

Local Railway Items from Area Papers - 1992

05/01/1992 *Ottawa Citizen* *Maniwaki*

Train finds new backer Citizen staff The Wakefield steam train looks like it's back on track with Outaouais businessman Marc Grondin's \$1-million proposal to run it for the next 25 years.
Grondin's proposal, which would see tourists on scenic rail trips between Hull and Wakefield by June 27, remains to be ratified by the 'train council on Monday. The council was created by the municipalities of Hull, Chelsea and La Peche to revive the steam train.
The project was put in jeopardy when Andy Tommy, a key investor, pulled out three months ago. The council then called for new proposals.
"Marc Grondin answered the call," council co-ordinator Gilles Ruest said Saturday.
Grondin's proposal, the only one the council received, "puts the train in a position to take off," Hull councillor Yves Dueharme said.
"I'm certainly excited," said Grondin, who has been involved in the tourist industry for many years. His \$1-million investment will be matched by a \$1.4-million grant from the Quebec government to restore the line.
Grondin, who believes he can make a profit on the train, intends to operate it year-round.
The National Capital Commission operated the tourist train in the 1970s and early 1980s, but abandoned it because of the high cost

23/01/1992 *Ottawa Citizen* *Brockville* *Jasper*

TRAIN RAMS PICKUP

Man killed at crossing

A 39-year-old Ontario Hydro employee was killed Wednesday when a Via Rail train slammed into his truck at Jasper, 10 kilometres southeast of Smiths Falls. Provincial police said the Hydro pickup truck was east-bound on County Rd. 16. It drove across a level crossing, which had operational flashing lights and bells, when it was struck by the southbound train at 10:30 a.m.
There was no one else in the truck.
The victim's name is being withheld pending notification of next of kin. No one on the three-coach train was hurt.

04/02/1992 *Le Droit* *Maniwaki*

STEAM WHISTLE MAY YET SOUND IN GATINEAU VALLEY:

The Gatineau Hills may yet echo to the sound of a steam locomotive, something that hasn't happened since September 1, 1985.
On February 25, seven years of blood, sweat and tears may come to a happy ending when it is anticipated that the Province of Quebec will finally officially commit \$1.4 million to an ambitious proposal to operate a steam passenger tourist train between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec. The route is the CP Rail former Maniwaki Subdivision.
Equipment for the Hull-Wakefield service will be purchased from Sweden. Promoter Marc Grondin will journey to Sweden in mid-February to buy rolling stock from the Swedish government. The purchase will include three steam locomotives, three service cars, 15 passenger cars, a yard locomotive, and other equipment for a total of \$500,000. Transport and other costs will bring the final total to \$650,000. The steam locomotives have been in 'strategic reserve' for many years.
The next few months should see quite a flurry of activity as operators of the railway set about to build a shop and turning facilities in Hull, rehabilitate the former Maniwaki subdivision and install visitor service facilities, especially at the Hull end.
As much information as possible will be provided in the April issue of Branchline. (Branchline).

14/02/1992 *Ottawa Citizen* *Kingston (CN)* *Iroquois*

DIDNT HEAR WHISTLE

Train kills railway worker

A railway maintenance worker who failed to hear a train's jwarming whistle was killed Thursday when struck by a westbound VIA train just west of Iroquois. Iroquois is 80 kilometres ! south of Ottawa, i George. MacDermid, 34, of RR 5, Alexandria, was clearing ice and snow from a switch on the j Canadian National Railways main line with a gas-powered blower mounted on his back when struck by the train,
A fellow worker told provincial police MacDermid had his head down and did not hear the train's whistle over the roar lof his torch. MacDermid was married with two children.

19/02/1992 *West Quebec Post* *Maniwaki*

CAN VILLAGE COPE WITH TOURIST INFLUX?

As the clock ticks closer to the resumption of steam passenger rail service between Hull and Wakefield, Quebec, a new issue has emerged to tax the creativity of the train's proponents.
Wakefield merchants and residents, alike, wonder how well their tiny community will be able to cope with an influx of up to 900 passengers on a daily basis. The train's proponents are forecasting that close to 140,000 people could visit Wakefield during the summer of 1992, far outtaxing the limited visitor service facilities in the community.
At a recent meeting, merchants described their experiences between 1974 and 1985 when Wakefield service was provided by the Government of Canada using ex-CP locomotives 1057 and 1201. They spoke of the disruption to their regular business with people looking for parking and washrooms. It was also mentioned that the crowds assembling to watch the locomotive turning rituals also seriously blocked traffic on the main street.
Pro-train advocates dismissed the worries and called for innovative solutions to the problems. They see the resumption of rail service as an economic panacea.

05/03/1992 *Canadian Press* *Alexandria*

BROKEN AXLES CAUSE DERAILMENTS: On February 18, two LRC coaches on Ottawa-Montreal Train 34 derailed at speed at Glen Robertson, Ontario, when an axle broke. Fortunately there were no injuries.

A similar derailment occurred at St-Lambert, Quebec, on February 29 when an axle on one LRC coach on Quebec-Montreal Train 621 failed. These derailments, plus a similar one at Ottawa in 1991, have resulted in VIA stepping up the frequency of axle testing of LRC rolling stock in line with recommendations made by the Transportation Safety Board. (Canadian Press, 05/03/92 via Branchline)

25/03/1992 *West Quebec Post*

Maniwaki

Wakefield

Business community develops plan for tourist train.

Commerce Wakefield, a local business association, is developing a strategy for handling the projected influx of passengers from the soon-to-open Wakefield Steam Train.

The group has recently discussed a consultant's proposal for added washroom and other such visitor facilities to Wakefield in time to greet the first passengers on June 27 of this year.

