

TRUCK WEST

Western Canada's Trucking Newspaper Since 1989 • February 2015 Volume 26, Issue 2

Page 7 **Special honour:** Trucking companies played a role in recent Wreaths Across Canada ceremonies.

Page 15 **A smarter tire:** There are 150 tire companies with a SmartWay tire. How do you choose the right one?

Page 18 **Cool deliveries:** Aero Delivery of Saskatoon, Sask. is profiled by assistant editor Sonia Straface.

Page 23 **Trailers wanted:** Demand for new trailers is greater than it has ever been. How that will affect your business.

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Only going between 30 and 40 km/h, this giant 140,000 kg crystallizer was delivered after a long three day trek.



Reach us at our Western Canada news bureau

Contact **Jim Bray** at: jim@transportationmedia.ca or call **403-453-5558**

Premay makes massive move

A large crystallizer was transported to Bethune, Sask. in a move that was two years in the making.

A rather large delivery was made this month in Saskatchewan. Premay Equipment, a specialized transportation company located in Western Canada, helped move a giant crystallizer from JNE Welding of Saskatoon to K+S Potash Canada's potash mine near Bethune, Sask. The move began on Jan. 6.

The crystallizer, which brings potash to the surface during the solution process, is more than 10 metres wide, 10 metres high, close to 20 metres long and weighs nearly 140,000 kilograms.

"It's geographically one of the biggest moves that has happened in Saskatchewan," said Lockie McKinnon, terminal director of Premay Equipment who helped plan the trek for two years. McKinnon said that the move took two years of planning to execute because of all the organization involved.

"You have to check with all the infrastructure, like the highways and power and utilities and you have to find a route, as well," he said. "You've got

to look at the infrastructure to make sure it can handle (the weight). The biggest thing is getting everything organized and getting all the people in place. And making sure the power crews and police are in place and making sure there is a lot of communication."

Because of the dimensions of the crystallizer, McKinnon said Premay had to run the route several times in the months leading up to the move to ensure a smooth ride once the trek got started.

"We probably ran the route once a month just to make sure there was no change," he said.

The size of the crystallizer means the commute was a slow one – travelling 75-100 kms a day going around 30-40 km/h. McKinnon added that the delivery was contained between the hours of 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to avoid causing traffic backups and so school buses weren't disturbed. There were also a multitude of escort vehicles assisting with the trek.

"There's a truck pulling it at the front, and two trucks behind pushing it," McKinnon said. "I also have four pilot cars on it and a police escort." **TW**

Calgary: A strong transport hub

By Jim Bray

CALGARY, Alta. – Is the Calgary region becoming a transportation hub to rival those in other regions across the west? It appears to be the case, and it's happening almost via osmosis – in that the region is booming and it only makes sense for commerce to want a piece of that action.

That was the basic sentiment at The Calgary Region as a Transportation Hub conference, held in late 2014 at a venue in the Calgary Zoo. Far from being the kind of "animal act" one might expect at such a facility, however, the Van Horne Institute-led event saw a quite civilized group of presenters extolling the virtues of the Calgary area, while not ignoring the challenges of facilitating international trade in an area far inland.

Calgary Mayor Naheed Nenshi kicked off the conference, saying "Here in Calgary, we're particularly blessed. We have great access to the ports of Vancouver and Prince Rupert, and we have access to the United States and Mexico. Whether it's air, rail or road, our geography is extraordinary. What's important is that we're able to capitalize on it."

He claimed Calgary is home to more tech startups per capita than anywhere else in Canada, and cited the old saw "location, location, location" as one of the reasons.

On the other hand, a city that grows by tens of thousands of people each year risks bursting at the seams, which is leading to plentiful scrambling to keep up. That means major ongoing roadwork, a major expansion of Calgary International Airport, including a recently-opened runway and a new international terminal scheduled to open later this year, and burgeoning logistics facilities throughout the area. Nenshi boasted that the airport expansion is "by far the largest public works project in Alberta's history" and noted that, when it comes to roads, the province finally has a deal to build the southwest portion of the ring road, some 60 years after it was first proposed.

