



Photo: G. Gélinas

*Tourist train L'Amiral transported cruise passengers for the first time in September 2013, and did it again in 2014. Since 2015, it has been immobilized at the Gaspé station.*

## What about L'Amiral?

Geneviève **Gélinas**

**GASPÉ:** – Escale Gaspésie is concerned because it still doesn't know when the Gaspé-Percé railway will be repaired adequately to allow the tourist train L'Amiral to move. The train used to carry cruise ship passengers from Gaspé to Corner of the Beach.

On May 5, in New Carlisle, Premier Philippe Couillard announced that his government earmarked \$100 million to upgrade the railway from Matapédia to Gaspé. He didn't give any schedule but the Port-Daniel-Gaspé section will be the last to be repaired and it's not sure that \$100 million will be enough to get to Gaspé, the Premier stated.

"That is not reassuring," says Stéphane Ste-Croix, spokesperson of Escale

Gaspésie. "It means that L'Amiral will be inactive a minimum of two to three more years." He points out that he welcomes the fact that there will be money for upgrading the railway in general.

Mr. Ste-Croix reminds us that the tourist train has been immobilized at the Gaspé station since 2015. "It's clear that it's going to deteriorate and I'm not talking about the clientele's frustration," because they see the train and cannot use it.

"Meanwhile, the cruise lines do their business and they're going to forget our rail excursions," worries Mr. Ste-Croix. The absence of the train offer "has an impact on our capacity to welcome, disembark and transport the cruise passengers," he adds. L'Amiral can carry 225 pas-

sengers. The tourist train cost was \$2.4 million. The federal and the provincial governments paid \$1.8 million of that amount.

While waiting for the train's return, Tourisme Québec is giving \$25,000 per year to Escale Gaspésie in 2016, 2017 and 2018. This money helps cover the extra cost of renting coaches. About six times per year, there are not enough coaches on the Gaspé to transport the cruise ship passengers. Escale Gaspésie has to rent some coaches outside the region. Their rental is expensive in peak periods and they travel long distances. "To rent a coach in Quebec City, Laval or Lower St. Lawrence means three days of billing but only one day of work," says Mr. Ste-Croix.