



LAC-MÉGANTIC REMEMBERS: 1 YEAR LATER

Somber, respectful, and solemn activities planned

Hours after a solemn procession passed the spot where tragedy struck Lac-Mégantic a year ago Sunday, crowds packed Ste-Agnes Church to remember the 47 people who perished when a runaway train derailed in the centre of town and exploded.

First responders who plunged in to fight the inferno that erupted after the train jumped the tracks were given a resounding round of applause when they entered the church Sunday in long lines.

Framed photographs of the victims were on display alongside bouquets of flowers at the front of the church, which sits not far from the crash site. In a poignant, personal touch, a baseball glove lay in front of one man's photo.

"How many times has the whole community of Lac-Mégantic impressed us, by its wisdom, and its capacity to lift itself up?" said Archbishop Luc Cyr,



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who presided over the service. "You have given us a beautiful message of dignity and strength. Yes, there have been tears and great suffering but at the same time there has been overwhelming generosity and love." Some of those tears were being

shed Sunday by people gathered outside the church to watch the service as it was projected onto a big screen metres from the derailment site. Some sat on lawn chairs and dabbed at their eyes. Parish priest Steve Lemay told the service that it has been a

difficult year and he urged the politicians present to continue to provide support for the community. "I pray and I will continue to pray for the fraternal support you offer us today will continue in the form of concrete decisions and actions. "We still need help to rebuild our

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town and protect our environment."

The Sunday service was the latest commemoration in a weekend of events to remember the tragedy. A moment of silence followed the ceremony and a monument to the victims in the form of a large granite book with their names inscribed was dedicated on the church's lawn.

Dignitaries including Gov.-Gen. David Johnston and Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard lay bouquets of flowers in front of the monument and attended the church service late Sunday morning.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper marked the first anniversary of the tragedy in a statement, noting the "resilience, determination and extraordinary strength of character" of Lac-Mégantic residents.

"No passage of time can erase from our consciousness the lives lost, the injured and the families torn apart by this tragedy," Harper said.

"Having witnessed this first-hand during my visits, I owe these people my greatest admiration," said

Harper, who was represented at Sunday's ceremony by International Development Minister Christian Paradis, who is also the local MP.

Johnston offered renewed condolences and hopes for a brighter future for all in Lac-Mégantic.

"The town will rise again, from the solid foundation of resilience and compassion laid by its people," Johnston said Sunday in a statement.

Johnston also announced that he is presenting the Commendation for Outstanding Service to the first responders and citizens of Lac-Mégantic and the surrounding communities, "as a way of recognizing their extraordinary efforts and exceptional kindness and caring."

Earlier Sunday morning, more than 1,000 people marched in solemn silence in the darkness after observing a moment of silence at 1:15 a.m. That was the exact moment on July 6, 2013 when the fuel-laden train derailed and exploded in a series of cataclysmic fireballs.

Though a year has passed,

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the emotional scars in the community remain as deep as the physical damage that is still so apparent on the local landscape.

The march followed a midnight mass and a moving speech by Mayor Colette Roy Laroche, who received two thunderous rounds of applause and two standing ovations from about 1,200 people who packed Ste-Agnes Church.

"For several minutes we tried to convince ourselves that it wasn't true," Roy Laroche said of the July 6 catastrophe in a speech also watched by about 200 people on a big screen outside the building.

"But what happened to us was a nightmare. When we removed our hands (from our eyes), the horror was still there and the worst was to come."

She urged townsfolk to turn the

page on the tragedy and look to the future, but to never forget.

Roy Laroche, who became a household name in Quebec for her leadership and poise in the disaster's aftermath, also asked the community to stick together to overcome any future obstacles.

"A year ago, we found ourselves in one of the worst tragedies in the histories of Quebec and Canada," she said.

"We were also covered by the biggest wave of love and solidarity that modern Quebec has ever known."

In his sermon during Sunday's midnight mass, Rev. Steve Lemay, the parish priest, offered words of comfort.

"There's still more road to cover," said Lemay, who presided over many of the victim's funerals

and has opened up about how hard the year has been on him.

"Many of us are still suffering from the consequences of the catastrophe that struck us . . .

