



Photo: G. Gélinas

The LM Wind Power “We are hiring” sign was seen everywhere over the last year, including on the plant’s exterior walls.

LM Wind Power plant workforce reaches 475 employees

Geneviève **Gélinas**

GASPÉ: – Gaspé’s LM Wind Power blade manufacturing plant has recently reached its objective of 475 employees, that is to say almost 300 more than in August 2016. One quarter of the workers, 120 people, come from outside the Gaspé Coast and moved to the region because of their new job.

The Montreal construction workers community was a good source of employees for the plant. “They tell us: we’ve had enough with being unemployed (seasonally) in Montreal. We decided to come to Gaspé and work all yearlong,” reports the plant’s director general, Alexandre Boulay.

The Rocher-Percé MRC provides 20% of the LM workforce. “Because of the schedule, the employees can organize themselves to travel together and come to work in Gaspé,” Mr. Boulay says.

The shifts last 12 hours but the employees work about 175 days per year. Most people holding year-around jobs work between 230 and 240 days annually.

The average age in the plant decreased from 43 to 38 years old. Several immigrants are part of the team. “We have individuals from approximately 20 countries: Australia, Brazil, Cameroun, Colombia, Congo, Guinea, Peru, Dominican Republic...,” enumerates the director general.

According to Mr. Boulay the marketing strategy to re-

cruit employees has been a success. LM displayed its “We are hiring” sign everywhere including on the sides of highways. They also advertised on the radio, in social media and on TV, including during the Bye bye 2016 TV show, a highly popular wrap up of the year produced by Radio-Canada.

Mr. Boulay refuses to say how much the company paid for the recruiting campaign. “We took the necessary measures to meet our challenge. We’re recovering our investment in our employees’ excellence.” In the past, he mentioned “hundreds of thousands of dollars.”

Mr. Boulay says the plant will continue hiring a few employees per month in order to replace the employees who decide to leave. The employee turnover rate is “normal” and “isn’t a problem,” he says.

NAFTA re-negotiation: no worries at LM Wind Power

The fact that Canada, the United States and Mexico are re-negotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) doesn’t worry the Gaspé plant director general.

“We follow NAFTA closely but our re-powering projects are secured. And we don’t see wind energy as a target of the NAFTA (re-negotiations). We’re the only blade manufacturing plant in Canada,” says Mr. Boulay. He adds that American blade

manufacturers deliver their components to Canada.

Senvion closed its blade manufacturing plant in Welland, Ontario, in 2015. Last July, Siemens announced the closure of its Tillsonburg blade plant, also in Ontario. That is how the Gaspé plant became the only blade manufacturer in Canada for large wind mills.

LM completed a 2,700-square metre expansion in June, 2017, at a cost of slightly more than \$12 million. The employees are manufacturing 42-metre-long and 46 metre-long blades for GE. That contract makes the plant operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The blades manufactured in Gaspé replace old blades on existing wind mills in Texas. They travel by truck to New Richmond and then are loaded on flat cars to reach their destination by train.

The American market will keep the Gaspé employees busy up to 2021. Alexandre Boulay would like the Gaspé plant to manufacture blades of 80 metres or more in the future.

“For 80 metres and up, we’ll have to consider the port (to export the blades). We’re still dreaming of a direct road,” says Mr. Boulay. That road would allow the blades to be hauled to the Sandy Beach wharf without following Highway 132 and road 198.

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