

CN boss pushes for communication

■ **Sean Finn tells mayors, councils that they are just a phone call away; touts emergency planning, disaster preparedness**

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The executive vice-president of CN told New Brunswick's municipal leaders Saturday the national railway is committed to reinforcing rail safety in the wake of several major disasters.

Sean Finn addressed the crowd at the annual general meeting of the Cities of New Brunswick Association in Dieppe, saying the lines of communication are always open between Canada's largest railway and the villages, towns and cities with tracks running through them.

"If you'd like to meet, we'll meet," he said.

Finn's visit is timely as the association also passed a resolution regarding rail safety, in support of the Federation of Canadian Muni-

cipalities' ongoing discussions on the file at the federal level.

The past few months have seen several derailments, including one over the weekend in Alberta, two last month in the same province, and the catastrophic train crash and explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Que., on July 6 that killed 47 people.

Finn is travelling across the country to emphasize the importance of emergency planning and knowing what goods, dangerous or otherwise, are transported to, from and through their communities.

He said municipal councils and their local fire chiefs must be prepared and informed in order to make citizen and infrastructure safety, and environmental protections, a priority.

"We decided to look back at the last 12 months and took note of every town that had at least one car of dangerous goods come through in a year's time," Finn said. "There are 1,098 communities that fit the profile."

CN officials categorized each of these communities based on their size and ratio of dangerous goods,

including crude oil, chlorine, petroleum and much more that are transported on the railway tracks.

The 63 cities with more than 25,000 people that see a high ratio of hazardous commodities come through the municipality are the category with the most urgency. Finn said the mayors, councils and fire chiefs will have a sit down with CN officials.

The majority of New Brunswick's communities with a railway passing through — 83 of them — fall into the third and fourth categories therefore a meet isn't mandated but Finn said CN is willing to discuss and share information with any municipality looking for help.

Prior to the Lac-Mégantic disaster, Finn said the information was not live and it wasn't often that CN would receive communications from mayors looking for a list and timeline of the transportation of goods.

After reaching out in the past few months, the 22 prior requests bumped to 80 but Finn wants that to significantly improve.

"Hopefully by next year, we'll have requests from all 1,098."