Up to 1,000 passengers are forecasted to visit the community on a daily basis during the summer. The group has no idea how many others will drive there just to watch the train. (Branchline)

29/03/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Kingston (CN)

Brockville

Two die as car hits train

A car-train collision near Brockville early Saturday morning killed the two people in the car.

The car smashed into a freight train on CN Rail tracks about two kilometres east of Brockville at 1:55 a.m., said Sgt. Howard Pledge of Ontario Provincial Police.

One of the victims was Michael Montgomery, 33, of Brockville. Police are withholding the name of the second victim until relatives are notified.

30/03/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Kingston (CN)

Brockville

Police have identified the second of two men killed in a collision between a van and a train near Brockville early Saturday.

Raymond Beyries, 38, of Toronto, died when the van he was driving smashed through a railway crossing barrier and hit an eastbound freight train on the CN Rail tracks about two kilometres east of Brockville, according to Ontario Provincial Police. OPP earlier identified the van passenger, who also died, as Michael Montgomery, 33, of Brockville.

24/04/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Kingston (CN)

Prescott

Girl killed by train in Prescott

A sixteen-year old girl was killed Thursday when she was struck by a VIA Rail passenger train in Prescott

Prescott police say the victim was crossing the tracks shortly before 9 a.m. near Edward Street when she was struck from behind by a westbound VIA train travelling about 70 kilometres an hour.

A freight train was passing on a second set of tracks at the time of the accident

At the request of the family, police are not releasing the name of the victim..

Enthusiasts in Smiths Falls aim to revive train and station

SMITHS FALLS Ken Papineau and friends are painstakingly and lovingly putting back together a railway that went bankrupt almost 75 years ago.

Their railway will never turn a profit and it will never span a continent, as the original did. But it will keep alive a vital part of this country's heritage and show people what it was like to ride the rails long ago.

Papineau and the 256 members of the Smiths Falls Railway Museum Association are restoring a complete train and station built for the Canadian Northern Railway. And it's all being done with volunteer labor.

After Canadian Northern went bankrupt in 1918, it continued to operate for five years to pay off its creditors and then was merged into Canadian National in 1923. It's now all but forgotten except by railway buffs.

It was the Canadian Northern Railway that built the once-sumptuous and somewhat whimsical Smiths Falls CN station, which is being restored as a museum and base for old rolling stock preserved by the museum's members.

The museum owns about five kilometres of track leading from the station, which formerly belonged to Canadian National. The museum hopes to extend the track to as much as 20 kilometres in the next few years.

A large part of Papineau's life revolves around the train station and rusty sections of track in the station's freight yard where locomotives, passenger cars, cabooses and freight cars are being slowly restored.

A bachelor, Papineau is there seven days a week, at least eight hours a day, from early May until late October, working as a volunteer and showing the museum's treasures to visitors. He's also overseeing the mammoth task of restoring the building and equipment to their former glory.

Papineau is the museum association vice president and still only 47, though he earned enough money to retire from his job as a photo equipment salesman five years ago.

"I've been interested in trains since I was 10, when my parents bought me my first Christmas train set. But why bother with the model stuff when you can have the real thing?" he says.

Rebuilding a complete antique train is a daunting task that will cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and take several years.

The museum already has a working engine a small diesel-electric locomotive' built in 1957 for work in freight yards. When Canadian Pacific stripped it of some of its working parts and donated it to the museum in 1985, no one expected it to run again.

But museum association member Steve Hunter and a team of volunteers spent years rebuilding the engine. Now, says Papineau, "it purrs like a kitten" when used occasionally on short excursion runs for visitors, who ride behind in a caboose.

But the locomotive soon to become the museum's chief attraction is a midsized steam engine built in Montreal in 1912 for Canadian Northern.

The locomotive, which was taken out of service by CN 40 years ago, is being leased to the museum for \$10 a year by its owner, the Canadian Railroad Historical Association. It will be shipped from Montreal to Smiths Falls on a flatbed rail car June 13.

Five members of the Smiths Falls museum association put up a total of \$11,500 to pay to transport the locomotive and tender, which between them weigh as much as a Boeing 707 jet

Its restoration will become the association's top priority, but Papineau says it's too soon to guess how long that will take or how much it will cost.

The first job will be to restore it cosmetically, so that it can go on display while the association sets about raising funds to rebuild the boiler and make it run again.

"This engine allows us to make a complete Canadian Northern train to depict that railway's history," says Papineau.

The museum already has five dilapidated, but structurally sound, Canadian Northern passenger cars, all built around 1920 and in service until little more than a decade ago.

Now they're not a pretty sight The old seats have been ripped out giving them a forlorn look. The mahogany interior of the first-class car was hideously painted over in red, white and blue in the 1960s, when CN's slogan was "red, white and blue means savings for you."

The museum already has replacement seats and windows for the old cars. Papineau won't say just where they came from. "We have many friends that work for the railways that don't have names," is all he'll let on.

The museum also has an old CN dental car, which used to be fully equipped with living quarters and dental equipment so dentists could visit remote communities to do their work.

But the association is giving higher priority to restoring a once-luxurious business car built in 1886 in which Canadian Pacific bigwigs entertained wealthy clients.

The museum hopes to restore the exterior of the car by its 100th birthday in 1996.

Just as big a job as rebuilding the old equipment is restoration of the old station, built by Canadian Northern as a showpiece to impress its customers on the last stop of their transcontinental journey before they reached the capital. The station opened in 1914.

The main waiting room, now well on the way to being restored to its former grandeur, looks as if it could have been designed as a ballroom at Rideau Hall.

The station was a terrible mess when the museum association took it over in 1985, six years after it had been abandoned by CN. There was a huge hole in the roof, the place had been vandalized, and the floor had collapsed into the flooded basement

"We bought the station from CN for \$1, not such a great deal, believe me," says Papineau.

