

425 employees now working at LM Wind Power Gaspé plant

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GASPÉ: – The expanded LM Wind Power plant in Gaspé currently employs 425 people, and that number could eventually reach 500 if the plant becomes productive enough. The new part, inaugurated on July 14, allows the employees to increase the production pace, but also makes possible the fabrication of longer blades for the offshore wind mill market.

More than 100 blades have gone through the 2,700 square meter expansion since the Construction LFG workers finished building it ahead of schedule, at the end of May.

The LM employees do the post-molding steps there, explains plant manager Alexandre Boulay. “They cut the flashes, polish the blades, do the finishing, the assembly and balancing.”

The expansion cost was more than \$12 million. As a result of moving the post-molding steps to the new part, LM could add one mold to the two existing ones in the older part of the plant.

LM had 185 employees in August 2016. The company has hired 240 new employees since then to reach 425. “The objective is 450 so we need 25 more. However, it depends on our productivity. If we increase the pace, we’ll need more employees. There’s an objective to aim for 500,” Mr. Boulay says.

About 80% of the LM employees are from the Gaspé coast and the balance comes from elsewhere in Quebec and other provinces. LM has in-



Photo: G. Gélinas

LM Wind Power has hired 240 new employees since August 2016, to reach a total workforce of 425 employees.

vested “several hundreds of thousands of dollars” in the marketing process to find good candidates, admits Mr. Boulay. “It allows us to get a good workforce.”

Since September, the Gaspé employees have been manufacturing 42-meter blades for General Electric. The Gaspé blades will replace components which are at the end of their useful life on wind mills already in the United States.

The blades are transported by truck from Gaspé to New Richmond, where they are loaded on rail cars to reach their destination by train. “Two trains are going back and forth continuously between the Gaspé Peninsula and Texas,” states Mr. Boulay.

The manufacturing of blades for the American market will keep the LM employees busy until 2021, Mr. Boulay said. “In 2021, there will be new markets. We think about Alberta and New England. We’ll look at the offshore

wind turbines market, because we can manufacture blades that are twice as long (than 42 metres).”

The offshore turbines require more than 80 metre long blades, and sometimes up to 88 metres. Even onshore, some turbines have blades between 60 and 70 metres in length.

If LM was to manufacture 80-metre blades, they should be exported by ship, says Mr. Boulay. Up to 60 metres, they can travel by train. And as for the blades currently produced at LM, they could be transported by train from Gaspé with minor changes to the Port-Daniel tunnel, the manager adds.

The Quebec Government announced \$100 million for upgrading the Gaspesian railway, but didn’t determine a schedule and admitted that the amount could not be enough to reach Gaspé. “We’re sure that it can be done within a few years. The objective is 2021,” states Mr. Boulay.