"We have suffered and cried together, we worked together, walked together and it's together that we will continue on the path."

Many participants in the march wore glowing plastic stars on their chests. Several wiped away tears as they held hands with the person next to them.

Most stared sadly at the downtown area where dozens of buildings were gutted. To this day the zone remains off-limits behind metal fences as decontamination work continues.

A half-dozen people left the march to sit side-by-side on the railway track, looking at their broken town.

Nearby a woman stood by herself, gazing in the same direction while weeping quietly in the darkness.

"I think it was important to do this to complete our mourning process," said walker Bernard Boulet, whose sister Marie-France was declared dead in the disaster, though her remains were never found.

She lived in the downtown area that was incinerated by the explosions. Boulet said several of her family members took part in the events.

"It does us some good," Boulet said of the mass and the march.

On Saturday, the people of Lac-Megantic began their weekend of events to remember the victims of the conflagration that forever changed their town.

Hundreds turned out to watch locals release 5,000 young trout into the lake, plant flowers in a new garden near the train tracks, and free 460 butterflies into the sky.

The gestures were meant to symbolize the water, earth and air — all aspects of the environment contaminated by the nearly six million litres of crude spewed from the smashed tanker cars.

But as the collective healing process moves forward, locals say their terrible emotional wounds have yet to heal.

The pain remains so raw in the community that many planned to avoid the weekend ceremonies, which also include concerts and social events.

Louissette Nadeau, who attended Saturday's flower-planting ceremony, doubted her daughter, who narrowly escaped the explosions, would be able to find the strength to participate in any of the activities.

Nadeau said her daughter Nathalie had just left the Musi-Cafe bar, where dozens died when the train exploded.

She said the first blast knocked Nathalie off her feet and left her with second-degree burns on one arm. Then, the massive flames rushed toward her.

"Luckily, her spouse lifted her up off the ground ... because if not she probably would have burned right there," said Nadeau, whose daughter lost many friends that night.

"It's been a year, but it's like it happened yesterday. She's having a very hard time dealing with this . . .

"She always says, 'Why

me? Why not them?' " Nadeau said she took part in the flower ceremony to help give strength to those who lost loved ones. She fears, however, that the town may never be the same.

"I hope that one day life will be different," Nadeau, a resident of Lac-Megantic for 30 years, said as she struggled to hold back tears.

"We try to move on, but it's impossible."

Later Saturday, hundreds of people released butterflies at another event near the crash site.

Children giggled as some butterflies clung to their fingertips, at first refusing to fly. The moment brought smiles to hundreds of faces.

Linda Gendreau, a Lac-Megantic resident who watched as children helped release trout into the lake Saturday, said the community has yet to free itself from the grip of the catastrophe.

She said the commemorative events are important steps in the town's recovery.

"It's an intense life moment that we're living through in Lac-

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Megantic," said Gendreau, who lost a work colleague and several acquaintances in the disaster.

"We are very much in the presence of the consequences of the tragedy, so it's a process."

CANADIAN GOVT APPROVES NORTHERN GATEWAY PIPELINE

Greg Rickford, Canada's Minister of Natural Resources, issued a statement outlining the Government of Canada's decision after the Joint Review Panel's independent review of the Northern Gateway Pipelines proposal to construct and operate two parallel pipelines to transport crude oil between Bruderheim, Alberta and Kitimat, British Columbia, and a marine terminal at the port of Kitimat.

The proposal was submitted by Northern Gateway Pipelines Limited Partnership to the National Energy Board (NEB) for an environmental assessment and regulatory examination in 2010. This constituted the beginning of the regulatory process.

The Joint Review Panel for the Northern Gateway Project was an independent body established by the Minister of the Environment and the National Energy Board to review the project. The Panel's rigorous science-based review included feedback from over 1,450 participants in 21 different communities, reviewing over 175,000 pages of evidence and receiving 9,000 letters of comment. The NEB is responsible for regulating some 73,000 kilometres of pipelines transporting crude oil, natural gas and

petroleum products across Canada.

"In December 2013, the Joint Review Panel found that construction and operation of the Northern Gateway Pipelines project is in the public interest, subject to 209 conditions being met by the proponent. After carefully reviewing the report, the Government accepts the independent Panel's recommendation to impose 209 conditions on Northern Gateway Pipelines' proposal," stands in the statement.

"Today constitutes another step in the process. Moving forward, the proponent must demonstrate to the independent regulator, the NEB, how it will meet the 209 conditions. It will also have to apply for regulatory permits and authorizations from federal and provincial governments. In addition, consultations with Aboriginal communities are required under many of the 209 conditions that have been established and as part of the process for regulatory authorizations and permits. The proponent clearly has more work to do in order to fulfill the public commitment it has made to engage with Aboriginal groups and local communities along the route," added Rickford.

The National Energy Board will now issue Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity.

STUDY SUGGESTS LINK BETWEEN OILSANDS AND FORT CHIP ILLNESSES

Critics say study's methodology is

not scientifically rigorous enough

A study conducted by First Nations groups and scientists from the University of Manitoba released Monday suggests the Alberta oilsands are in part to blame for some health concerns in the downstream community of Fort Chipewyan and higher levels of heavy metals in wildlife.


The study is based on the work of residents of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nations and scientists from the University of Manitoba, who measured the extent of heavy metals

and other contaminants in country food harvested by indigenous people in the region.

Fort Chipewyan is located downstream of the Alberta oilsands. (Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers)

Funding for the study was provided by the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations, as well as the National First Nations Environmental Contaminants program.

The study said it relied on both "Western science" and traditional knowledge gathered from interviews with elders and



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harvesters in the community. At a news conference in Edmonton on Monday, Chief Steve Courtoreille of the Mikisew Cree First Nation and Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation said the report backs up their belief that contaminants from the oilsands are making their people sick.

"If this river here was the Athabasca River that was coming down from Fort McMurray," Courtoreille said, motioning towards Edmonton's North Saskatchewan River, "I tell you, there'd be an uproar here."

The report says that oilsands development "compromises the integrity of the environment and wildlife, which in turn adversely affects human health and wellbeing."

According to the study, all of the heavy metals that were tested for in wild food — arsenic, cadmium, methyl mercury and selenium — were present to some degree in the samples. Some, the study said, occurred in concentrations of concern for human safety.

"Generally speaking, concentrations of arsenic, cadmium and mercury were highest in the kidneys and livers of animals, especially ducks," the study reads.

The study suggested that there are widespread declines in health in the community. It also said that of 94 participants, 20 people had suffered from cancer.

"Cancer occurrence increased significantly with participant employment in the oilsands and with the increased consumption

of traditional foods and locally caught fish," said the report.

Study methodology questioned The conclusions of the study are considered controversial, in part because of the study's methodology, which some say is not scientifically rigorous enough to support the findings.

Warren Kindzierski, an associate professor with the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta, has questions about the model used by researchers, which could create subjective results.

For example, people were asked about the "perceived role of smoking in affecting participant health," which could slant the study's results, Kindzierski said.

"If the subjects do not believe it's important, it's given a low weight in the model and that introduces an element of bias."

Kindzierski says he isn't sure the evidence in the report is strong.

"I do not believe that this type of study offers the smoking gun evidence that some people might think," he said.

In March, the government released its own study suggesting the Fort Chipewyan community doesn't have higher overall cancer rates. The Alberta Health Services survey, which used data from 1992 to 2011, did find the prevalence of cervical and bile duct cancer in Fort Chipewyan was higher than expected. But that survey noted that most cervical cancer is caused by a virus. It also noted that U.S. research suggests that links between duct cancers and

environmental toxins are not strong. The chiefs and University of Manitoba researcher Stéphane McLachlan agreed more work needs to be done.

But Adam said there was a reason why the First Nations didn't collaborate with the University of Alberta for the research.

"The Alberta universities were, in our view, not credible enough because of the close ties that they have with the Alberta government in regards to some of the studies that they've done in the past," he said.

Fort Chipewyan is a community

of about 1,300 people on the northwest shore of Lake Athabasca and one of the most northern communities in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo.

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based oil and gas exploration company, formed Maverick Northstar, Inc., a joint venture to facilitate the deployment and operation of gas-to-liquids (GTL) technology in the Canadian Provinces of Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. (Earlier post.)

The small-scale modular plants will utilize and promote technology that converts a methane-rich feedstock, such as natural gas, flare gas and biogas, into high-quality methanol, which offers new possibilities for synthetic chemicals and fuel production in Canada's methane-rich prairie provinces.

Much of the methane in Western Canada is found in remote oil and gas fields where traditional distribution is not economically viable due to infrastructure choke points and discounted gas rates. Maverick's modular production platform offers a small-scale solution that can be co-located at the source of the methane. The platform converts methane and higher hydrocarbons into methanol that can be used on-site or transported to larger facilities nearby for conversion into higher value products such as ultra-clean synthetic fuels and chemicals.

Maverick has contracted with Plant Process Equipment to manufacture and sell small-scale gas-to-liquids plants (GTL). These modular plants are mounted on skids and can be quickly transported and installed remotely, even in difficult-to-access terrain. The plants can produce up to 10,000 gallons a day of methanol from methane-rich waste gas, or natural gas sources.

MARITIMES AND NORTHEAST PIPELINE CAPACITY TO BE EXPANDED

Spectra Energy plans to ship inexpensive U.S. shale gas into Maine, Maritimes

The company that owns the Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline has announced plans to expand its capacity to ship inexpensive U.S. shale gas into Maine and the Maritimes.

Houston-based Spectra Energy is responding to a call from New England governors for access to a reliable supply of lower cost energy to generate electricity.

Spectra Energy, which owns the Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline, plans to expand its capacity and reverse pipelines to ship U.S. shale gas north to Boston, Maine and the Maritimes, instead of south from Nova Scotia. (Courtesy of Spectra Energy)

But Spectra Energy says it may also bring lower natural gas prices to Atlantic Canada.

The Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline was built to carry Nova Scotia gas west and south into New England.

Those supplies are running out, however.

In addition, last winter's multiple storms and extended cold stretches led to crippling price spikes throughout the Maritimes and much of the northeastern U.S.

Meanwhile, there are abundant supplies to cheap shale gas

in the southern United States, in the Marcellus region.

Spectra's pipelines are not currently set up to ship gas into the Boston area and north to Maine.

But the company plans to reverse pipelines and increase capacity of the Maritimes and Northeast Pipeline and the Algonquin Gas Transmission pipelines by up to one billion cubic feet per day.

"Our pipelines are in the right place at the right time to supply the region's electric plants with affordable, clean, domestic natural

gas," Bill Yardley, Spectra Energy's president of U. S. transmission and storage said in a statement.

"To enhance the reliability of approximately 60 per cent of these generators, we can expand our mainline and lateral facilities along our existing pipeline footprint while minimizing the effect on communities and the environment," he said.

Colleen Mitchell, president of the Saint John-based Atlantica Centre for Energy, says access to Marcellus shale gas will be good for all gas consumers.

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"That would help to address supply bottlenecks which tends to lead to lower prices which is a good thing for Atlantic Canada," she said.

It could also boost chances for construction of an liquefied natural gas export terminal in Saint John, said Mitchell.

"You have to have a stable supply, it has to be long-term, there has to be sufficient amounts for it. So this step would certainly help to make an export LNG terminal feasible," she said.

Spectra's plan remains a proposal at this time. It must first win favour with New England Governors. The target year is 2018.

NEW N.B. GOVERNMENT DOCUMENT AIMS TO EXPLAIN NATURAL GAS EXPLORATION

The New Brunswick government released a document today that it says is aimed at dispelling the myths that surround the exploration

for natural gas in the province.

The 21-page document was produced by the Department of Energy and Mines with the help of other government departments and agencies.

Energy and Mines Minister Craig Leonard says the government has heard people in the province have questions about the natural gas industry and it is trying to provide them with relevant information.

The industry, particularly

fracking for shale gas, is controversial in the province.

The New Brunswick Anti-Shale Gas Alliance filed a lawsuit last week with the Court of Queen's Bench in an effort to stop exploration in the province.

Attorney General Hugh Flemming acknowledged notification of the legal action and defended the government's decision to proceed with shale gas exploration, saying it has done so in a safe and responsible manner.



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