



For immediate publication

PRESS RELEASE

**2009 CRUISE SHIP SEASON
BLOWS WIND INTO SAILS OF PORT OF GASPÉ !**

Gaspé, 19 November 2009. — The 2009 international cruise ship season for the Gaspé headland has proven a success. Our welcoming ways and appealing attractions are drawing cruiseshippers in ever increasing numbers, and our investments are benefiting individuals and businesses across the region. Indeed, the Gaspé headland would appear to be charming visitors from around the globe!

The mission of the Port of Gaspé is to promote, develop and operate an international cruise port on the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula. Our objective to transform the Port of Gaspé into a regular port of call on international, cold water, Saint Lawrence/Atlantic Canada/New England cruise itineraries is proving a success from a number of standpoints.

Results for the inaugural season of port operations are impressive. Eight ships, representing six different cruise lines and a total of 11 port visits, dropped anchor at Gaspé. For an initial season, both the numbers and exposure afforded by leading cruise line operators are nothing short of enviable, and confirm industry interest in our port of call. Port visits accounted for a volume of 11 000 cruise ship passengers and 3600 crew members. Of this number, nearly a third of cruiseshippers booked guided tours to Percé or Forillon, and nearly as many took the opportunity to come ashore and explore on their own. Shore-based greeting and excursion deployment proceeded without a hitch. In addition, solid, outstanding community support provided proof positive of an enhanced awareness of the economic, cultural and tourism-related factors which can positively impact development in our region.

Objectives and investments

Investments were notable and the corporation injected several million dollars into the community. During this first year of operation, it was important to oversee implementation of the greeting infrastructure initiative. Out of an aggregate budget amount of \$1.76 million, \$330 000 was invested in Phase 1 of Parc Nautique de Gaspé for marine and ground infrastructure. Planning is currently under way for other Phase 1 work—Gaspé rail station, the old factory at Anse-à-Beaufils, and the town centres of both Gaspé and Percé—with completion scheduled for 2010. The tourist train and

intermodal greeting pavilion, each of which figures on the list of Phase 2 projects, are to be operational by 2012.

In terms of training and payroll, over \$250 000 was injected into job creation at the local level. This figure was over and above an operating budget of more than \$100 000, a portion of which was earmarked for the development of international cruise ship marketing and promotional strategies.

Model of international tourism development

The first year of port of call operations proved highly educational. We took the opportunity to study the industry and to gain an understanding of its inner workings and structures, our aim being to hone development of our international tourism strategy. As cruise shipping is entirely new to the Gaspé tourism landscape, there are critical positioning-related challenges to be worked out. The corporation continues to innovate and is intent upon developing marketing, greeting, tour guiding, transport and tourist experience approaches which are fully adapted to regional resources and specific to the singular nature of the cruise ship sector.

Regional influence and positioning substantiated

Interest in the Port of Gaspé as a port of call on cruise ship itineraries is such that it has already attracted the attention of one of the most celebrated organizations dedicated to the development and circulation of world geographical knowledge, namely National Geographic Society. In October, a committee of 437 international experts gathered at the behest of society officials and attributed a rating of 80 out of 100 to the Gaspé Peninsula, thereby ranking the region an impressive third among all must-see places on the planet. The article clearly pointed up the distinctive nature of our region and underscored the leading attractions: sense of place, authenticity, culture and unique experience offered visitors. These findings are in perfect keeping with the vision of the Port of Gaspé which is to entice visitors discover the untold charms of our magnificent corner of the world by *daring to venture beyond!*

Recognition at this level provides the region with tremendous, unprecedented, international exposure, and has blown wind into the sails of international tourism development across the Gaspé Peninsula. An important player in regional tourism development, the team at the Port of Gaspé is confident that it is up to the task and poised to serve the community in exemplary fashion. Accordingly, let us together set our sights on the horizon in anticipation of adventures yet to come.

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