The association has already spent about \$200,000 doing it up, and it may be another couple of years before the station is finished.

The museum, which is open every day from May to October, has no admission charge but gets some revenue by offering rides in a small gasoline-powered track inspection car than runs on the rails and looks like a van. It seats eight comfortably.

06/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Winchester**Finch*

Railway worker killed by train Citizen sUiff : A railway worker killed Thursday when struck by a freight train near Finch has been identified as Ray Rabe of Holstein, Ont.

Rabe, 48, was a member of a crew repairing track on the CP Rail line, one kilometre east of Finch. His identity was withheld until his family, which lives near Durham, could be notified.

Const. Bernie Gadbois of the Ontario Provincial Police said Rabe had been working on the north line when the eastbound train passed on the south line. Finch is about 35 km northwest of Cornwall.

20/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Kingston (CN)**Iroquois*

Handle safety, foremen told

MORRISBURG Foremen of railway maintenance crews should be safety coordinators rather than actively participate in the work, says a coroner's jury-

This was one of the recommendations made following an inquest into the death of a CN rail worker who was killed at a track maintenance site just west of Iroquois, 65 kilometres southeast of Ottawa.

George MacDermid, 34, foreman of a five-member maintenance crew, was killed when he was hit by a VIA train on Feb. 13.

Evidence presented at the hearing showed that MacDermid was working in the middle of the north track when he was struck from behind by the westbound passenger train.

MacDermid, an Alexandria-area resident, was working with a noisy snow-blower when he was hit.

The jury said a foreman of a track crew should be more of an observer with the responsibility for safety.

The coroner's jury also recommended that railway employees working along tracks wear fluorescent garments such as vests.

MacDermid was the second area railway worker killed by a train in the last two years. Another was killed when he was struck while working on tracks in Cornwall.

25/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Waltham

Hull

CP has given notice that it proposes to apply for abandonment of the Wamo Spur (formerly the Waltham subdivision) between mile 0.0 and Mile 1.0 E.B. Eddy Forest products (the only shipper on the line), no longer requires rail service and has pulled up all its trackage. (Branchline)

28/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Maniwaki

Romantic legend rolls again

Wakefield steam train rewards well-wishers with mighty whistle blasts

It was two hours late, the toilets didn't work and the whistle blew out somewhere around Farm Point.

No matter. For the hundreds of passengers aboard the Wakefield steam train, Saturday's inaugural excursion along the banks of the Gatineau River was a glorious rebirth of a romantic legend.

From the moment the iron lady chugged out of a replica, turn-of-the-century station in Hull to her snail's pace crawl into Wakefield, the bygone age of steam came puffing back to life.

Passengers many sporting engineer's caps stood in the aisles of the 1940s vintage railcars, laughing and chatting noisily. Others sat back and drank in the spectacular landscape as the train's piercing whistle echoed through the Gatineau hills.

For most, it was the first time to find out what a Canadian steam train looked, sounded and smelt like.

For others, it was a memory of days gone by. "Our family used to take the steam train every Friday to our summer home in Chelsea," said Mary Mac-Neil, 72. "It's like a long lost friend has come back."

After seven years of on-again, off-again negotiations, the locomotive's revival drew crowds of well-wishers along its 32-kilometre route.

People lined the rails and waved and cheered from virtually every level crossing as the train chugged black smoke and hissed steam.

Lome Blackburn, a high-spirited engineer who was coaxed out of early retirement to run the train, rewarded the crowds with a mighty hoot of the whistle as locomotive 909 puffed through brushland and industrial parks to the beautiful countryside of the Gatineau Valley.

For John Trent, the journey was especially poignant.

A visibly tired and slightly sunburnt Trent sat sipping a Budweiser as the train turned a corner to unveil the first spectacular view of the Gatineau River.

"I feel very proud. This is a great day, and a long time in coming."

In the seven years since the National Capital Commission stopped running the tourist train, the University of Ottawa professor has worked tirelessly to get the steam train back on track.

Trent brought together three local governments, two branches of provincial government, the NCC and a group of private investors who are betting \$2.5 million the train will be a profitable, year-round venture.

Organizers have tried to make a trip on the steam train as authentic as possible. But apart from the whistle, which all agreed is thrilling (until it blew out), there will be a good deal less black smoke poured into the air. The original coal fires have been replaced by diesel fuel to create steam.

And engine 1201, the locomotive that used to do most of the pulling along the western bank of the Gatineau, spent Saturday in an air-conditioned museum.

Instead, the horsepower for the train is a Swedish-built engine that was retired in the 1960s.

The sleek, black locomotive, which dates from 1907, pulls nine passenger cars and a diesel locomotive as backup. Only once during Saturday's maiden voyage was Blackburn forced to kick the back-up diesel engine in to scale a mile-long incline on the outskirts of Chelsea.

Those on board found photo opportunities around every bend as the train wound its way past log-jammed reservoirs, lush hills and panoramic views of the glorious Gatineau.

"I've been driving up and down the Gatineau hills for 50 years. But I never really realized just how beautiful this countryside is until today," said Gabriel Bedard. And what's a train ride without a hold-up?

As the locomotive crawled into Wakefield, the Molly Rod Raiders, a motley crew of masked outlaws known to frequent the Low and District Lions Club, spilled out of a stagecoach, jumped on board and held Chelsea Mayor Judy Grant for ransom.

Despite the ambivalence of some, hundreds of Wakefield residents and cottagers came out to cheer the train's arrival.

During the past few weeks, gallons of paint and dozens of flower boxes have gone into sprucing up Wakefield in anticipation of the thousands of tourists who will visit this quaint village.