"They haven't actually funded that yet," he claimed, "but I'm sure that at some point they will." Once that's finished, he said, the city's road system will be "world-class, bar none."

Alberta Transportation's Ross Danyluk
Continued on page 9

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February 2015, Volume 26, Issue 2

Canada Post Canadian Publications
ISSN 0700-5016 – Truck West (Print)
ISSN 1923-3531 – Truck West (Online)
Mail Sales Product Agreement No. 40069240
“Return Postage Guaranteed”

80 Valleybrook Drive, Toronto, ON M3B 2S9
Sales: 416-510-6892 / Editorial: 416-510-6896
Fax: 416-510-5143

Truck West, USPS 017-178 is published monthly by BIG Magazines L.P., a div. of Glacier BIG Holdings Company Ltd., a leading Canadian information company with interests in daily and community newspapers and B-2-B information services.

US office of publication: 2424 Niagara Falls Blvd, Niagara Falls, NY 14304-5709. Periodicals Postage Paid at Niagara Falls, NY. US postmaster: Send address changes to Truck West, PO Box 1118, Niagara Falls, NY 14304.

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Circulation inquiries: 416-442-5600 ext. 3553

Change of address: Please include subscription number from mailing label.

Subscription rates: Canada (Includes GST) –

One year \$40.60; U.S. – one year \$66.95;

foreign – one year \$66.95

Send subscription orders, address changes (incl. mailing label from latest issue) to above address. On occasion, our subscription list is made available to organizations whose products or services may be of interest to readers. If you prefer not to receive such information, please write to us. Please allow 8 weeks for changes or corrections.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.



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Remembering Ron Singer

Editorial Comment

James Menzies



Ron Singer, longtime industry advocate and owner of Ron Singer Truck Lines died suddenly Dec. 22 while – what else? – prepping his trailer for a load. Ron built a successful business in Calgary, Alta. managing a fleet of gravel trucks that served destinations across Western Canada. However, he was a proud trucker first and foremost and was always ready and willing to put in a full day behind the wheel.

Singer was as passionate about trucking as they come. He was involved in many industry associations over his career, including the Alberta Trucking Association and later the Alberta Motor Transport Association, the Alberta Construction Truckers Association, the Owner-Operators' Business Association of Canada and the North American Truckers Guild.

He wrote a column for *Truck West* for a time and felt the industry's publications served an important purpose. He didn't always agree with what appeared in the pages of this magazine and others and was always quick to pick up the phone to share an alternative view.

But he was just as quick to call to commend the author on a job well done. On more than one occasion he asked me for one of our contributors' phone numbers so he could personally call them and congratulate them on a well-written piece.

Ron was always eager to help

young journalists entering the industry get up to speed on the important issues. I spent more than one day riding around with Ron in his beautiful Western Star to get an idea of what professional drivers face on a daily basis. I know my friend Jason Rhyno did the same when he was new to reporting on the industry.

I recall talking to Ron about an ill-informed, anti-truck story that appeared in a Calgary daily newspaper. We agreed that the writer would benefit from a day spent with Ron in his truck. To her credit, the author of that piece did join Ron on the road and she later acknowledged that experience helped change her views of professional truck drivers.

While Ron was a hard-working professional trucker, he still found time to pursue his other passion – big rig racing. He competed in and helped run the North American Big Rig Racing series, and fielded two trucks – one of which was driven by his son Ron Jr.

Family was important to Ron and he took great pride in his daughter Jennifer's involvement in the business and various industry groups.

The word 'professional' appears throughout this tribute because it's the word that best sums up Ron's life and career. Nothing bothered him more than seeing truck drivers be-



having unprofessionally while out on the road. It worried him that those drivers would shape public perception of the industry he cared for so much.

He took it personally. Even in recent years, with rates in the gravel sector seemingly under attack, Ron was not one to cut corners. His trucks were always meticulously maintained and he always took time to do the little things like brushing loose gravel from the cab steps and ensuring the tarp was properly closed.

The entire *Truck News/Truck West* staff sends our condolences to the Singer family. Ron will be missed by the entire industry. **TW**

James Menzies can be reached by phone at (416) 510-6896 or by e-mail at jmenzies@trucknews.com. You can also follow him on Twitter at @JamesMenzies.

