



The end of Réno-Région sparks outrage from Gaspé's mayor

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GASPÉ - The end of the Réno-Région program and various other support measures for the adaptation of people with disabilities were quietly swept under the carpet by the Quebec government's budget cuts at the start of the budget on March 25.

These decisions have drawn strong criticism from the mayor of Gaspé. "These are penny-pinching efforts for the government. We're talking about programs that don't cost much from the government's budget, but which have a huge impact in a region like ours." "Several municipalities and MRCs have adopted resolutions to denounce these cuts," says the Mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté.

The Réno-Région program provided funding for lower income households to carry out essential renovations, such as replacing windows or repairing leaking roofs. In addition, funding to adapt homes for people with disabilities and to support small businesses in making their stores accessible was also eliminated.

"What will these cuts do? There may be people who will

no longer be able to stay in their homes. If these people no longer live in their homes, where will they go? In our social and affordable housing, which is saturated? I don't think it's a good idea to penalize poorer or more vulnerable people," says the mayor.

It could cost a few thousand dollars to, for example, renovate a roof. In return, housing them in new apartments would cost at least \$225,000, the average cost per door to build new housing. And that's a very conservative figure.

Rail Monitoring Office

When the budget was tabled, Quebec quietly announced to the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie that the rehabilitation of section three of the rail between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé was returning to the feasibility study phase.

Daniel Côté expressed his deep disappointment and reminded the Ministry of Transport's monitoring office of this. While the train was scheduled to arrive at the Gaspé station in 2026 and was pushed back to 2027, Quebec no longer has a

timeline to provide for the time being.

The ministry explained to elected officials the contractual pitfalls and major cost overruns. "I told them quite clearly that we don't need a Cadillac or a Mercedes for the Gaspé railway. We have a large section that is already built in Cadillac mode, where trains can travel at very high speeds with heavy loads. We don't need the Cadillac. We need a train that works. That's been our request from the beginning," says the mayor. "Let's streamline the process and make it passable by a medium-sized train for our needs. If they want a Cadillac within 20 years, that's fine, but as long as the work is completed quickly so the train can pass," he continues.

The rehabilitation must be able to accommodate a passenger train that meets Via Rail standards. "If Via can pass, freight trains can pass," says Mr. Côté.