Merchants watched gleefully as about 400 passengers spilled out of the train for a two-hour stopover:

"Business was excellent," said Josie Pearson, owner of the Chateau Pearson hotel and tavern.

For other merchants, traffic was surprisingly light

"We expected to see a lot of people, but it wasn't half as busy as we thought it would be," said Sean Maloney, of the Pot au feu restaurant next to the temporary station.

There had been opposition to the revival of the train. On Friday night fourteen spikes were driven into the tracks near Chelsea.

"Somebody wanted to derail this train," said Trent. "This is highly dangerous, and it's absolutely illegal." The spikes were removed Saturday morning by rail crews who will monitor the tracks every morning before the train starts.

The Wakefield steam train, which will bring an estimated \$2 million annually to the local economy, will operate year-round, with its heaviest operations, in summer.

It will make one trip every morning until July 12, when it begins two daily round trips. Operator Marc Grondin says it's booked solid until July 7.

29/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Kingston (CN)

Brockville

Freight train derails near Brockville

BROCKVILLE Canadian National's main line between Montreal and Toronto was blocked after a freight train derailed Sunday, spilling dolls, potato chips, jewelry, bubble gum and other cargo.

CN police were brought in to "make sure there's no Sunday shoppers," said CN official Laurie Bronson.

The 11-car train, en route to Halifax from Toronto, jumped the tracks at about 7 a.m. as it rounded a curve about 15 kilometres east of Brockville.

Three crew members escaped injury, Bronson said.

No more delays, train operator says

The operator of the Wakefield steam train says the first weekend trips have worked the bugs out of the system and the train should keep to a revised schedule in future.

Saturday's inaugural four-hour excursion stretched to six hours, and Sunday's trip dragged out to eight hours. Operator Marc Grondin laid on two school buses Sunday to carry some passengers back to Hull from Wakefield quickly.

Grondin said Sunday night that many of the holdups were due to security concerns. Vandals caused a delay during the Saturday trip, and the train stopped repeatedly Sunday so that crews could inspect the track. And the Sunday departure, scheduled for 10 a.m., was delayed until noon so that the whistle, which blew out Saturday, could be rebuilt.

Because of the fears of vandalism, the train will be restricted to a maximum speed of about 25 kilometres an hour for this week's trips, Grondin said. That will increase total time for the round trip from the scheduled 2 hours and 30 minutes to 3 hours and 15 minutes, excluding a two-hour stopover in Wakefield.

More than 350 tickets were sold for the Sunday train. Passengers said dozens abandoned their plans when the departure was repeatedly delayed, although Grondin said only 26 tickets were refunded or exchanged for other dates. He said 147 passengers were on the train for the return journey. Several dozen returned by the buses.

But those who made the return trip raved about the experience and scenery.

"We were there to ride on the train, so it was fine," said Lennie Young of Kamloops, B.C., who took the trip with her sister, who lives in Ottawa. "We weren't there to rush, so we really enjoyed it."

30/06/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Kingston (CN)**Brockville*

Rail line reopens near Brockville Canadian National's main line between Montreal and Toronto reopened Monday after a derailed freight train spilled cargo onto the tracks Sunday.

The 11-car train from Toronto to Halifax jumped the tracks at about 7 a.m. as it rounded a curve about 15 kilometres east of Brockville. CN spokesman Mike Matthews said one line was repaired at about 2 p.m. Monday and the other one was to be opened today. Three train crew members escaped injury in the accident. CN investigators haven't determined the cause of the derailment.

04/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Maniwaki*

WAKEFIELD TRAIN

Snag means part of trip by bus

The Wakefield tourist train, after being a target of saboteurs, has run into two new snags.

A burst boiler has put the steam locomotive out of service, and CP Rail is refusing to allow a backup diesel engine to use CP tracks.

CP's stand is forcing train operators to carry passengers by shuttle-bus from the newly-built train station in Hull for the first three kilometres of the journey. Then passengers scramble aboard the train in a freight yard for the rest of the 32-kilometre trip to Wakefield, on track owned by the train operators.

Despite the setbacks, the train has already carried more than 13,000 passengers on the scenic ride along the bank of the Gatineau River since the service began June 27.

The sleek, black steam engine, built in Sweden in 1907, was knocked out of service 10 days ago when the boiler sprang a leak after being topped up with cold water instead of hot water.

Repairs are taking longer than anticipated, due to difficulty in obtaining tools and parts, and the backup diesel engine is pulling the 1940s-vintage cars on the twice-daily trips to Wakefield.

John Trent, who spearheaded a seven-year fight to restore the Wakefield tourist train after the National Capital Commission cancelled it said Monday he's baffled by CP Rail's refusal to allow the diesel engine on its tracks.

Marc Grondin, president of the company that operates the Wakefield train, said CP has inspected the diesel, but it may be another week before it is certified to run on CP track.

Train officials hope to have the steam engine repaired today and back in service Wednesday.

"We're learning about a special lady that needs special treatment," said Trent, speaking of the failure to refill the engine with hot water.

Train operators hope to have enough money to buy a second steam locomotive next year. In the meantime, it will be necessary to take the steam engine out of service a couple of days a month for maintenance, said Trent.

Judging by the enthusiasm of 350 people aboard on Sunday afternoon's run, the train is a hit with passengers even when they have to be bused to the freight yard and pulled by the backup engine.

In the first few days, there were attempts to sabotage the train by putting obstacles on the track apparently a protest against the fact it was bringing lots of tourists into the sleepy Gatineau Valley.

But the sabotage has stopped since news reports stressed the danger to life and the heavy penalties for sabotage, said Andrew Littlejohn, a conductor on the train. The train is now keeping better time, since repairs to the track enable it to go up to 40 kilometres an hour. Journey time in both directions Sunday afternoon was about an hour.

