

U.S. Tariffs: Catherine Blouin assures the Quebec government will be there

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PASPÉBIAC – Outgoing Coalition Avenir Quebec (CAQ) Member of the National Assembly and Minister, Catherine Blouin, says the Quebec government will be there for Gaspé businesses that will face headwinds following the imposition of 50% tariffs on some \$28 billion worth of Canadian products.

Sectors in the region that may be affected include dairy products, seaweed, cement and forestry.

“This creates a lot of uncertainty. There’s nothing worse—even in the Gaspé Peninsula—than economic uncertainty. Until these tariffs are actually implemented, we can’t know what the impacts will be. Will our suppliers be affected? What about our exports? I’ve had discussions with people in the business community and reached out to the sectors likely to be most affected,” says Ms. Blouin, who hopes measures put in place by the Quebec government will help businesses.

The first program is aimed at small and medium-sized businesses with annual revenue between \$1 million and \$2 million.

The second program is for businesses with annual revenue exceeding \$2 million whose income has been significantly reduced by U.S. tariffs of 25% or more on Canadian exports.

No news on the train

The outgoing Member of



Photo: Nelson Sergerie

Catherine Blouin, outgoing CAQ Member of the National Assembly for Bonaventure and Minister of Families.

National Assembly (MNA) is not taking a position, for now, on the Coalition’s demand for the return of passenger train service in the Gaspé Peninsula. The organization is seeking a firm commitment from candidates to complete the restoration of the railway to Gaspé.

Ms. Blouin says she will present her proposals once the election campaign is underway. However, she points to the progress already made on the railway.

“We’ve invested over \$500 million. Sections One and Two are now operational, extending to Port-Daniel-Gascons. That’s a significant improvement. Work is currently underway on Section Three between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé,” she notes.

VIA Rail service is expected to return to the Gaspé Peninsula, as far as New Carlisle, by early 2028 at the

latest.

“I don’t think we’ll be the ones to delay the train’s return. That’s all I can tell you,” Ms. Blouin states.

Maria Hospital project moving forward

Transferred to the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI) in June by Santé Québec Gaspésie, the project involving the emergency room and intensive care unit at the Maria Hospital has made little apparent progress.

When asked about the next steps, the SQI indicated that the project is included in the Quebec Infrastructure Plan at the study phase, which will include the development of a feasibility study.

According to the SQI, this stage will identify and document needs, analyze options and define project parameters, including the budget and timeline.

In June, Santé Québec Gaspésie Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Martin Pelletier indicated that the functional and technical program had already been completed.

“The project is moving forward,” Catherine Blouin affirms.

The announcement of another feasibility study phase, despite the project already being well documented, has raised questions.

“A feasibility study had already been started. Now, this is Phase One, officially set out in writing, which is the feasibility study phase. It can be confusing, but this is the normal process,” she says.

The phase is expected to

take between 18 and 24 months.

Ms. Blouin, who will seek re-election in 2026, acknowledged that she had hoped the project would have advanced further during her current mandate.

“When I arrived in 2022 promising to move the project forward, I would have liked to do so, but it didn’t exist. I took it on at the very

beginning, when it was still in its infancy,” says the MNA.

The project represents an estimated investment of between \$250 million and \$350 million and is expected to be completed around 2031-2032.

The new facilities in Maria are expected to be similar to those completed at the Gaspé hospital in 2021.