



# Bangor Daily News

## Attorney hopes Lac-Megantic victims will get compensation next year

By Nick Sambides Jr. | October 24, 2013

The attorney shepherding through bankruptcy the Maine railway blamed for one of the worst rail disasters in Canadian history hopes to start getting victims some monetary compensation early next year, he said Thursday.

“It really is the logical next step after the sale of the assets,” attorney Robert Keach said of the possible settlement efforts. “The discussions around that ... don’t await the bankruptcy sale.”

The discussions with the victims actually began within a few weeks of the bankruptcy filing that stemmed from the July 6 disaster, in which an unmanned Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway train slammed into the center of Lac Megantic, Quebec, and exploded, killing 47 people and destroying the center of the town.

The engineer and sole crewman aboard the train had followed company procedure and left the train at the end of his shift about an hour before the accident. A company official had suggested that he had possibly failed to set enough train brakes. Investigators continue to probe the causes of the disaster.

Keach, whom a U.S. District Court judge appointed to run the company as a trustee during the bankruptcy process, said negotiations could start getting money to the victims within the first six months of next year, with luck and cooperation.

Several lawsuits on behalf of the 47 killed and others have been filed in Canada and the U.S. since bankruptcy proceedings began a few months ago. Keach said he did not have an exact number. Several filed in Cook County, Ill., on behalf of victims recently got pushed from state to federal courts, he said.

Prior to the accident, Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railway employed 109 people in the U.S. and 61 at its Canadian component. Fifty-eight U.S. workers and 16 Canadians were laid off after the accident due to the bankruptcy filing. Since the bankruptcy proceedings began, the company has rehired 15 U.S. and 13 Canadian workers, Keach said.

The reconnection of the railroad tracks severed by the explosion should happen by Thanksgiving and the bankruptcy sale could happen in the next two or three weeks, Keach said.

*Bob Keach is a shareholder and co-chair of Bernstein Shur's Business Restructuring and Insolvency Practice Group. He can be reached at 207 228-7334 or [rkeach@bernsteinshur.com](mailto:rkeach@bernsteinshur.com).*