Some Wakefield businesses are booming due to the train. "It gets crazy in here," said one of two women serving a line of customers in Orme's bakery.

Keith Nesbitt, owner of Wakefield General Store, has been portrayed as an opponent of the train. He said: "I'm not really opposed to it I just don't see much extra business. It would be better if people could stay in Wakefield longer, instead of having to catch the same train back.

" Round-trip adult fare is \$16 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, \$20 on Thursday and Friday and \$24 on Saturday and Sunday. There are discounts for children, seniors and families. The train now runs twice a day.

07/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Maniwaki*

CP clears tracks for beleaguered Wakefield train

The Wakefield tourist train may be powered by diesel rather than steam for the next few days. But at least it will be leaving from the Hull station.

CaP [sic] Rail and Transport Canada gave their blessing Thursday to the train's operators to use a diesel engine on the first three kilometres of the route that runs north from Hull.

It is a back-up engine purchased in case the steam engine broke down which it did last week.

A boiler on the steam engine sprang a leak when cold water instead of hot was added to it Since then, with the diesel in its place, the train ride to Wakefield has been starting and ending at a makeshift station three kilometres up the tracks from the brand new station built in Hull.

The diesel needed clearance from CP and Transport Canada to use the three kilometres of track that start at the Hull station.

09/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Kingston (CN)**Brockville*

Train kills man

A Brockville man was killed after his car was hit by a train carrying 160 passengers Friday night.

No one on the VIA Rail train was hurt. Elery Barkley, 45, drove around the railway barriers at a level crossing on Sharpes Lane in Elizabeth Township, just east of Brockville, police say. The collision occurred at 9:20 p.m.

17/08/1992 *Ottawa Sun*

Chalk River

Almonte

Saturday night, the RCMP concert band played at the Almonte (Ontario) fairgrounds to an enthusiastic audience. But, during the highly dramatic Phantom of the Opera theme, the 7:40 freight came barrelling through town a block away from the fairgrounds. The band just couldn't compete, so they stopped. Then the fellows in the horn sections started mimicking the train horn. The concert resumed after a big round of applause.

18/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Smiths Falls

Barrhaven

Train kills boy playing near railway tracks

Action is needed to stop children playing on train tracks, a coroner said after a boy was killed Monday by a train in Barrhaven.

Coroner Dr. Lucy Rabb said she wants an inquest into the death of seven-year-old Jason Burns.

"The police were saying there's a problem with children playing on the tracks in that area," Rabb said. "It's a real safety concern."

Jason died when he was struck by the protruding edge of a ladder on the side of a passing VIA Rail train. The accident occurred at 10:20 a.m. near a pedestrian underpass linking Dolan Drive and Antler Avenue in Barrhaven.

Nepean police said the boy was one of half a dozen children playing on the CN track embankment above the underpass. The train tracks cut through the residential section of Barrhaven.

Area residents, including several children, confirmed the railway embankment above the underpass attracts a lot of children.

"Whenever we go by we see kids playing in the tunnel (of the underpass) or on the top," said Wendy Stewart, 16, who was walking along a path leading to the underpass from Antler Avenue with her twin sister Janice when the accident occurred.

"You see kids up there all the time," said Richard Boyling, 13. "You see them putting pennies on the tracks or lying on the side of the hill (the embankment) throwing rocks at the train as it goes by. If you're a little kid you love train tracks."

Nepean police Sgt. Ralph Erfle said it appears the children were playing along the embankment near or on the tracks as the Toronto-bound train approached.

While the others scattered, Burns apparently hid in the grass on one side of the tracks. "He came out just as the train was passing and a ladder on the side of the train hit him," Erfle said. The ladder was welded on to the train car.

The train stopped about one kilometre down the track.

The Stewart sisters said they heard the children on the tracks and the train go by.

"We heard this scream and then these little kids came running towards us," Wendy said. "They were crying and screaming. They wanted to go home."

"We asked them what was wrong. One of the kids said, 'Our friend, the train hit him'."

The teenagers found Jason's body lying in the gravel by the edge of the tracks. Running off, they found two older men and told them what happened. While the men went to investigate and called for the police, the sisters told one boy who knew the dead child to get Jason's mother.

The death stunned the quiet neighborhood. As police cars and ambulance crews arrived and news of the accident spread, mothers came out and collected the younger children and took them home. Older children gathered to watch the police drape yellow plastic sheets over the child's body.

"I'm terrified," said a shaken Tiffany Smith, 14, a friend of Jason's older brother, Jamie, 13. "How can anything like this happen? My parents are always telling me not to go near the tracks."

The Burns family was devastated. A police psychologist was called to help the distraught parents and their other son.

"They're in shock," said neighbor Faye Ireland, who has known the family since they moved into the area three years ago.

"You can't believe this."

She described Jason as a "sunny, sunny boy. He had one of those sunny faces. He was always laughing."

Meanwhile, area residents hope something can be done to prevent another death.

Before the city built the underpass last year, resident Sue Taylor said, children regularly cut holes in a fence that blocked access to the railway embankment in order to cross between Draper Drive and Antler Avenue. The underpass was intended to discourage people from climbing over the embankment, said Nepean public works commissioner Clarke Bellinger.

Still, Rabb hopes some good will come out of an inquest, which she hopes to have approved in a few days.

"There's no way we can absolutely stop anybody (from getting on the tracks), but we certainly want to make it as difficult as we can."

"I want an inquest even if just to highlight the problem to parents."

19/08/1992 *West Quebec Post*

Maniwaki

NEW TENDER FOR WAKEFIELD STATION: New tenders have been issued for the construction of a scaled-down station facility in Wakefield, Quebec. An original design, including a water tower cum observation tower was judged to be too expensive by the project's backers. The new structure will have a minimum of passenger comforts. In the interim, passengers aboard the Wakefield Tourist Train are handled at the unsheltered and somewhat short platform that once served the National Museum of Science and Technology's 1201 steam train excursion program.

