

**Time line of related events before and after the July 6, 2013  
Lac-Mégantic disaster, frame-up and scapegoating of two  
United Steelworkers rail workers -- locomotive engineer Tom  
Harding and train controller Richard Labrie**

- **2012** – Conservative government Federal Minister of Transport Denis Lebel approves the request of the Montreal Main and Atlantic railway (MMA) to haul crude oil with a “crew” of one -- locomotive engineer Tom Harding -- as a cost-cutting measure.
- **July 6, 2013** –An unmanned runaway 72-car oil train carrying crude oil from the Bakken shale oil fields in North Dakota to the Irving oil refinery in New Brunswick, derails in downtown Lac-Mégantic and explodes killing 47 people, destroying the downtown area and dumping millions of litres of oil into the soil and the lake. Before the end of the month, without publicity Lebel is shifted out of his Minister of Transport position to another post and is replaced by Lisa Raitt, the current Minister of Transport.
- **November 8, 2013** – A 90-car rail train derails and explodes on a trestle in rural swamp area near Alice Alabama.
- **December 30, 2013** – A half kilometer long crude oil train collides with a train hauling grain at Casselton, North Dakota about 17 kilometers from Fargo. The resulting explosion and fire forces the evacuation of 2,400 residents.
- **January 7, 2014** – A Canadian National Railway train carrying propane and crude oil derails and explodes near Plastic Rock, New Brunswick. Forty-five homes are evacuated.
- **March 12, 2014** – Locomotive engineer Tom Harding, Train controller Richard Labrie, both members of local 1976 of the United Steelworkers (USW) union, MMA company official Jean Demaître, the manager of train operations, are arrested by the Quebec provincial police – Harding by the SWAT team at gunpoint -- and paraded to a

temporary Lac-Mégantic court house at the sports center in handcuffs where they are charged by the Quebec prosecutor each with 47 counts of criminal negligence causing death. The three could face penalties of life in prison if found guilty. “Thomas Harding is not responsible for the state of the railways,” said Daniel Roy, Quebec director of the USW. Those who are really responsible are the federal government with deregulation and ceding railways to little companies like MMA.”

- **April 2014** – United Steelworkers union District 5 in Quebec, initiates a defense fund for Harding and Labrie to raise funds for legal costs called *Justice for USW Rail Workers* and puts up a website: [www.justiceforUSWrailworkers.org](http://www.justiceforUSWrailworkers.org). USW Local 1976 donates \$70,000 to the fund. Tens of thousands dollars more are raised from other USW members and other unions such as the Teamsters Rail Conference. In the United States rail workers begin to raise funds through a website: [www.tomhardingdefensefund.org](http://www.tomhardingdefensefund.org).
- **April 30, 2014** – A 105-car crude oil train derails into the St. James River near the centre of Lynchburg, Virginia, a town of 78,000. The derailed cars explode and oil leaks into the St. James River. Hundreds are evacuated.
- **August 19, 2014** – The federal Transportation Safety Board (TSB) releases its report on the Lac-Mégantic disaster citing 18 factors that contributed to the derailment including a “lax safety culture” at the Montreal Main and Atlantic railway and big gaps in Ottawa’s railway regulatory system. In response Edward Burkhardt former chairman of MMA blames Tom Harding saying: “The fact is this is a failure of one individual.”
- **August 28, 2014** – Thomas Walsh, Tom Harding’s lawyer and Daniel Roy USW District 5 director, referring to the TSB report, hold a press conference demanding that the charges against Harding and Labrie be dropped. “It’s time to stop using workers as scapegoats,” said Roy. Subsequently the Quebec prosecutor refuses to drop the charges.

- **September 9, 2014** – Rail workers in the United States, who are members of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transport Workers (SMART) who work for the Burlington, Northern and Santa Fé Railway, vote down a proposal by the company for one person “crews” on freight trains.
- **October 3, 2014** – The Toronto *Globe and Mail* reports that Canadian Pacific Railway CEO Hunter Harrison, in comments following a speech to investors in White Plains, New York, blames Tom Harding for the Lac-Mégantic disaster saying it happened “because of one person’s behavior. An individual did not set the brakes.”
- **January 22, 2015** -- The French-language Quebec-based RDI TV program *Enquête*. in a report called *Lac-Mégantic the corrected version*, explains that an initial draft of the TSB report included a 19<sup>th</sup> factor – the one person “crew”. This factor was dropped from the final published version.
- **February 14-15, 2015** -- Canadian Pacific Railway allegedly orders rail workers to park a 57-car train carrying dangerous goods unattended on a mountain slope above the town of Revelstoke, British Columbia without applying hand brakes—in breach of emergency directives by Transport Canada issued after the Lac-Mégantic disaster. Transport Canada later opens an investigation following complaints by the Teamsters union.
- **February 15-16, 2015** – Three thousand Canadian Pacific rail workers end one day Canada-wide strike under threat of federal strike-breaking legislation. Teamster union leaders opt for arbitration of contract demands, of which the question of safety is central. Picket signs carried by the strikers said “Fatigue kills,” referring to company violation of contract terms concerning rest periods.
- **April 20, 2015** -- The Quebec prosecutor, in a highly unusual move, cancels a scheduled and routine preliminary hearing for those charged with criminal negligence. This deprives lawyers defending Harding and Labrie of the opportunity to learn about the prosecutor’s strategy

and to call MMA and TSB officials to the stand in order to prepare their defense.

- **June 4, 2015** – The Toronto *Globe and Mail* publishes an article titled *Gaps in the system: Is rail safety on the right track?* The report states that since 2010 across Canada and the United States there have been 21 derailments of trains carrying crude oil since 2010 resulting in 11 fires, 6 explosions, 9 evacuations and 47 deaths.
- **June 22, 2015** – Under the Railway Safety Act and the Fisheries act the federal government files new charges against Harding and Labrie as well as five company officials. The charges under the Railway Safety Act could bring a \$50,000 fine and six months in prison. Those under the Fisheries Act could result in one million dollar fine. Those charged will appear in court on November 12. Minister of Transport Lisa Raitt says the investigation is continuing and more charges could be filed under the federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act.
- **July 6-12, 2015** – To mark the second anniversary of the Lac-Mégantic disaster protest events are held in 90 communities in the US and Canada in the context of a *Stop the Oil Trains Week of Action*. Demonstrations involving unionists, rail workers and others are held across the US and Canada to mark the anniversary and protest the growing use of trains to haul crude oil. Demonstrators in Lac-Mégantic July 5 call on the federal government to build a railway bypass around the town. Oil trains are scheduled to resume runs through the downtown Lac-Mégantic in January 2016.
- **September 8, 2015** – Court hearing takes place in Lac-Mégantic to set the date for the trial or trials on the 47 counts of criminal negligence. Judge François Tôth adjourns hearing after 15 minutes and schedules another for December 1. Prosecutor begins maneuvers to move the expected jury trial to Sherbrooke from Lac-Mégantic where the Tom Harding and Richard Labrie have massive support. This will be one of the issues discussed at the December 1 court hearing.