



## Fallout from CN strike could last several weeks

— Gilles Gagné

NEW RICHMOND: — The CN strike, which took place between November 19 and November 26 inclusively, will have consequences on the railway traffic in the Gaspé Peninsula for a minimum of two to three weeks, according to Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society, the operator of freight trains between Matapédia and Caplan.

The cement traffic delivered by the Port Daniel plant is the most affected because the turnaround of railcars is off its normal pace, points out Mr. Lévesque.

“For example, one of McInnis Cement’s clients operates a siding with a capacity of 15 cars maximum. We send them two series of 10 to 15 cars weekly to allow them enough time to unload without saturating their siding. When CN stopped, the deliveries there stopped too and then CN showed up with 45 cars in one shot. Of course, it jammed in the freight yard before its delivery. Imagine that scenario repeated with thousands of clients,” explains Mr.

Lévesque.

“So it will probably take two to three weeks before a normal cycle is restored. Cement will be impacted more at the outset and I don’t think we will recuperate all the traffic lost,” he adds.

“Regarding windmill blades, it delayed the (incoming empty) train by a week, a week-and-a-half, but we should not be too affected. We will make up for the lost time in December,” states Luc Lévesque.

The difference between cement and windmill blade trains is that cement leaves the New Richmond silo installed for McInnis Cement on a daily basis, while windmill blade trains leave New Richmond every second week, which provides some wiggle room for the delivery.

The windmill blades are made in Gaspé by LM Wind Power and they are trucked to New Richmond because the line east of Caplan is under repair. Cement also has to be trucked to New Richmond and Nouvelle before being transferred into railcars.

The woodchip traffic out of the Temrex sawmill in Nouvelle was not affected by the strike because the line east of Rivière-du-Loup is manned by people from another union than the Teamsters. The Mont-Joli crews were therefore not on strike. The woodchips are delivered to the Rivière-du-Loup paper mill.

“As for the lumber traffic (coming from Temrex too), the traffic is slow since the summer so the loss is not too important on that side,” concludes Mr. Lévesque.