Monday, January 25, 2021

The Honorable François Bonnardel   The Honorable Omar Alghabra
Minister of Transportation   Minister of Transportation
700, boulevard René-Lévesque Est, 29ᵉ étage   330 Sparks Street
Québec, QC G1R 5H1   Ottawa, ON K1A 0N5

Dear ministers:

It was with dismay that we have read media accounts suggesting that Keolis Canada, the parent company of Orléans Express, is considering cancelling all bus service east of Rimouski as early as February 7 of this year.

Such a suspension of service will only further isolate the people of the Gaspé, who have increasingly been deprived of the transportation links available to many other Quebecers and Canadians. Via Rail suspended its passenger service to this region in 2013. Air Canada eliminated Gaspé as a destination in 2020. The cancellation of the bus service provided by Orléans Express in 2021 would mean that the final affordable means of collective transportation available to the people of the Gaspé will vanish. It is also the primary means by which many Gaspésians travel to Rimouski for specialized medical treatment.

We understand the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, further cutting off this region from the rest of the province and country will only further stymie the growth and flourishing of the Gaspé and its people, even as the region experiences a modest but promising growth in its population.

As representatives of institutions deeply rooted in and committed to the Gaspé, we implore you to take whatever measures at your disposal to address this urgent situation.

Sincerely yours,

The Most Rev. Gaétan Proulx   The Right Rev. Bruce Myers
Roman Catholic Bishop of Gaspé   Anglican Bishop of Quebec

cc: The Hon. Christian Dubé, Quebec Minister of Health and Social Services
     Mrs. Méganne Perry Mélançon, Member of the National Assembly for Gaspé
     The Hon. Diane Lebouthillier, Member of Parliament for Gaspésie—Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine