

Re: Lac-Megantic investigation: Police search MMA Railway office for clues, by Andy Blatchford, The Canadian Press, July 25.

Please don't be too quick to condemn the engineer of the train that devastated the community of Lac-Megantic. It has been a long time coming, and although I find it sad to say, we told you so. Oh, we could not tell you when or where but you have been told for years that with the continued reduction of the crew members on freight trains operating in Canada, it was bound to happen.

When I began my 34-year career on CN Rail in 1973, there were four crew members on board every freight train. I worked as a conductor on hundreds of trains. There was an engineer in the locomotive along with a brakeman. Also, there was a brakeman and the trains-in-charge employee, the conductor, in the caboose.

In the 1980s, Canadian Railways, CN and CP applied to eliminate the caboose from the rear of freight trains and move the rear-end employees to the engine.

Good thinking. Four crew members in the front and no one at the rear-end. It reminded me of four people carrying an extension ladder from one end with nobody holding up the other end.

Public hearings were held and I testified at those hearings in Toronto as to how unsafe freight trains would become. Consider the commodities that we handled through the cities and towns of this country.

We also knew that it would just be a matter of time before further crew reductions would occur. Sure enough, trains now operate with two employees.

So, who is responsible for the train in question operating with a single employee? Transport Canada, the governing body and the railway owners who permitted it, that's who is responsible. The community of Lac-Megantic is not the only victim of this tragic accident. I would venture to say that Mr. Harding is a victim of corporate greed and also Transport Canada believing that the railways only care

about safe operations and not profit. Many people will be passing the buck so as not to be held responsible and protect their own backsides but the citizens of Canada should be made aware that this has been an accident just waiting to happen.

Transport Canada is trying to make themselves look good to the public by initiating new safety rules.

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