The numbers tell an unflattering story

As those of you who read this column regularly have come to know, I like numbers. Why? Because they point to the truth and serve as a call to action.

One of the areas where “the numbers” should be acting as a call to immediate action is the under representation of women in trucking at all levels.

Actually this isn't an issue just for the trucking industry; the under representation of women is a reality across the entire supply chain.

The people that manage the freight you haul and who purchase the services you provide are predominantly male too. It's just that in trucking the under representation of women is particularly acute.

Consider that women make up just:

- 3% of truck drivers
- 3% of mechanics, transport trailer technicians, and cargo workers
- 11% of managerial staff
- 25% of freight claims and safety, and loss prevention specialists
- 18% of dispatchers
- 13% of parts technicians

Now consider that the national representation of women in the Canadian workforce is 48% and you quickly see how far behind we've fallen.

Considering we are facing a growing number of retirements in the

The view with Lou

Lou Smyrlis



years ahead and are having one heck of a time trying to attract young people to our industry, can we afford to keep missing the boat on attracting nearly half of the continent's source of human capital, leadership and ingenuity?

There is a huge economic opportunity for women to find careers in trucking and in so doing help the industry address its talent shortage.

But don't expect them to come running just because the jobs are there. Why? Because our industry carries the stigma of being male-centric.

A couple of years ago Deloitte surveyed more than 600 women working in manufacturing, another industry struggling to attract female candidates.

Even though they were working in manufacturing, only one in five thought manufacturing was doing a good job of representing itself to women.

Sound familiar?

Not only was manufacturing

doing a poor job of attracting women but women weren't particularly keen to consider manufacturing as an option.

The survey also found that more than half the women surveyed attributed the lack of interest among females to work in manufacturing to a perception of male bias that starts at the very top where “Common thought has long since been leadership equals male.” Sound like an industry you know?

Like manufacturing, our industry faces an uphill battle in attracting women.

But it has already taken the first step. Women with Drive is Trucking HR Canada's national project to promote women in freight transportation.

I was at its launch last year and I'm looking forward to its 2015 Leadership Summit, scheduled for March 5 at the Sheraton Toronto Airport Hotel.

To find out more, and to register, go to www.truckinghr.com. **TW**

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Wreaths Across Canada helps honour war vets in Ottawa, Winnipeg

By Sonia Straface

WINNIPEG, Man. – Most of us may think of November as the month in which we remember our nation's fallen war veterans.

But for Wreaths Across Canada, a non-profit organization, December is the more memorable month.

On the first Sunday of December, Craig McPhee, a retired warrant officer with the Royal Canadian Air Force and founder and president of Wreaths Across Canada, and a number of volunteers gather thousands of wreaths and lay them on tombstones in the nation's capital.

This year, according to McPhee, 3,000 wreaths were laid at the National Military Cemetery at Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa, with more than 1,700 in attendance at the ceremony.

Families who have lost loved ones are the first to get a wreath after the ceremony to lay on the tombstone of the fallen soldier in their lives.

"The attendance was the biggest yet with visitors," said McPhee. "There are probably 4,500 headstones in the National Military Cemetery, but 1,500 have their headstone in place, but have not moved in yet – I am one of those. If there is no date on the headstone, no wreath (is laid)."

The wreaths were delivered by Jade Transportation of Perth, Ont. McPhee said Jade owner, Jim Doel has gone to New Brunswick to pick up the wreaths and deliver them the day before the ceremony for the last three years.

The event formally began in 2011. McPhee said the day is always emotional.

"It was very sunny but cold," McPhee said about this year's ceremony.

"The people who had been here in the past for this ceremony wanted to come back and place wreaths at their loved one's headstone.

"Tears were flowing. The people are quiet. Some friends are together talking about the deceased person they just laid a wreath at.

"Others run into of friends they have not heard from in years."

For the first time this year, Bison Transport joined forces with Wreaths Across Canada and held a similar ceremony in Winnipeg.

