

A busy return to Parliament for Alexis Deschênes

NELSON SERGERIE

GASPÉ – Federal Members of Parliament (MPs) returned to Ottawa on January 26 to sit in Parliament, and the MP for Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine-Listuguj brought two major issues with him after spending the last month talking to constituents.

Alexis Deschênes spoke about international news, particularly what is happening in the United States, as well as purchasing power and the cost of living.

He also added that there is a lot of work to be done in terms of infrastructure in a broad sense, from housing to federal wharves.

On January 26, the federal government announced a 25% increase in the GST credit for the next five years, a positive measure for low income tax-



Photo: N. Sergerie

MP Alexis Deschênes.

payers.

The Bloc Québécois MP thinks this is a good thing, but that more is needed.

"We have to put this into context. We're talking about

maybe \$10.80 a month. That's not nothing, but it's not going to make the huge difference that people need. The Bloc Québécois will return with our request to increase the old age pension. Some seniors are victims of injustice, as they did not receive the 10% increase for those aged 65 to 74. There is also an employment insurance reform that would improve the income of seasonal workers, who often live on low incomes. There are several ideas, and as long as the government moves in this direction, we will work with it," says the MP.

Among his other priorities for the riding are the return of the Fisheries Fund, port infrastructure in Matane, and the Îles-de-la-Madeleine airport, which has been announced but is still awaiting construction.

The redrawing of the fed-

eral electoral map and the challenge before the Federal Court of Appeal are expected to take place in the first half of the year.

A fisheries conference will be held, an annual event that will take place this year in the Magdalen Islands.

Via Rail on the hot seat

"A senior VIA Rail executive will appear before the Transportation Committee on February 11. We will be able to ask questions and find out why they have not committed to a return to Port-Daniel," says the MP.

With the gradual resumption of rail traffic between New Richmond and Port Daniel, pressure will mount on VIA Rail.

"The strategy is to keep up the pressure. The next few

months will allow us to do that. Once a new chief executive officer is appointed, we will be able to summon him. We want to make sure that senior executives are aware of the demands of Gaspesians. We will force them to explain their decision. All we are asking for is justice," says Mr. Deschênes.

The theme of the session is "For the Love of Quebec."

"Our priorities as a party are the economy and the (trade) fare crisis. We will put pressure on Mr. Carney to deliver the goods. Quebec identity, language, secularism, the environment. In the House of Commons, we are the only party pushing for global warming not to be forgotten and for work to be done on the transition rather than on oil," concludes the elected representative.