

\$861 million for transportation in the region

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CHANDLER - The Quebec government will invest a “record” sum of \$861,457,000 in the Gaspé Peninsula-Magdalen Islands for transportation between 2024 and 2026.

However, excluding the \$680 million allocated for rail repairs, only \$181 million remains for other transportation projects over the next two years.

Last year, after deducting rail investments, \$214 million was spent on road improvements.

“We are still there,” notes the Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé (MNA), Stéphane Sainte-Croix, during the announcement made on May 16 in Chandler.

“The Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine region comes in third position behind Montreal and Montérégie. I think this is very good news and that we have our large share of the pie,” adds his colleague from Bonaventure, MNA Catherine Blouin.

The funding breakdown is as follows: \$37,898,000 for road maintenance, \$71,377,000 for structure improvements, \$64,269,000 to

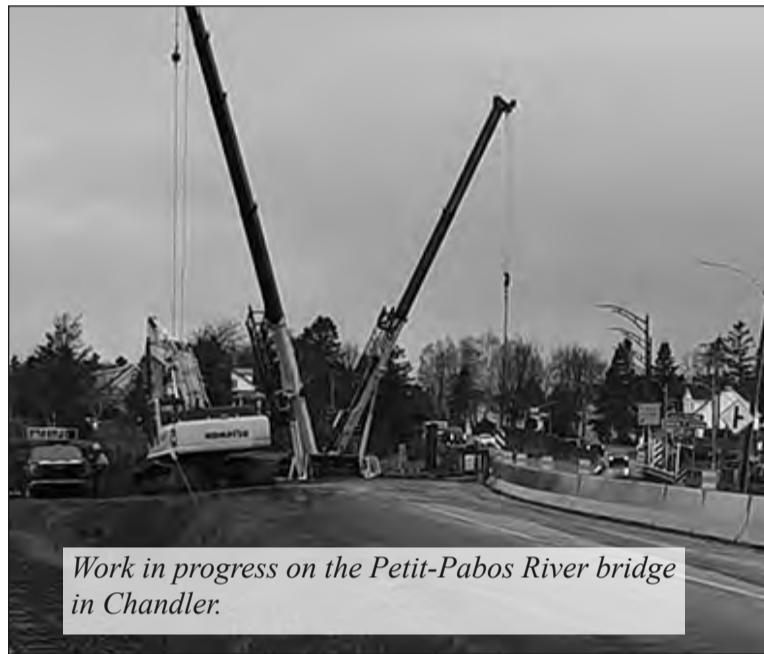
make the network efficient and safety enhancements, \$680,295,000 for the railway project, and \$7,617,000 for airport projects.

Stéphane Sainte-Croix admits: “It is never enough, but it is substantial in terms of our needs. This responds to several elements that we had in the works along the way. We are going to improve our roads. We are bringing a lot of investment into rail. We are very proud to announce significant sums,” notes Mr. Sainte-Croix.

Among the projects mentioned are the stabilization of the embankment of Highway 132 (Côte Donahue sector), between Cannes-de-Roches and the Pic de l'Aurore, in Percé; the repair and reconstruction of the railway between Port-Daniel-Gascons and Gaspé, and the repair of taxiways and aprons at Bonaventure airport.

Despite the substantial investment in rail until 2026, the region's MNAs are not confirming the dates for the resumption of rail service in Port-Daniel-Gascons at the end of the year and Gaspé in 2026.

“The indicators are in that



Work in progress on the Petit-Pabos River bridge in Chandler.

Photo: N. Sergerie

direction (2026). We ask questions regularly. We are closely monitoring this project. The objective remains the same: to bring the train to Gaspé in 2026 and all the indicators point in this direction,” supports the member for Gaspé.

“Most of the work is being done,” adds his colleague from Gaspé.

Discussions between VIA Rail and the Quebec government continue for a return of the passenger train.

The MNA for Gaspé evokes several scenarios for

passenger transport. “Forms of partnerships. Other ways to imagine the passenger's return. As a priority, we must complete the rail, but we are not closed to analyzing all kinds of possibilities that ensure the sustainability of passenger service. We are very interested in this,” notes the member for Gaspé.

The Société du chemin de fer already has a tourist train and is exploring the possibility of purchasing autonomous cars for passenger transport.

“When I tell you that we are looking at several options

that would bring innovation, we are not closed to any option,” said the elected official.

Asked if he did not believe 100% in VIA's return, the MNA replied, “That's not what they say. We are not excluding other potential avenues. Let's take advantage of this avenue to reflect. I'm not excluding anything. We are not closed to the idea of others than VIA,” says Mr. Sainte-Croix.

The president of the Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie prefers not to comment on the MNA's comments. “We, the local elected officials, will continue to push for the investment of nearly \$1 billion in rail. Since the beginning, it has been an economic development tool for the transport of goods. The mobility of citizens is part of our reality, objectives that we have had from the beginning. What form will it take and with whom? I don't have the recipe,” says Éric Dubé, recalling the financial setbacks and the work to obtain rehabilitation.

“We take steps as we get an opportunity. I've been working on this for 10 years,” says the president.