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**James Jackson photo**

Repair crews work to fix a section of track Oct. 12 following the derailment of a northbound train headed for Chemtura in Elmira the night before. The derailment occurred on a section of track between Allen Street East and William Street East.

## Off track

By James Jackson, Waterloo Chronicle Staff

CN Rail failed to notify the Region of Waterloo of the recent rail derailment in uptown Waterloo, a violation of an agreement between the two groups.

"We have a process in place that they have to notify us," said John Hammer, director of transportation at the region, who was out of the province when the derailment occurred.

"Who did they notify? What did they do?"

The train was pulling five empty tankers and two engines when four of the cars left the tracks around 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 11 on a section of track between Allen Street East and Willow Street in the uptown.

None of the cars on the northbound train tipped and workers were on the scene the next day to make the necessary repairs to the track, which is owned by the Region of Waterloo, operated by the Goderich-Exeter Railway and maintained by CN.

Hammer said preliminary conversations with CN suggest to him that because the accident was relatively minor — with no spills or serious damage — the rail company did not feel it was necessary to notify the region.

"I will be having a discussion (with CN) to see what happened," Hammer continued. "Was it a malfunction with the train itself? Was it a malfunction with the tracks? Was the train going too fast? All sorts of different things could have happened out there, so we really need a report from them so I can follow up and ensure this does not happen again."

The day after the derailment a CN employee suggested it could take up to two weeks for a report to be ready detailing how the accident occurred.

Hammer has also been in contact with GEXR and will be following up with them again this week. "There is always a concern that dangerous goods are travelling on a highway or a railway and we want to be sure it is absolutely safe," he said. "We can't be foolproof, but there is always a concern."

Aside from the annual maintenance performed by CN Rail, the region also hired an independent inspector to examine the track last year, Hammer said.

The incident has left Waterloo residents worried, as the train was bound for the Chemtura chemical manufacturing plant in Elmira.

"It's only a matter of time. That derailment was a warning," said uptown resident Gordon Ball, who has serious concerns about what could have happened had the derailment occurred when the tankers were full. Waterloo has a response team capable of handling small railway spills, and CN also has a spill response team it can mobilize for larger accidents, Hammer said.

Once the LRT is up and running the region will take full responsibility for its maintenance, Hammer added. Lindsay Fedchyshyn, a spokesperson for CN Rail, said since it was not one of their trains involved in the incident it was the responsibility of GEXR to contact the region.

Calls to GEXR general manager Wesley Logan and to the public relations department of RailAmerica, Inc., which owns GEXR, went unanswered.

Calls to Chemtura to inquire about the materials that are transported by the rail cars, and the frequency of those trips, also went unanswered.