Two killed, six injured as VIA train slams into van.

Alan Hustak glanced at his watch. 8:45 a.m.

"We'll be in Ottawa in about 20 minutes," he thought Tuesday as VIA Rail train 31 from Montreal neared a level crossing on Hwy. 138, about 30 kilometres north of Cornwall. "Then he saw the van headed south toward the train.

"I thought, 'Christ, that guy seems to be going awfully fast.' I could see the signal lights flashing. I was mesmerized because I knew there was no way that van was going to stop."

The train slammed broadside into the van at 145 kilometres an hour.

Eight people were inside the van five women, three men. Two of the passengers Lynn Lalande, 24, of Kanata and Kelly Harris, 29, of Orleans died in the crash. Five of the others remained in area hospitals Tuesday night. They are: Abdul Nasser Jabbari, 28, of Ottawa, who was driving the van; Nicole Grosz, 21, also of Ottawa; Stephan Rowe of Cumberland; Stacey Robinson, 19, of Gloucester; and Anne-Marie Vinet, 15, of Orleans. Vinet was in critical condition in the intensive care unit of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Christopher Zwicker, 17, from Orleans, was treated in Cornwall General Hospital and released. Zwicker said the van's passengers were en route to the headquarters of the Farm Boy produce company in Cornwall to learn how to use new cash registers. The 17-year-old student at St. Peter's Catholic High School said none of the seven passengers or the driver, an employee of Farm Fresh, knew each other.

Zwicker, who was sitting in the first row of the van, said he saw the train coming toward them. "I was thinking I should tell (the driver) to stop.

"He said he suddenly felt the van being pushed by the train into a blinking signpost at the crossing.

"I felt the van turning and dirt filling up. I couldn't hear or see anything, it happened so fast., The only thing I heard was first impact."

He was still strapped to his seat when the van stopped. He crawled out on the ceiling which had become the floor, The right side of the van, where the train hit it, was completely gone.

"I remember yelling out, 'Everybody out of the van because I saw gasoline pouring out and everything smelled like gas. But I was the only one conscious."

Four of the occupants were flung from the wreckage, The other four remained trapped in the overturned shell. Gasoline poured from the ruptured tank.

Paul Robitaille of Buckingham and Ian Macdonald from Kanata were following the van in another vehicle. They scrambled through the wreckage, cutting people loose from their seat belts.

"I went and cut the seat belts of three of them who were still in the van to get them out," Robitaille said. "One girl in the rear was in shock and struggling so I left her for a moment and went to the front of the van to the passenger side and cut another girl out. Then I crawled inside to cut out another guy because gas was pouring right on him."

Zwicker said the driver didn't seem to be going over the 80-km speed limit and was concentrating on the road ahead. "He didn't try to beat (the train) but there were trees and houses blocking the view of the train."

Ontario Provincial Police are investigating.

26/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Chalk River**Arnprior*

Arnprior woman dies as car hit by freight train

A 68 year-old Arnprior woman was killed instantly Tuesday morning when her car was broadsided

by a CP freight train. Thelma Fairfield was driving alone on a private cottage road near Stewart's Bay, eight kilometres west of Arnprior, when she drove in front of the westbound train, said Const. Wayne Pratt of Ontario Provincial Police in Renfrew. The crossing was unguarded.

27/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Alexandria**Moose Creek*

Deadly crossings:train crash rate puzzles experts

A deadly phenomenon surrounds trains.

People see the train approaching. The flashing signal lights are clearly visible. They hear the warning bells. But the impending threat of thousands of tonnes of steel bearing down on them is either ignored or somehow doesn't register.

The phenomenon stumps safety experts. And it results in an alarming number of injuries and deaths each year.

"When people see a train coming, for some reason they simply don't seriously consider the danger," says Benoit Levesque, national director of Operation Lifesaver, a safety awareness program of the Railway Association of Canada.

The observation may apply to Tuesday's fatal crash between a VIA Rail passenger train and a van.

Flashing lights and warning signals were operating for 22 seconds before the van loaded with eight people drove into the train's path. Lynn Lalande, 24, of Kanata, and Kelly Harris, 29, of Orleans, were killed, and six others were injured in the crash. Five of the survivors remain in hospital with serious injuries. None of the injuries is life-threatening.

The accident occurred at 8:45 a.m. at a level crossing on Hwy. 138, about 30 kilometres north of Cornwall. There are open fields on either side of the crossing and the signals are visible on the highway from at least a half-kilometre. It's not known why the van's driver, Abdul Nasser Jabbari, 28, of Ottawa, did not stop. Police have yet to interview Jabbari, who is now in stable condition after surgery at the Ottawa Civic Hospital.

Coroner Dr. Gabriel Slowey says an inquest into the accident will be held late this year or early in 1993. There have been two other fatal crashes at that crossing since 1981.

Levesque says such accidents are all too common.

29/08/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Kingston (CN)**Brockville*

A Brockville teenager was killed Friday when he was struck by a VIA Rail passenger train on a railway bridge.

Larry Harold Barlow, 14, was riding a trail bike across the bridge when the train, travelling at more than 100 kilometres an hour in the same direction, hit him from behind at about 4:30 p.m.

Const. Garry Dunklin of Brockville police said the youth rode on to the bridge from a well-worn dirt path frequently used by trail-bikers. Dunklin said the train engineer had no time to blow a whistle or slow down..

The youth's father, James Barlow, said his son just got the trail bike the day before the fatal accident

The youth, who was going into Grade 8 this year, traded another bike for it and had been warned repeatedly to stay off the railway tracks.

