

CN derailment near Plaster Rock has left family living in tents

Caleb Levesque and family say CN is to blame for the ongoing issues with their home

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Family members in Wapske, N.B., say they have been living in tents on their front lawn for more than a month after their house was ruined following a freight train derailment near Plaster Rock in January.

They say CN Rail is to blame.

Caleb Levesque, the son of the property owner, and his family, say their house remains unlivable due to damage from a train derailment back in January.

Levesque says a carpenter hired by CN Rail to fix their house following the derailment left the house worse than before due to poor craftsmanship.

The initial heat of the train derailment melted much of the siding on the house. The carpenter replaced the siding but Levesque says the carpenter CN Rail hired didn't do it right.

"So all the siding is falling off, buckling. So we've been getting a lot of water when it rains," he said.

Levesque said when post-tropical storm Arthur arrived, the water came right through the new siding, leaving puddles on the floor.

"Completely soaked it, just big puddles on the floor. The inside of the house is soaked, damaged. It's ridiculous," he said. "It smells so bad you don't even want to go in the house."

Residents wary of mould

Levesque says the most concerning thing now is the mould throughout the house.

He says so far CN Rail has refused to fix the ongoing problem.

Levesque is staying in a tent with his girlfriend, their dog and cat. His father is in another tent, all on their front lawn.

To shower and launder, they've been driving to the house of a family friend. For cooking, they've made due with just a barbecue, without the use of a stove or fridge.

"It sucks. It's not so bad when you're just camping, but when you have to do it for over a month ... it's hard," said Levesque.

He says CN Rail officials should acknowledge the unacceptable conditions their hired carpenter left the home in, and pay to make it right.

"They took the responsibility on when the train went by our house and derailed, they took the responsibility to fix everything that they had damaged," said Levesque.

The Levesques got an initial quote on the damage from restoration specialist Nicholas Mann, of ServiceMaster Restore.

Mann estimated it would cost about \$160,000 to fix the home properly. Levesque said CN Rail offered him \$2,500 after receiving the report.

"Right now all we want is to get our house fixed and everything that was in the house replaced," said Levesque. "We just want our house fixed so we can go home."

Levesque says his lawyer hopes to meet with CN Rail in September to sort out a solution.

Train jumped the tracks

A 122-car train derailed on Jan. 7 with 19 cars and a locomotive jumping the tracks.

Five derailed tanker cars were carrying crude oil from Western Canada to an Irving Oil refinery in Saint John, N.B., while four other tankers carried liquefied petroleum gas.

About 150 people living within a two-kilometre radius of the crash site were forced to leave their homes for several days.

A Transportation Safety Board investigation found one of the wheels on the 13th car broke from "fatigue."