



## Incidents on the railway cause problems to the Gaspésie Railway Society

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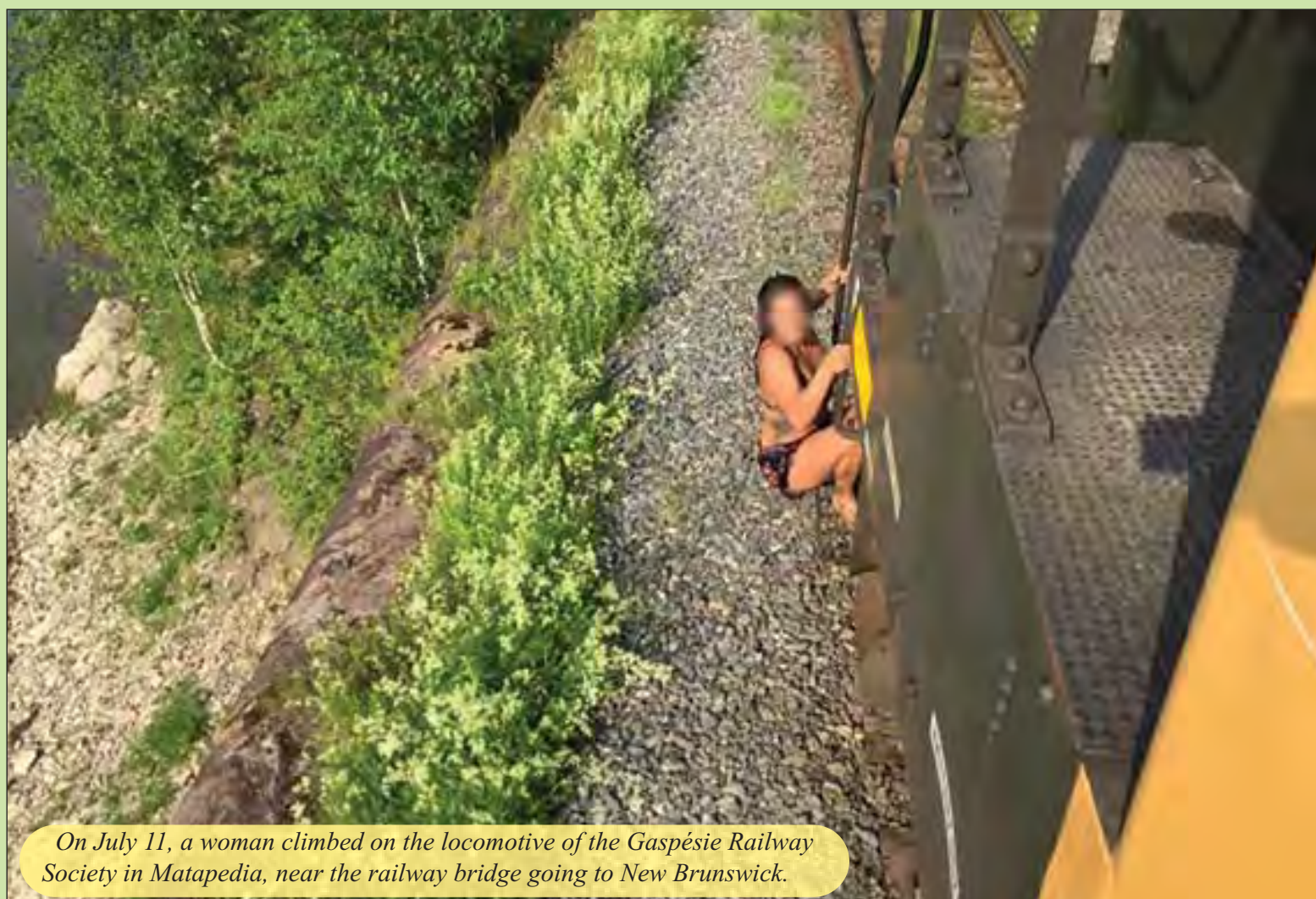
NEW RICHMOND: – Incidents on the railway and people jumping aboard trains are causing safety problems to the Gaspésie Railway Society. The management of the transporter has asked the assistance of the Sûreté du Québec in order to stop this kind of behaviour.

Over the past few weeks, the Gaspésie Railway Society train crews have dealt with a woman who decided to climb on the locomotive in Matapedia, near the railway bridge crossing to New Brunswick. In addition people are jumping into the Little Cascapedia River from the bridge located near the former pumphouse of the linerboard mill. That practice has been ongoing for decades but it is getting worse.

Moreover, some people are sitting close to a passing train and trying to touch its wheels. Young people have also been seen climbing on the Little Cascapedia bridge when the train is passing.

“People used to distance themselves from the trains. Now, some people are trying to get as close as possible,” states Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society.

Since the end of 2016, traffic has increased considerably on the line between Matapedia and New Rich-



*On July 11, a woman climbed on the locomotive of the Gaspésie Railway Society in Matapedia, near the railway bridge going to New Brunswick.*

Photo: Courtesy of the Gaspésie Railway Society

mond. The increase is more noticeable between Nouvelle and New Richmond, because it was already regular between Nouvelle and Matapedia before the end of 2016.

That increase is due to the hauling of windmill blades produced in Gaspé, transferred to railcars in New Richmond and destined for Texas, as well as the cement produced in Port Daniel and loaded in freight cars in New Richmond and Nouvelle

since the summer of 2017.

“There is at least one daily train both ways between New Richmond and Matapedia. Sometimes, it is more because of our needs. Near the Little Cascapedia Bridge and the pumphouse, shunting operations can mean ten or more train movements every day, especially when we load windmill blades,” says Éric Dubé, president of the Gaspésie Railway Society.

Increased traffic means a greater hazard for people walking on the railway or close to it. The risk is already very high for people trying to jump on a moving train or taking bets on the number of wheels they can touch when a train is passing.

Since the third week of August, Sûreté du Québec officers are allowed to give infraction tickets ranging between \$200 and \$500 to anyone trespassing the rail bed,

with special attention given to the Little Cascapedia bridge area.

The fines will of course, not be imposed on people using authorized grade crossings or trails specifically designed to cross the railway.

“The Gaspésie Railway Society asks for the collaboration of the public on the matter. It is an important safety matter,” insists Éric Dubé.