

Windmill blades temporarily loaded in Nouvelle

Gilles Gagné

NOUVELLE – Due to the 23-day traffic halt east of Nouvelle, a halt stemming from the damage sustained by the Cascapedia-St-Jules old railway bridges, the Gaspésie Railway Society had to improvise and find a quick solution to ensure the loading of a second windmill blade train in December, west of the Cascapedia River.

A relatively flat area was located in Nouvelle, just west of the terminal where the Gaspésie Railway Society completes the loading of cement cars. After obtaining permission from the Municipality of Nouvelle and the go-ahead from the property owner, gravel was brought to the location and compacted to flatten



The loading of windmill blades was transferred to Nouvelle for a week. A few more than half of the 72 cars were loaded as of December 17

Photo: G. Gagné

were reloaded on truck trailers and brought near Leclerc siding, where cement is handled in Nouvelle. The loading operation started slowly on December 14 with two blades on the first day.

“It took the new crew a little while before getting used to that specific task and the wind was blowing on the second day. But things settled over the third day and they were loading at a fast pace after that, more than 10 blades per day. We almost had to slow them down,” explains Luc Lévesque, director general of the Gaspésie Railway Society. There was a need for a new loading crew because New Richmond’s Fabrication Delta and GE’s subcontractor for the

the area. Heavy equipment including two cranes, was also needed to load windmill

blades.

The blades had already been trucked to Fabrication

Delta in New Richmond, where they were supposed to be loaded on flat cars. They

WINDMILL BLADES:

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loading operations, Northern Crane Services, were not able to reach an agreement for the next two years. The windmill blades are made in Gaspé by LM Wind Power, a Danish company now controlled by GE. GE produces windmill turbines and the builder of the turbines decides whose blades will be used.

The windmill blades made in Gaspé are delivered to the southern part of the United States, mainly Texas. They are essentially installed on existing windfarms to replace old blades. That process is called repowering.

That supply contract was signed in the summer of 2016. It is valid for at least the next two years.

As of now, the next windmill blade train will only be loaded after January 20 and it should take place in New Richmond, where the Gaspésie Railway Society is installing a new railway spur for that purpose.

That spur has been under construction since November 17 but it was interrupted due to the December 2 flood. The staff of the transporter then concentrated its effort at completing track work in Cascapedia-Saint-Jules.

The Town of New Richmond is currently holding a consultation process to adopt a zoning derogation that will allow windmill blade loading on an adjacent property, which is necessary, given that the Gaspésie Railway Society’s piece of land is not wide enough for the storage of all the blades.

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