

<http://www.cbc.ca/beta/news/canada/montreal/sept-%C3%AEles-fatal-train-derailment-locomotive-engineer-couldn-t-have-prevented-crash-says-tsb-1.3512507>

Sept-Îles fatal train derailment: Locomotive engineer couldn't have prevented crash, says TSB

Federal transportation safety board says QNS&L railway didn't regularly inspect rock face for danger of slides

Angelica Montgomery and Loreen Pindera · [CBC News](#) March 30, 2016



The train derailed and slid into the Moisie River. (Radio-Canada)

Locomotive engineer Enrick Gagnon couldn't have done anything to prevent the derailment of the train he was driving when it collided with fallen boulders and other debris blocking the track north of Sept-Îles, Que., concludes the Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB).

In a report released Wednesday morning, the TSB said the November 2014 collision caused the two lead locomotives and the first nine cars of the 240-wagon train to derail, sending them down the slope and into the Moisie River.

Gagnon, in the submerged lead locomotive, was killed, and about 1,000 litres of diesel fuel spewed into the river.

About 30 metres of railway track were destroyed.

[Fixes to rock face postponed](#)

The TSB report found that engineers for the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway (QNS&L) had done careful inspections of the rock face over the years, but little work to minimize the risk of falling boulders and landslides had been done in the years just prior to the 2014 accident.



Erick Gagnon was 45 years old and had worked for Iron Ore Company of Canada since 1997. (Erick Gagnon's Facebook page)

The report found the rock faces and soil were last inspected in June 2013, when more than a dozen locations were identified as posing a "very high" risk, and a recommendation was made that work be done to stabilize the rock face in several places.

"The rock face that collapsed had not been identified, but the risk level of an adjacent rock face had been assessed as 'very high'," the TSB said.

Despite a recommendation that annual inspections be done, the TSB found no rock face inspection was conducted in 2014. It said other emergency repairs took priority, including work to stabilize tunnel walls.

"The engineering work recommended for the rock faces was regularly postponed until the next inspection," it said.

The report does note that QNS&L has since taken action to secure the rock faces.

Little time to react

The report said it was still dark when the accident occurred, at 5:40 a.m. on Nov. 6, 2014.

It's not known at what point the rockslide occurred, however, the report said Gagnon received no alarm or other indication that anything was amiss from the track signaling system.

The winding track and darkness meant Gagnon would have had mere seconds to see debris on the track ahead of him – not enough time to avoid the collision and subsequent derailment.

Crew mate wouldn't have made a difference

The QNS&L is the only railway company in Canada with permission to operate with a single engineer operating the train.

However, the fact that the train had only one person at the helm did not likely make a difference, the report said.

"Even if a second crew member had been on board, it would still have been difficult to perceive and identify the debris," it said.

The TSB said it was hampered in its reconstruction of the accident by the fact the train was not equipped with on-board video or voice-recording equipment to make it easier to understand exactly what happened.