

We are also demanding better train accessibility. The train does not travel to New Richmond in Baïdes-Chaleurs or to Port Daniel or Gaspé via Chandler.

Transportation is essential not only for a region's economic development but more importantly for its social development. This is crucial for us. We need to have a discussion on this, to bring together the entire Gaspésie population, all those involved in civil society who have a stake in it, so that pressure is placed on the government to improve transportation. It is essential for people to be able to move around, for the region's products to be made available outside our area, as well as have goods from the outside brought in. Trains are important, as they reduce pollution created by trucks.

Just as important for us in the development of the territory is to have what is called a decent annual income. What I mean by that is to get rid of the black hole (of Employment Insurance), so that people do not end up 2 to 6 weeks a year without any income.

People must have enough income to meet their personal and family needs. A decent income should include work, working conditions and wages, and guaranteed income supplements for an individual or couple. This should also include employment insurance that meets the needs of our region, which is mainly dependent on tourism. Tourism means temporary, seasonal work. It is very important as tourism is the engine of economic life in the Gaspésie area, after government services and services to the population, such as grocery stores, etc.



We want to put pressure on governments to change laws and regulations governing employment insurance so that a seasonal worker can live decently. That is a primary mandate. At this time only a part of the population is able to make ends meet. These are workers who receive employment insurance benefits as soon as they stop working and continue receiving them until they are back at work. But that is not the case for everyone.

In Gaspésie, we also do not have decent annual wages. When people are working, they may not make enough money to live a normal life, pay rent, buy groceries, and have a little left for leisure. The notion of a decent annual income becomes very important under such conditions.

Our other concern is the shortage of labour. Businesses are closing because they cannot address customer needs or are cutting down on work hours. Workers find themselves without a job because of an overall labour shortage.

In sum, our main concerns are transportation, a decent annual income and everything else related to work in general. It is not because we live in a remote area that wages should be inferior to what they are in large centres.

I attended a meeting a while back on employment. An employer told me he found it appalling that he could not find people to work during the summer season and that students had refused his offers for a job. I asked him what he was looking for as training. He told me he was asking for at least two years of university in surveying. I asked him what wage he was paying. He told me \$15 an hour. I told him that was his problem because the same student will make much more in the city.

The main reason for the shortage in labour is working conditions. Young people leave the region to

go and study in the city and don't come back because they cannot find suitable jobs in Gaspésie and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, which meet their expectations. Since we have problems of a labour shortage, communications, accessibility and services, they are not interested in coming back. We are lacking in terms of government services and means of transportation, and transportation costs are exorbitant. It costs more to travel from Gaspé to Montreal than it does from Gaspésie to Cuba. None of this encourages people to come and live in the Gaspésie.

Given the situation, we have three main demands:

1. Better government services for the region, and existing government service jobs must be preserved;
2. Improved and more accessible transportation. Not only is the high cost of transportation a drag on the local economy, it also hurts social development and prevents us from being able to bring and keep people here;
3. Adequate working conditions for workers, whether seasonal or full-time, which would allow them to live decently.



We intervene whenever we find it necessary. We intervene to remind our elected provincial and federal representatives that economic development is important for our workers and for the life of the region. Regions such as Bas-Saint-Laurent, Gaspésie and Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Côte-Nord, Abitibi, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, the so-called remote areas, are essential to the economic and social development of Quebec, something that governments forget.

More money is invested per capita in Montreal than in what are referred to as the remote regions. The mandate of the government, whether provincial or federal, is to distribute the wealth equitably; however that is not being done. When I hear the term "remote region," I find it a pejorative. These are integral parts of the country, parts of Quebec, yet they do not receive the same attention as the major centres.

Fifty-seven per cent of seasonal work is located in eastern Canada. Seasonal work makes a fundamental contribution to the development of the society and Quebec's economy. This must be recognized.

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