

Gaspésie Railway Society to weigh options regarding the Amiral train

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NEW RICHMOND: – The Gaspésie Railway Society will weigh the options regarding the relevance or not to move the Amiral tourist train to New Richmond. The passenger cars and the power generating cars have been stranded in Gaspé since the summer of 2014 and they are deteriorating without proper maintenance.

Part of that deterioration is also due to vandalism. The train was operated mainly for the cruise ship clientele until September 2014 and left there because Gaspé was its main operational base.

“We will assess two scenarios, the cost of leaving the train in Gaspé while providing proper maintenance to the cars and the cost of moving those cars to New Richmond. We will opt for the most feasible scenario guaranteeing their good state. Luc Lévesque, Gaspésie Railway Society’s director general, will calculate both costs this summer and we will make a



The Amiral was used between July 2013 and September 2014, first in the Bay of Chaleur area (photo) but mostly between Gaspé and Percé.

decision based on those calculations,” explains Éric Dubé, president of the Gaspésie Railway Society.

Other factors contributed to leaving the Amiral train in Gaspé. The Gaspésie Railway Society ran into financial difficulty over the fall of 2014. Upon the acquisition of the line by Transports Québec between March and May 2015, that ministry decided to shut down the line between Caplan and Percé until enough traffic

would justify its maintenance. The Percé to Gaspé stretch was added in September of the same year.

A fault in the Douglastown area was one of the reasons given by then Transport Minister Robert Poëti, who also invoked the lack of profitability of the Amiral train. At the time, both reasons were contested by the mayor of Gaspé, Daniel Côté. A washout that occurred along the line just east of Port Daniel in 2014

also contributed to the decision of leaving the train in Gaspé in 2015, as the effects of the washout had worsened the state of the rail bed.

Abandoning the line between Caplan and Gaspé proved a bad decision made by Robert Poëti and his successors because substantial freight traffic materialized along that stretch, which remains shut down until repairs are carried out. Years of track works were wasted between

2014 and 2018 inclusively.

Former Montreal commuter cars were used to make the Amiral. They were upgraded in 2013 at a cost of close to \$2 million, a cost comprising some expenses linked to the organization of the service. Initially, the Gaspésie Railway Society had acquired 10 passenger cars from the City of Montreal for a cost of \$1. Five cars were sold when it became evident that they would not be used in the Gaspé Peninsula. New Richmond’s Rail GD received the contract to upgrade the Amiral cars in 2013.

The Amiral locomotive was also stranded in Gaspé between 2014 and 2017. In November 2017, the bogies, the motor and the envelope of the motor, including the cab, were transported from Gaspé to New Richmond on three separate flat trailers. The locomotive was needed by the Gaspésie Railway Society in order to fill the needs of the growing freight traffic between New Richmond and Matapédia.

Photo: G. Gagné