

Tourism Minister and Transport Minister to discuss the Amiral train

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GASPÉ AND CARLETON: – Quebec’s Tourism Minister Dominique Vien intends to talk to Transport Minister Robert Poëti and ask him if he can accelerate the process that currently blocks the Amiral tourist train from being active this tourist season.

Minister Vien was on the Gaspé Peninsula, July 22 and 23 to conduct meetings with the region’s tourism stakeholders. She did not make any specific announcement. She knew very little about the Amiral tourist train when she first met the press in Gaspé.

“I was informed about the train file only this morning when I stopped at *Escale Gaspésie* (the body in charge of promoting and greeting cruise ships in Gaspé and Percé). I told Gaétan Lelièvre, Parti québécois MNA for the riding of Gaspé that I will commit to having a discussion with Robert Poëti. I am unable to comment further on the file (...) The cruise ship industry is growing. We are

not on the edge of the cliff,” said minister Vien in Gaspé.

In Carleton the following day, she was submitted to numerous questions regarding the Amiral train, and she had a little more to say, although the message hardly changed.

“It is a situation that bears a quantity of challenges. We must be vigilant and put emphasis on safety (...) The idea is to resume the service as soon as possible. I will carry the message and express it clearly. I must get more information. I want to check with Robert Poëti to see if there is a way to accelerate things,” said Minister Vien.

She was informed that the Quebec government put money into the Amiral train.

“It is a delicate situation. If we put money in that, it is because there is potential. The information currently available tells us that a safety issue is the source of the problem,” she said in Carleton.

Repairs worth slightly more than \$1 million were scheduled on the Haldimand railway bridge over this year, conditional to a grant allotted

by Quebec’s Transport ministry. That ministry acquired the Matapédia-Gaspé line in May, after expressing its intention to buy it on March 2. The former owner, the Gaspésie Railway Society, an entity controlled by the area’s municipalities, had been experiencing financial difficulties for months at the time.

The acquisition of the line by Transport-Québec has not accelerated the process leading to repairing the Haldimand bridge, closed until the work is complete.

The call for tenders was still awaited during the fourth week of July, and two months of work are required to repair the bridge. A go-ahead before mid-August is unlikely so the work wouldn’t be complete before mid-October, too late for most of the cruise ship clientele.

The uncertainty forced the cancellation of the eight trips scheduled for the end of the summer and the early fall.

Cruise ship lines were also forced to cancel in 2012 because of line repairs and the fact that the train was not ready.