The company partnered with the Royal Canadian Air Force 17 Wing and other branches of the Armed Forces to place 260 wreaths at the beginning of every row of headstones at the Field of Honour in Winnipeg's Brookside Cemetery.

The cemetery is the largest military cemetery in Canada with more than 11,000 fallen buried there.

"Bison is committed to helping Wreaths Across Canada expand this initiative and we will work hard to gain the involvement of our industry, the business community at large and

individual citizens so that perhaps next year, we have one wreath for every headstone," said Rob Penner, executive vice-president and COO of Bison Transport.

McPhee maintains that the ceremony's purpose is to do something in addition to Remembrance Day to honour veterans.

"We have 280,000 veterans buried across Canada," he said. "What do we do for them? Nothing. (The ceremony) is to remember, to honour and to teach." **TW**

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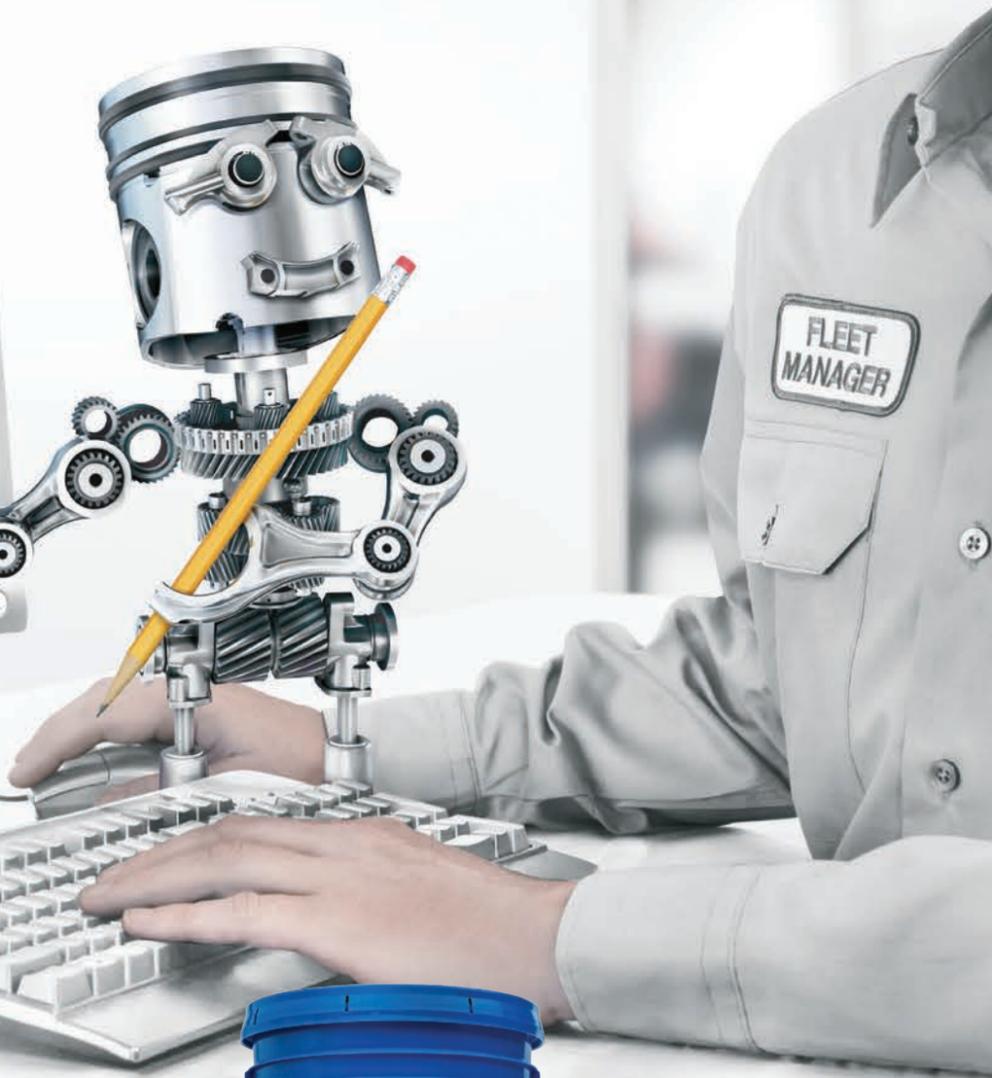
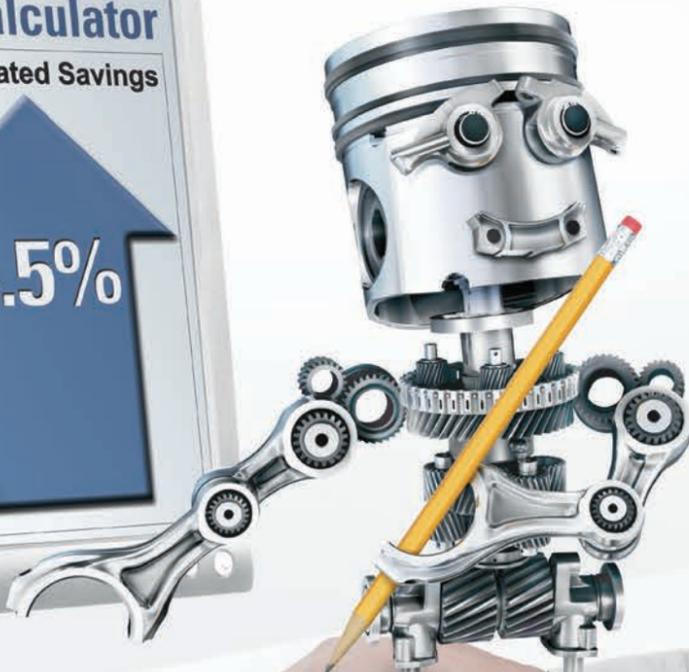
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ALBERTA

