

VIA rail will not partially return to the Gaspé Peninsula

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GASPÉ - Despite growing anticipation from the Coalition for the Return of VIA Rail Passenger Service to the Gaspé Peninsula, VIA Rail has confirmed that a partial return is not in the cards.

In an email confirming the visit of Denis Boucher, Director of Government and Indigenous Relations, to the region, VIA Rail reiterated its longstanding position.

"In keeping with our original commitment, a partial return of the route is not possible for logistical reasons, and our position has not changed."

In this email, VIA Rail reiterates its repeatedly stated position, namely "its commitment to resume service in the Gaspé Peninsula when the tracks are safe and allow for competitive travel times to Gaspé, and that remains our intention."

The company confirms the

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Éric Dubé, President of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie.

statements made by Éric Dubé, president of the Société de chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, that it was preparing to resume service in 2027, once the rail line to Gaspé had been repaired.

"However, when the provincial budget was tabled on March 25, 2025, VIA Rail learned, along with the people of Gaspé, that the rehabilita-

tion work on the section between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé had been returned to the planning phase, with no new timeline," VIA notes.

VIA Rail explained that it had already set up an internal committee to coordinate all operational aspects of the return, including the availability of rolling stock and staffing, and the modernization of regional stations. A joint governance structure with Quebec's Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility was also in place to ensure close coordination.

"Faced with this major change, and still firmly committed to restoring full service for the people of the Gaspé Peninsula, VIA Rail must now go back to the drawing board to assess the next steps," the email continued.

In his discussions with stakeholders in the region, Mr. Boucher asked them to keep his visit confidential.

Finally, the company con-

firmed that during the week of July 7, he met with the Table des MRC de la Gaspésie, represented by the president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, Éric Dubé, the Coalition pour le retour des services du train passager de VIA Rail en Gaspésie (SCFG) Bloc Québécois Member of Parliament Alexis Deschênes, and Gaspé Mayor Daniel Côté.

"This visit reflects VIA Rail's desire to maintain open communication with representatives of the region," the email from VIA states.

Éric Dubé not surprised

The president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie, Éric Dubé, says he is not surprised by VIA Rail's decision to maintain its stance and wait until work on the rail line to Gaspé is complete.

"I'm not really surprised. They've been playing this card for a long time. From the be-

ginning, they've always said it was Gaspé or nothing," said Éric Dubé.

He explained that the expected timeline had originally aimed for a return by 2026 or 2027, but now that's uncertain.

"What changed all that was that we were supposed to be in Gaspé by 2026 or 2027. Will the deadline be pushed back? We understand that the pressure is on the Quebec government because they are the ones who put the rehabilitation to Gaspé on hold. Did VIA use this as an excuse? They are the ones who can answer that," commented the president.

The SCFG will continue to pressure Quebec City to restore the rail line to Gaspé, given that Osisko will need the train for the eventual relaunch of Murdochville's Gaspé Mines around 2030.

"There are other projects. We are in discussions with other companies. This is a major issue for the region," adds Mr. Dubé.