pressure. We know very well that we have to push to make things happen," added Mr. Saucier, noting people's interest in the return of freight and passenger trains.

"We're telling the government: it's urgent. Relaunch the calls for tenders for the last section and let's complete the rail repairs to Gaspé as

quickly as possible," suggests the spokesperson.

The committee and its partners will take a step back and intend to write to the Quebec Minister of Transport once the cabinet shuffle is complete to reiterate their demands.

"We will contact the minister (Jonatan Julien, appointed on September 10) and Mr. Legault as well. This will be done soon. At the committee level, we will meet this fall to see what happens next," says Mr. Saucier, leaving no scenario off the table.

The committee is hoping for a positive sign in the budget update, which is nor-

mally released in the fall.

"Yes. That's very clear, particularly the re-inclusion in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan. There was \$512 million for the entire section 3. We would like the amounts to be guaranteed, and we will monitor that in the budget update," notes Mr. Saucier, who demands that the federal government keep a close eye on the situation should the federal government ever want to contribute to the rail repairs.

Of the \$872 million announced, the federal government has so far only promised \$45.8 million, the spokesperson points out.



Spokesperson for the Gaspésie Rail Transportation Mobilization Roundtable, Carol Saucier.

Photo: N. Sergerie