Calgary's status as transport hub strengthened

Continued from page 1

reminded attendees of the importance of focusing globally "to develop an effective and efficient transportation system" and called on Albertans to adopt a strategic and proactive approach to facilitating economic development.

"We are hoping to become less transactional and much more collaborative," he said of his department, noting "we continue to shift our efforts by adopting a multimodal perspective versus what was often perceived as solely highways and bridges."

He outlined provincial goals including fostering competitiveness, access to markets, ensuring environmental stewardship as well as innovation and technological integration, and long-term sustainability.

Calgary Regional Partnership's Reg Johnston outlined some of Calgary's competitive advantages, claiming that when it comes to container volumes, Calgary is actually a busier port than Prince Rupert. "We are in the center of the population in Western Canada," he said, noting that Calgary is at a crossroads of the east-west Trans-Canada Highway and the north-south Hwy. 2, the latter of which facilitates commerce from the north to the American border, and he claimed YYC is one of only two Canadian airports with dedicated freight service to Asia and Europe.

Bison Transport's senior vice-president Trevor Fridfinnson noted that, despite his company being headquartered in Winnipeg, circumstances demanded they expand to Calgary.

"Winnipeg had the advantage of being the geographic center point," he said, "but as Calgary and Alberta gained momentum in the last decades, the population grew and activity grew as well. That caused a lot of transportation providers, retailers, distributors to really take notice. We were no exception."

Bison, Fridfinnson said, decided to put boots on the ground in Alberta in 2005 and it's to the point now that about half of Bison's employees and contractors call Calgary their home turf or primary operating hub. He credited the popularity of long combination vehicles as one of the engines of this growth, saying they've been "a big help from environmental, economical and efficiency standpoints" and he praised the City of Calgary and Alberta Transportation for "providing a smart regulatory environment and infrastructure that supported this innovation."

Fridfinnson said Calgary is a good fit for Bison because of its ready labour market, cooperative governments and infrastructure. "There's no better place to live and do business," he said. "The opportunity here in Calgary is unparalleled."

Home Depot finds the area attractive enough that it broke ground on a Rapid Deployment Centre in southeast Calgary last October, one of two in Canada (the other's in Vaughan, Ont.) Both locations dovetail with neighbouring CP Rail operations and represent a new way of thinking for the retailer. "Home Depot did not really have a supply-chain about five years ago," said Todd Cooper,

Continued on page 10



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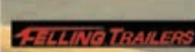
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Bison one of many transport companies drawn to city

Continued from page 9

the company's director of supply chain transportation. "Each store ordered its own product and each store made its own shipping arrangements. By putting in (these) distribution centres, we reduce our inventory in the stores and improve the customer experience."

