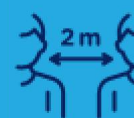




Wear  
a mask



Keep your  
distance

Québec.ca/coronavirus

1 877 644-4545

Votre  
gouvernement

Québec



Photos: G. Gagné

The July 7 train was so long that it was difficult to take a picture illustrating its size. More than one picture was needed.

## Longest train ever between Matapédia and Gaspé?

Gilles Gagné

NOUVELLE – Since the first windmill blade train that circulated between New Richmond and Matapédia on December 3, 2016, Gaspésians have gotten somewhat used to seeing them nearly every other week between those two municipalities. Most of those trains are “unit trains” hauling exclusively windmill blades made in Gaspé by LM Wind Power and delivered solely to the southern part of the United States, essentially Texas.

Barring a few exceptions, all those unit trains consist of 72 flat cars carrying 48 blades. Those exceptions were triggered by one or two cars presenting technical problems, for example. On the Gaspé, those unit trains rarely include any other type of rolling car, such as ones carrying cement, woodchips or lumber.

The July 7 windmill blade train was an exception. It consisted of 72 cars between New Richmond and Nouvelle where nine cars were added: five woodchip cars and four cement cars. They were connected to the train at Leclerc, in the east part of Nouvelle, often referred to as Drapeau. Leclerc used to be the place where, until the beginning of the 1980s, limestone was loaded at the plant owned by a firm called J.J. Leclerc. This is the place where the Gaspésie Railway Society completes the loading of the cement cars. That loading begins in New Richmond and the cement comes from the Port Daniel plant.

Pulled for a rare but not exclusive occasion by four locomotives, the train then had 81 cars when it left Leclerc. It is not a record, number-wise. In the 1970s and 1980s, CN trains rolling in the Gaspé Peninsula had up to 100 or more cars sometimes. Those were the reigning days of the smaller 40-foot boxcars. In the winter of 1990, an 82-car freight train also circulated east of Matapédia. By then, most of the boxcars were 50 feet in length.

In addition to including nine cars of woodchips and cement, the July 7 windmill blade train had another characteristic that was not often seen in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the length of its main components. The flat cars used to haul the blades are very long, close to 90 feet in length, in fact 89 feet and four inches. So, if the train is not the largest, number-wise, it might have been the longest in the history of the Matapédia to Gaspé line.

Considering that each of the four locomotives measure 57 feet, for a subtotal of 228 feet, while the 72 flat cars measure 6,432 feet. Add five woodchip cars of 64 feet-and-a-half, for 322.5 feet, and four cement cars of 45 feet and 8 inches, for

182 feet and 8 inches. The overall total makes 7,165 feet and two inches. In trains of yesteryears equivalence, it would have taken close to 174 boxcars of 40 feet or 139 boxcars of 50 feet to match it, considering that they were hypothetically pulled by the same locomotives, a model already in use at the end of the 1950s.

There are many retired railway employees in the Gaspé Peninsula. SPEC, along with some rail enthusiasts, would like to know if anybody can remember a longer train circulating between Matapédia and Gaspé. Photos would be welcome as well, although it is easy to understand that such a long train is difficult to photograph, except from a plane or elevated area. The July 7 train proved just that! Our readers can send us messages via The Gaspé Spec on facebook or to [specs@globetrotter.net](mailto:specs@globetrotter.net).

We will gladly do a follow up in August, if we receive any responses, whether they confirm or not that the July 7 train could have been the longest to roll east of Matapédia, towards Gaspé. It sure was not the heaviest though, because the blades are light, about seven tons each.