

Tatamagouche should benefit from international bike rally

By CATHY CALLAGHAN
NEWS Writer

TATAMAGOUCHE — The pending arrival of hundreds of cyclists on the North Shore this summer should be greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm by business people and volunteer groups, says a village entrepreneur.

An upcoming international bicycle rally will have "a big economic impact on Tatamagouche," says Jimmie LeFresne, chairman of the tourism committee of the Tatamagouche Area Chamber of Commerce.

Now is the time to jump on the bandwagon.

Tatamagouche and all North Shore communities will make up the cycling centre of the east coast when the annual Atlantic Canada Bicycle Rally for people of all ages and abilities is held July 29 to Aug. 3.

Plans for the sixth annual festival follow closely on the success of the 1991 event in which a record 309 people participated in Lunenburg.

Gary Conrod, rally manager, said

during a recent interview early inquiries by perspective cyclists indicate another possible large attendance.

Mr. LeFresne's Train Station Inn is already booked for the event. Organizers are looking to Nelson Memorial Park for other accommodations.

The tourism committee chairman said the event will bring money into the community, but will not require that residents put money out.

"This is an opportunity for businesses and volunteer organizations to make money." People involved in the project locally include Mr. LeFresne and cycling enthusiast Enid Campbell. Volunteer groups are encouraged to come up with innovative ways in which they can be involved in the rally.

On a broader scale, Mr. LeFresne said Tatamagouche has a growing reputation as an ideal location for such events and residents should pursue them whenever possible. Many business people were disappointed last year when plans to host

a Bluegrass Festival at Nelson Memorial Park fell through.

Tatamagouche has all the services of larger towns but they're in a small, quaint village.

The chairman attributed the success of other large, annual events such as the Oktoberfest, Winefest and Tatamagouche Area Singers musical productions to the cooperation of all people in the community.

"The people who put this community at the top work well together," he said.

The bike rally is not a competition. It is one of only a few recreational events suitable for people of all ages and physical conditioning. In 1991 the age spread was from 7 to 72 years of age.

Mrs. Campbell was among participants. She is thrilled that something of this magnitude is coming to the area.

The rally consists of a variety of daily bicycle rides, easy or long. Participants are rewarded at the end of each day with a social event such

as a reception, picnic, field day and lobster banquet. Most of these events will be sponsored by local groups, providing a potential for them to raise money.

Mr. Conrod said the North Shore is ideal for such a rally because of its beautiful scenery and network of roads. Organizers will map out 15 routes from which cyclists can choose one each of the three days.

Mr. LeFresne said Tatamagouche should not be looking to attract large "smoke stack" industries down the road, but should instead be looking at immediate ways in which it can boost the economy and survive hard economic times. "Events like this bike rally are happening now."

He said such events will have long-term effects. He is confident that people who visit Tatamagouche and the North Shore once will come back again, perhaps to visit or even purchase land and retire. "And, that's another boost to the economy."