"We are located across the street from Home Depot's new RDC's," Ian Murray, CP's managing director of intermodal marketing said, "and by connecting the two we (gain) lots of efficiencies and benefits. And as rail raises its game around speed and consistency, we're finding that rail provides great opportunity for truckers to leverage, and also for the retailers who can take advantage of cost efficiencies. They're looking for access to highways and major roadways, and as we connect the rail to the roads it just makes it that much more efficient to get those goods to market."

"It works better for us," Cooper agreed, noting that Home Depot chose Calgary because "it allowed us to reduce our delivery times to our customers. Secondly, we improve our bottom line, because moving product is a huge expense for us and this helps us keep the costs as low as possible."

He noted that once the Calgary centre is up to speed fully, they'll be closing their current one on the west coast.

CP isn't the only railway finding Calgary the place to be in the west. CN has

completed phase one of a new site just to the northeast of Calgary.

"We've integrated our brand new state-of-the-art intermodal terminal on that property," said Tony Bianco, CN's director of sales intermodal domestic, adding "we've actually moved all of our

'We wouldn't have made a \$200-million investment if we didn't feel the transportation hub was here.'

Tony Bianco, CN Rail

resources and all of our terminal staff under the one roof."

He said the 265,000 sq.-ft. facility is on track to be completed in the first quarter, and promised that businesses who collocate there can eliminate a large part of their transportation costs.

"That's true savings both for the rail carrier and the other customer located on that particular property." Bianco said the importance of Calgary to CN is significant. "We wouldn't have made a \$200-million investment if we didn't feel the transportation hub was here. It's one of the most important components in the transcontinental railway system."

Stephan Poirier, senior vice-president and chief commercial officer for the Calgary Airport Authority, focused on YYC's expansion, which he said is possible in part because Calgary was already a decent air hub. Referring to the airport's cargo program as "the economic pipeline program" linking Calgary and the rest of the world, he said air commerce through Calgary has been limited traditionally by the fact that

there's very little cargo space on most commercial passenger planes.

"We understood this in 2000 and focused and worked really hard (on a) cargo program that would enable the city to be connected properly to the rest of the world," he said. Poirier announced the airport has attracted "a very large European cargo player" and claimed the Authority's biggest achievement to date was bringing Cathay Pacific's cargo service to the Calgary market to "plug the hole we have in bridging the gap between buyers and sellers in North America and Asia."

He also mentioned that Mississauga-based Cargojet has secured the Canada Post contract, which will bring even more air traffic, including two 767s, and three 757s daily.

There's also airport growth that isn't strictly aviation-related. "We saw a natural fit with warehouse and logistics service providers that could locate at the airport to conduct business efficiently," Poirier said, outlining the development of the industrial park on the airport's western edge, which started at 330,000 sq.-ft. in Y2K and rose to more than three million - more space than Toronto's Pearson Airport has on airport land,

Poirier claimed - as companies such as FedEx and UPS moved in. He said another 1.5 million square feet will come on stream over the next six years.

Justin Reimer, of the Alberta Government's Innovation and Advanced Education department, noted that with the equivalent of the population of Red Deer moving to Alberta each year "it puts a lot of stress on the existing infrastructure and transportation capabilities. It's going to be critical that all the supply-chain stakeholders are engaged in building our key gateways and portals for the future."

He predicted that the amount of goods moving through Western Canada's key gateways and ports will double over the next 10 years.

Reimer said having competitive transportation is fundamental in assuring Alberta's future prosperity. "We did some economic modeling and found that on average, for every 1% reduction in the cost of transportation, our GDP would increase by \$500 million per year. This would in turn result in the creation of approximately 40,000 new jobs."

