

Gaspésie Railway Society launches safety campaign

Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: – The Gaspésie Railway Society is launching a major safety campaign to remind the public that trains can circulate at any time between Caplan and Matapédia, considering that traffic has intensified a lot since the presence on the line of the windmill blade trains.

Two serious accidents were avoided recently in the New Richmond area and the management of the Gaspésie Railway Society, the operator of freight trains between Caplan and Matapédia, sees the necessity to reach out to the public.

“A couple of weeks ago, a snowmobiler was driving his vehicle between the tracks and faced the train at one point. The crew came close to using the emergency breaks. The snowmobiler was able to get off the tracks in time. Another day, a woman was walking with her headset, listening to music, not between the tracks but right on the shoulder, along the ties. The locomotive engineer had to use the whistle and she was



Photo: G. Gagné

Trains are now moving on an almost daily basis between Nouvelle and New Richmond. Much of the new traffic generated by the hauling of windmill blades and that traffic will intensify as of February when the number of monthly windmill blade trains will be two instead of one. Cement from Port Daniel will also be shipped by train starting this spring.

quite scared,” explains Éric Dubé, president of the Gaspésie Railway Society.

“We see more and more people using the tracks as four-wheeler and snowmobile trails, or for walks. If a collision occurs, the train will win for sure! The possibility of a casualty when a train is involved in a collision is 40 times higher, compared to a collision involving only cars. The train cannot

get off the tracks to avoid the collision. The train needs a greater distance before stopping completely,” he adds.

“People are no longer used to trains passing regularly but the situation has changed recently. We have trains rolling almost daily between New Richmond and Matapédia, one way or another, sometimes both ways. When we brought in the second windmill blade

train, CN had left six cars behind and delivered them to us a day later, during the night. So we sent a train to Matapédia at night. People must now be aware that trains can pass 24 hours a day, seven days a week along our line. When we get snow, the tracks are plowed at night by the train and the plow,” emphasizes Éric Dubé.

Trains were already rolling four to five days a week be-

tween Nouvelle and Matapédia, because the Temrex sawmill delivers lumber and woodchips regularly to the Canadian National line in Matapédia.

“Starting in February or March, we will send windmill blade trains west twice a month instead of once a month, between New Richmond and Matapédia. That reality involves a lot of shunting. Starting over the spring, we will also haul the cement from McInnis Cement between New Richmond and Matapédia. Other traffic could soon be added to that,” points out Éric Dubé.

He recommends that the public refrain from using the tracks as trails, to cross where there are grade crossings. “Ideally, people must slow down and stop at grade crossings, more so if there are not light and sound signals,” says Mr. Dubé.

“Freight trains don’t have a regular schedule. They can roll at any moment of the day and night, any day of the week, including weekends,” he insists.