"He just didn't listen," said Barlow, 44, his voice cracking with emotion. "They think they're invincible but please kids, listen to your parents."

The bridge, near the western boundary of Brockville, is a shortcut for trail-bikers to a series of paths near train yards on the other side.

Barlow said the bridge is frequently used by pedestrians, including workers at a nearby plant

Police said the youth was wearing a helmet and may not have been able to hear the approaching Toronto-bound train.

Barlow's death is the latest in a series of train accident fatalities in Eastern Ontario.

Tuesday, two people died and six were injured when a VIA train slammed into a passenger van on Hwy. 138, about 30 kilometres north of Cornwall.

The same day, a 68-year-old Arnprior woman was killed when she drove in front of a train at a level crossing.

On Aug. 17, seven-year-old Jason Burns of Barrhaven died when he was hit by a ladder on the side of a passing VIA train while he was playing near the tracks.

01/09/1992 *Ottawa Citizen**Smiths Falls**Barrhaven*

Inquest set in Barrhaven death

An inquest into the Aug. 17 train track death of Jason Burns has been set for Oct 29 and 30 at the provincial courthouse on Elgin Street

Burns, 7, of Draper Drive in Barrhaven, was among children playing on the CN Rail track that runs through Barrhaven when he was struck by a protruding ladder on a passing VIA Rail train.

WAMO SPUR MAY BE PURCHASED BY CITY OF HULL.

The city of Hull has indicated an interest in the purchase of CP Rail's WAMO Spur. A little more than one mile in length, the trackage is all that remains of the Waltham subdivision linking Hull with Waltham, Quebec.

It is planned to use part of the WAMO Spur right-of-way as an access route to a proposed cogeneration plant and the other portion as a reserved bus lane. CP Rail is asking \$870,000 for the 1.6km strip of land.

The Waltham Subdivision was progressively abandoned during the 1980s. (Branchline).

09/09/1992

*West Quebec Post**Maniwaki*

WAKEFIELD TRAIN NOT PRODUCING ANTICIPATED BUSINESS SPIN-OFFS: Although the resumption of tourist train service to Wakefield, Quebec, has increased tourism in the area, it has not been the economic panacea that many thought it would.

According to local reports, at least six businesses born in the heady euphoria of the train's start-up have quietly packed it in. A variety of reasons are behind the failures including the shortness of the train's layover period, less than forecast passenger loadings, bad weather, and the recession.

Also contributing to the situation is the layout of the community itself. Wakefield stretches along the rail line, with the terminal at the extreme north end. This means that businesses at the southern end of the community are a fair hike away from the train - too far for many it would seem.

Two shops located adjacent to the turntable, however, report excellent business.

04/10/1992

*Ottawa Citizen**Kingston (CN)**Prescott*

Woman killed by freight train

A 62-year-old woman was killed by a freight train Friday night while trying to pick up her suitcase from a track at the Prescott station, police say.

Marjorie Somerville, of Bowmanville, Ont., was waiting for her Toronto-bound train after visiting relatives in the Spencerville area. She was hit by a CN Rail freight train just before 7 p.m.

"For some reason her suitcase was either on or close to the rail," CN spokesman Roger Cameron said from Montreal. "She was on the platform and she stepped out to retrieve the suitcase."

Cameron and Prescott police said they didn't know how the suitcase ended up on the track.

09/10/1992

*Ottawa Citizen**Renfrew*

ONTARIO'S NEWEST RAILWAY SAVES INDUSTRY: For the first time, the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has got into the shortline operating business by purchasing 43 kilometres of CN track between Arnprior and Nepean, which CN had received permission to abandon. The abandonment would have cut a supply lifeline for tough-to-transport raw material to the BASF Canada nylon fibres plant in Arnprior. The region bought the railway for \$550,000 and leases it to BASF under a 20-year agreement. BASF bought CN Rail's equipment for \$1.3 million.

The region had its own reasons to get involved after recognizing that railways are an important transit link that must be preserved. After special provincial legislation was passed, the Arnprior-Nepean Railway Co. Inc. was born. Regional planners and solicitors are negotiating a deal with Canadian Pacific to acquire the disused right-of-way between Carleton Place and Nepean, and is keeping an eye on other routes in the region that may one day be abandoned. (Branchline)

15/10/1992

*Le Droit**Maniwaki*

MANIWAKI SUBDIVISION COULD BECOME "PUBLIC UTILITY CORRIDOR".

The gatineau Valley County Rural Municipality Committee has launched a fund raising campaign to acquire CP Rail's former Maniwaki subdivision between Low and Messines, Quebec. The abandoned right-of-way would be used as a "public utility corridor". The committee hopes to raise \$425,000 locally while it will seek an additional \$325,000 from the provincial government. An offer to purchase is expected near year-end. (Branchline).

24/10/1992

*Ottawa Citizen**Alexandria**Moose Creek*

Police charge driver in fatal van-train crash

MOOSE CREEK - The Ottawa driver of a rented van in a fatal train crash on Hwy. 38 on Aug. 25 has been charged with two counts of criminal negligence causing death.

Abdul Nasser Jabbari, 28, has also been charged with driving with an improper licence. He is to enter a plea on Nov. 20 at Cornwall provincial court.

Two of the eight passengers in the van died. Kelly Harris, 29, a mother of two and Lynn Lalonde, 24, both of Ottawa, died of massive injuries. The other passengers were injured but recovered.

31/10/1992

*Ottawa Citizen**Smiths Falls**Barrys Bay*

Extend Nepean rail fence, jury urges

City, CN argue over who should pay the \$110,000 cost inquest hears

Seven-year-old Jason Burns was "just being a child, just having (Yin)" when he was struck by a train and killed as he played hide-and-peek near the tracks, Coroner Lucy Rabb told a jury Friday.

