

Windmill blade train in New Richmond

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The first windmill blade train is being loaded in New Richmond. The flat cars arrived on the night of November 11 in Matapédia and were immediately sent to New Richmond by the Gaspésie Railway Society director general, Luc Lévesque.

“We are talking about 72 cars of 90 feet in length each. There was no room to park them in Matapédia so we decided to take them to New Richmond that same night. We arrived in the wee hours of the morning,” says Mr. Lévesque.

The 72 cars and the couplers make a train of over 6,600 feet, about a mile and a quarter, or two kilometres. Finding room for them in New Richmond posed a logistics challenge, and the cars were spotted at various places, including the main line, as there is not enough room on the local sidings or the tracks leading to



Photo: G. Gagné

It takes three cars, each measuring 90 feet in length, to haul two blades.

Fabrication Delta and Rail GD. The flat cars are loaded between these two industries.

“The first train is a trial. We will load 30 blades on the same number of cars but their length requires a train of 45 cars because the blades overlap on a

second car,” explains Mr. Lévesque. The loading operation started on November 17. Two blades were put on flat cars. The operation continued the following day. The train is supposed to leave on December 3 for the central part of the

United States. It will be run as a unit train by the railways, which means that there will be no addition or subtraction of cars between New Richmond and the destination.

“Starting in January, the trains will be longer. The ship-

pers want trains of 72 cars and 48 blades,” points out Mr. Lévesque.

The 27 remaining cars are being stored for the next few weeks on the main line in Black Cape, near Burton’s cemetery. The second train is scheduled for January.

The blades are made by the LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé and trucked to New Richmond because the rail line needs improvements east of Caplan. Quebec’s department of Transport has not allotted money for the improvements since 2013.

LM Wind Power will supply blades to wind farms located in the central and southern parts of the United States for the next four or more years. Turbine builder General Electric is ordering the blades.

This first shipping contract awarded to a set of railways calls for the hauling of 600 blades between the Gaspé Peninsula and the United States over the next year.