

Local Railway Items from Ottawa Papers 1985

Tuesday 26/02/1985 Ottawa Citizen

Chalk River

Petawawa

Luck, experience helped limit impact of crash.

A combination of luck and lessons learned from the 1979 Mississauga train wreck prevented Sunday's CP Rail derailment at Petawawa from being more serious.

Canadian Transport Commission spokesman Peter Schnobb said two tank cars that normally carry propane and another that normally carries methyl alcohol were empty when the freight train left the tracks.

"There was the potential for something much bigger," Schnobb said Monday.

As it was, it took 11 hours for 50 firefighters to bring the blaze under control so 500 people could return to their homes.

CP spokesman Herb Brooks said today the line was expected to be open by 6 p.m. this evening.

Schnobb said even if those tank cars had been full, numerous safety precautions resulting from the Mississauga accident would have reduced the danger of a disaster.

Rail carriers must now separate tankers carrying dangerous chemicals from cars carrying flammable products. The positioning of cars on the derailed train was checked and met the requirements.

Chemical carriers are also now more resistant to damage and fire because of structural improvements made to the cars. "We can no longer duplicate Mississauga," said Schnobb.

A six-member transport commission investigation team is on the scene and a report will follow. No date has been set for its release.

Preliminary damage estimates put the cost at \$350,000.

At this point, a crack in the rail just east of the derailment remains the most likely cause, said Schnobb, adding that the broken rail may have given way under the weight of the train.

Schnobb said it is not uncommon for the rails to crack, especially following a quick thaw like the one that hit the area over the past few days.

He said the track is inspected by the railway company on a regular basis and the CTC carries out periodic reviews as well.

Schnobb didn't know when the line was last checked. That type of information will come but in the investigation.

The issue came up in the House of Commons Monday when Liberal MP Len Hopkins asked Transport Minister Don Mazankowski for a review on how often rail inspections were carried out.

Mazankowski said no action would be taken until the investigation is complete.

Officials said the derailment could have resulted in a much larger evacuation.

Firefighters were concerned the rain and water from their equipment could have reacted with the cargo in one car carrying 200 pounds of sulphuric acid. A toxic gas could have formed, causing vomiting and severe damage to eyes and lungs.

As it turned out, fire officials found when they opened the boxcar that the sulphuric acid had burned off without causing any dangerous fumes.

Lubricant oil also caused concern. Pembroke's water filtration plant was closed after environment ministry officials discovered the oil leaking into a ditch that drains into the Petawawa and Ottawa rivers.

The plant resumed normal operations early Monday. Environment ministry spokesman Andrew Policy said only a small amount of oil leaked into the Petawawa River, posing no threat to the water supply.

The 86-car train was traveling westbound at 70 kilometres an hour at the time of the 7:45 a.m. derailment. That was within recommended speed which varies according to weather conditions, geography, proximity to urban areas and track configuration.

One of four crew riding in the caboose suffered a bruised knee

About 100 CP employees worked throughout Monday and by 2:30 p.m. the track had been cleared of the 27 derailed cars. A nearby bridge, which spans the Petawawa River, needs extensive repairs with about three-quarters of the timbers in need of replacement because of damage from the derailment.

In the meantime, VIA Rail trains from Ottawa to Sudbury which use the line have been cancelled and a bus service is being provided.

CP has rerouted its freight traffic to other lines.

Derailed still echoes in trailer park.

PETAWAWA Pinehurst trailer park residents evacuated during the 27-car train derailment near here are having trouble forgetting the accident that shook them from their sleepy Sunday morning.

A steady stream of curious onlookers trudged through the water, and slush Monday to watch as mammoth cranes removed the twisted remains of the freight train from the tracks.

Some shook their heads as they looked at the boxes of bicycles that had tumbled from one wrecked car.

Esther Jourdain, the wife of a soldier, sipped coffee and squinted into the bright sunlight as she watched the cleanup from the doorstep of her trailer home.

"I'm always thinking about trains now," she said, remembering the thundering crash of the train.

Jourdain and her husband and two children have lived in the trailer for about 10 years and have no plans to move out.

"We have to stay here. Where else would we go except the PMQ's (private married quarters) at Canadian Forces Base Petawawa," she said.

