

## **CN officials address concerns**

**Chris Clegg and Joe McWilliams**  
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Questions about three train derailments the last few weeks prompted CN officials to attend a meeting hosted by the Town of Slave Lake June 25 to address concerns.

The derailments have municipal officials nervous about the risks posed by rail traffic, given the volumes of hazardous goods being shipped through the region.

The three derailments include one in Slave Lake May 8, the second at Faust June 11, and the third during a post-repair test.

The Faust derailment occurred at about 3:45 p.m. and involved 17 residue tank cars, one lumber car, and two hopper cars.

Before the recent spat of derailments, CN public relations man Warren Chandler said there had not been a derailment in the Lesser Slave area since 2009.

CN officials told everyone attending the meeting that the local line is not actually a busy line. Chandler said the line has “two to three trains a day” whereas between Edmonton and Saskatoon there are “24 to 30.”

Hence, Chandler says there is no plan to upgrade the rails from 100-lb. (per yard) to 135-lb. If that upgrade ever did happen, council was informed, the maximum speed of trains would go from 25 mph to 60 mph.

Council heard the railway is only required to have eight good ties spaced out over 39 feet of rail, or about one-third of the total.

“If you’re up to standards,” said John Robinson, one of the top men in engineering for CN in the region, “you don’t have a problem.”

High Prairie fire chief Ken Melnyk attended the meeting. Speaking from the gallery, Melnyk spoke about an incident near that community that “has the whole town in an uproar.” It had something to do with a switch being

“locked off,” which – if a train had come by, could have led to a collision at an oil-loading facility.

Rick McMillan, CN trains operations, acknowledged the incident, saying it had been investigated and it came down to employee error. The employee, he said, had received a message that his house was burning down.

“He left the site and forgot about the switch,” said MacMillan, adding the employee would be disciplined or dismissed.

M.D. of Big Lakes Faust Councillor Robert Nygaard asked about a bad spot on the rails near the Old Man Creek bridge. He was told the grade is a bit high on the approach. The plan is to level it out.