

Cancellation of the tourist train

“The Tourism Association is disappointed and surprised”

Thierry Haroun

GASPÉ PENINSULA: - The decision to cancel the activities of the Amiral tourist train for the 2015 tourist season has disappointed and surprised the Gaspé Coast Regional Tourism Association.

The press release published on the Amiral train's website is very clear: “Due to major repairs that have to be done on the railway used by the Amiral train this year, we are obligated to cancel all the trips that were scheduled for 2015. We expect that the (activities will resume) for the 2016 season.”

In fact many, such as Gaspé PQ MNA Gaétan Lelièvre, are blaming the Québec government for having postponed the publishing of the call for tenders to repair the Haldimand steel bridge that is considered unsafe by the Québec Transport Ministry. Therefore, the result is that the Gaspé to Percé train service for cruise ship visitors won't be available for 2015. That upsets the executive director of the Gaspé Coast Regional Tourism Association, Joëlle Ross. “To be honest, we are disappointed and surprised with what is going on and the cancellation of the tourist train given that this activity is sold to cruise ship clientèle in advance. It's so sad,” said Ms. Ross, who hopes that the is-



Photo: G. Gélinas

The Amiral tourist train.

sues will be settled as soon as possible so that the tourist sector won't be hurt in the long run.

“It's a question of image for our industry, the industry of all the Gaspé Coast.” Asked if Escale Gaspésie, the organization responsible for the cruise ship sector in the Gaspé and the Amiral train, has solicited the help of the association to make representations towards the authorities in order to find a solution, Joëlle Ross answered: “No. But we told them that we were available if they need us. We have no problem at all supporting them. This said, I would like to add that our association is a promotional organization. We

don't have the mandate to defend the rights of businesses.”

She also pointed out that the Amiral tourist train is no longer a member of the association because of an overdue debt. However, that debt has been paid recently thanks to the restructuring of the Gaspésie Railway Society in which the Québec government recently allotted \$3.9 million to get the society out of bankruptcy. Now that the Association has been paid, an amount of approximately \$18,000, confirms Joëlle Ross, “I presume that the Amiral train will again become a member of our association once it resumes its operations.”