"After all, this couldn't happen again."

Others, like Ed and Mary Jane McGuey, who have an 11-month-old daughter, said trains are dangerous but they weren't upset by the derailment.

"It doesn't scare us that much. It could happen anywhere," said the 31-year-old father.

14/03/1985 Brockville Recorder

Brockville

Brockville

Ghost-trains in the Brockville Tunnel? This is how it appeared during the afternoon of March 13, after smoke was detected curling up from beneath the doors of the abandoned railway tunnel in that community. For a while, things got to the point that smoke was even coming out the original vents for the 1700 foot long structure. These vents are located within the Brockville City Hall. From the exterior, however, they only appear as additional chimneys. In the end, the problem was traced to some - as yet - unbound youngsters who had dragged a considerable amount of wood into the bore and ignited it. Fire fighters finally managed to extinguish the blaze and measures have been taken to secure the entrances as fully as possible to prevent a reoccurrence of the incident,

Saturday 06/06/1985 Ottawa Citizen

Smiths Falls

Moodie Drive

The 17-year old Richmond man charged in the \$2-million derailment of a VIA train last June has been committed to trial.

Randy Rankin will appear in district court May 3 to set a date for trial.

Rankin was charged after a VIA train on the Ottawa-Toronto line derailed, sending 27 people to hospital with minor injuries.

He is charged with interfering with a transportation facility.

11/07/1985 Brockville Recorder

Brockville

Brockville

Workmen engaged in rehabilitating the south end of the Brockville Tunnel to permit it to continue to withstand the heavy pounding of vehicular traffic from where it crosses under Water Street have discovered that the structure may be stronger than originally concluded in a consulting engineering report from the Kingston firm of McNeely Engineering and Structure. While scraping away the material and street over the top of the tunnel in order to install a concrete reinforcing cap under the street, it was discovered that the base of the double skin thick rubble stone tunnel liner is supported along by stone buttresses spaced at seven to eight foot intervals. The discovery was somewhat of a surprise as the consultants had previously concluded that the only support for the tunnel was coming from the till material above it and not the masonry liner. In light of the discovery, the city has now sought a second opinion from the consulting firm. In spite of the discovery, however, the city has proceeded to reinforce the crossing of Water Street. This has involved the removal of the outside skin of stone in order to pour a thick concrete arch over the liner. The arch should alleviate any fears of a potential collapse because of heavy vehicular traffic. The rehabilitation is being done in a sympathetic manner and the distinctive high hump of the street over the tunnel - long a deterrent to the successful passage of long vehicles - remains. Indeed, because of the design of the reinforcing ring, the hump is actually one inch higher than it was previously!
(Branchline)

13/11/1985 Glengarry News

Alexandria

Glen Robertson

Glen Robertson's 66-year-old train station is gone after demolition crews razed the structure Friday.

On Tuesday a CN spokesman said the building, which has been closed for the last few years, wasn't of any use to CN or VIA Rail and it had been offered for sale to the Township of Lochiel. The decision was then made to bring in the wrecker's ball.

"We did go to the township, asking them if they wanted the building, but we received no answer," Louise Filion, an employee in CN's public affairs department, said. "We went to tender for the job and didn't receive any bids. We then asked four companies if they would do it and we finally picked a company in Quebec."

Mrs Filion said CN wrote to the township on Sept. 10, 1982 advising them that it would be approaching the Canadian Transport Commission to close the station. The firm did not receive a reply from the township.

Lochiel Reeve Ron MacDonell confirmed that CN had offered the station to the municipality, but said it wasn't interested in it at the time.

"They offered to sell it to us," he said, "but we didn't know it was going to be torn down."

The caption under the two photographs reads:

Landmark Gone

A Glen Robertson landmark disappeared over the weekend as the train station was torn down. The station was built in 1919 after the original station, located across the tracks, was destroyed by fire. The station was in operation until about two years ago. The top photo shows the original station, built around 1880. It shows Station Agent Dave Robertson, left and Catherine Jane Robinson, right. The bottom photo was taken about 1950 and shows, left to right, Station Foreman Jim Rickerd, Edith Morrison, Station Agent Norman Milke and Grace Hanley, sister of Edith Morrison.

Photos courtesy of Ray Rickerd.