"I'm sure he had been told a million-and-eight times by his parents not to play on the tracks," Rabb said.

"In his mind, he wasn't playing on the tracks. He was playing hide-and-peek and the tracks were an innovative path to the home-free zone."

The coroner's jury recommended that a 1.6-metre chain-link fence be built along both sides of the railway tracks between Jockvale and Greenbank roads in Barrhaven.

The cost of the fence, the jury said, should be shared "50-50" by Canadian National and the city of Nepean.

The jury also recommended that CN be responsible for keeping weeds that grow near the roadbed trimmed to a height of 12 inches.

The jury three women and two men ruled that the boy died accidentally about 10:15 a.m. on Aug. 17 when he was struck by the protruding handrail on the cab of the locomotive as the train sped past a pedestrian pathway near Dolan Drive.

Several witnesses told the jury that improving the fencing along the CN tracks that cut through Barrhaven would be a complicated and costly job.

But Rabb demurred. "My reaction is 'Horsefeathers,'" she said.

"In the end, it's taxpayers' dollars that will pay the cost. Every day we wait for the fence to be built, another of Jason's friends may lose his life."

Wayne Newell, manager of capital works projects for the city of Nepean, said it would cost about \$110,000 to extend the chain-link fence that now stands near the accident site so that it stretches all the way along the tracks between Jockvale and Greenbank.

A two-metre chain-link fence already extends about 30 metres on both sides of the track near the site of the accident.

But in earlier testimony, the jury heard that children can gain access to the tracks by crawling under the fence at certain points where it is not flush with the ground.

Nepean has rejected a proposal by Canadian National to pay \$50,000 of the cost. Newell said the city's position is that all costs should be paid by CN.

Rabb urged a community group to raise money to get the fence started while government agencies sort out the funding.

"I would be happy to donate the first cheque to the Jason Burns Memorial Fence," she said.

Among other recommendations, the jury suggested that the Railway Safety Act be updated to include a section on chain-link fencing, and that a public awareness campaign on train safety be launched by the city and CN.

A Via Rail engineer testified at the hearing that he saw only "a flash of motion and color" before his train struck the young boy as he emerged from the long grass and weeds growing near the tracks where he'd been playing hide-and-peek.

02/12/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Beachburg

Driver hurt when van collides with train

A Nepean man was seriously injured Tuesday when the van he was driving was struck by a freight train on Fourth Line; Road in rural Kanata.

The northbound van driven by George Kindack, 67, collided with a 17-car CN Rail train at about 2 p.m. Kindack was in serious condition late Tuesday at the Queensway-Carleton Hospital.

Ontario Provincial Police Sgt. Dan Bowers said there are no flashing lights or an automatic barrier at the railway crossing.

06/12/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Maniwaki

WAKEFIELD STEAM TRAIN RECEIVES FEDERAL FUNDS The federal government has awarded \$558,600 to the Tourist Development Council of Hull-Chelsea-LaPêche to go towards the completion of a garage/workshop in Trent Yard in Hull, building of a new station in Wakefield, repairs to the Wakefield bridge and other general maintenance work. Tourism Minister Tom Hocking said "the Wakefield train is an excellent example of enterprise in the area of tourism for all of Canada."

The steam train has carried about 35,000 passengers since operations commenced on June 27, 1992. Santa Claus trips were operated in December. Trips for skiers will start in January and sugar bush visits will be operated in the spring.

06/12/1992 *Ottawa Citizen*

Maniwaki

Wakefield steam train gets federal cash.

A non-profit tourism group that operates the Wakefield steam train received an early Christmas present last week from the federal government.

The Tourist Development Council of Hull-Chelsea-La Pêche was awarded \$558,600 to go toward the completion of a garage/workshop in Hull, building of a new Wakefield Station, repairs to the Wakefield bridge and other general maintenance work.

"We're extremely happy about receiving the money from the federal government because it's a recognition that what we're doing is of tourism benefit to the national capital region," says John Trent chairman of the council.

The steam train has carried about 35,000 passengers since operations began June 27.

Trent says there are plans to keep the train running this winter.

This week, the train will have trips to Wakefield for school children to visit Santa Claus. The train will leave from the Trent Yard in Hull's Industrial Park this week, on Monday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday mornings.

As well, the train plans to offer trips beginning in January to Wakefield for skiers. Times and ticket prices are not confirmed, but for more information call 778-7246.

31/12/1992 *Brockville Recorder*

Brockville

Brockville

CANADA'S FIRST RAILWAY TUNNEL DESIGNATED: On December 8, City of Brockville council passed a bylaw designating the Brockville tunnel's two portals, along with the first 30 metres of the south end of the tunnel that is open for display each summer. The designation under the Ontario Heritage Act marks it as a property of architectural and historical significance.

This is the fourth time that Brockville council tried to designate the 1,730-foot tunnel which opened on December 31, 1860. The first attempt was in 1983, the year the property was first turned over to the city by Marathon Realty, followed by attempts in 1985 and 1990. The reason none of them were successful was because aldermen and city staff worried the restrictions that come with designating a property under the Act could hamper future attempts at repair of renovation. Officials fretted that the city could face exorbitant costs if the repairs had to be carried out according to authentic 19th century specifications.

By citing only the north and south entrances in the designation bylaw, council remains free to repair, renovate or even fill in the length of the tunnel as it sees fit. While Heritage Brockville has always wanted the entire tunnel from Water Street to Pearl Street designated as a historic structure, Gary Tristram, Heritage Brockville Chairman, says "this is an important first step. At least now we can get some official recognition for it and now the city can try to get some grant money for repainting or other things." (Branchline)