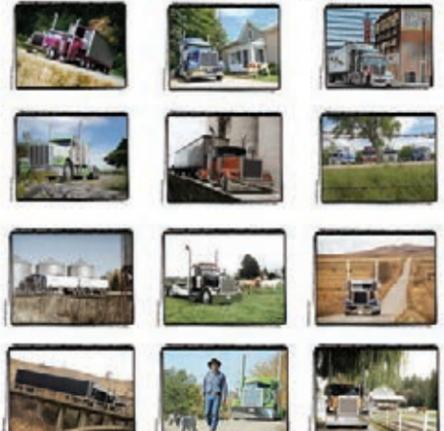
To get there, he said, "we need to grow our presence economically, reputation-wise, both across Canada and internationally and become a world centre for resource-based industries."

He noted that the resource sector will continue to be Alberta's economic foundation for the foreseeable future, but said Albertans "need to work on policies and programs to further broaden our economic base," including embracing policies that foster high growth and inspire entrepreneurs to innovate, commercialize and expand.

Arenso Bakker, a consultant from the Netherlands, wrapped up the conference saying it's wishful thinking to only invest in infrastructure and assume that's going to bring assured economic progress. "Infrastructure is an enabler," he said, noting that infrastructure only supports logistics - the transportation of goods - while what's needed is to support business in the broader sense and he challenged stakeholders to decide what they want their region to become so that "strategies can be put into effect" to achieve them. He said it isn't enough for transportation hubs to be located in places that are good for commerce, but that they should also be "good places to live." **TW**

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Who will pay for driver training?

Trucking HR Canada is in the process of developing a National Occupational Standard (NOS) for commercial vehicle operators (truck drivers). The fourth draft of this document was released this past December requesting input from the public.

I was encouraging drivers to review this before the deadline of Jan. 16, by posting links to it via my Twitter feed and through a couple of Canadian trucking Facebook pages during the first two weeks of January.

I know from my own experience that when issues are being discussed amongst the movers and shakers within our industry it is rare to find more than one or two full-time drivers present to provide a driver's perspective. Getting the word out to the vast driver pool (more than 300,000 of us in Canada alone) on important industry issues is very difficult.

This concerns me because our (truck drivers') personal health and safety is dependent on the depth and quality of the information and training we receive.

Many drivers – probably a majority – will not be aware that this NOS is being



Over the Road

Al Goodhall

developed and will not review the document. The drivers who do review the draft are going to leapfrog over this first step of developing the standards and get right to the heart of the big issue.

How will this training be delivered and who is going to pay for it? Drivers will jump on this because there is no group within the industry that recognizes the need for standardized and professional driver training more than the drivers themselves.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of hours of training involved in these standards both in a classroom setting and in the workplace. I'm afraid drivers will see this National Occupational Standard as a pie in the sky idea if it is adopted by the industry without the infrastructure in place to deliver the training.

So why do I think drivers will be highly skeptical about the adoption and delivery of a national training standard? Well, let's take a look at just one of the

29 key competencies of a professional driver listed in the NOS draft: hours-of-service.

You would think with the amount of press and discussion this topic has received, every driver would be an expert on the subject of hours-of-service. Far from it.

Facebook and the CB to the rescue. Most drivers in their first year on the road turn to their fellow drivers to answer their questions about hours-of-service. Let's remember these are freshly minted drivers right out of school building a new career and they want to get it right. These drivers are asking basic questions about the rules and often receiving the wrong information or advice from their more experienced peers.

I've been working in this business for more than 15 years now and hours-of-service is a standard that drivers have been made responsible to know and they are still not receiving the depth of training they require on this topic before hitting the road. I recognize the difficulties involved with training a workforce that operates hundreds or thousands of miles away from the home office most of the time. It's not as if a carrier can pull in a whole fleet of drivers for a weekly training meeting, even though that is obviously what is currently required.

Should a carrier bear the full responsibility for training their drivers to meet a nationally adopted occupational standard? I don't think so. The financial burden would sink many small carriers.

I think it's fair to expect an employer to uphold a standard that is adopted for any

profession but to make them responsible for delivering *all* of the training and bear all of the associated costs is not a reasonable option. It's pretty obvious that an apprenticeship program on a national level has to be adopted by the trucking industry if it is serious about meeting the occupational standards outlined in the draft document.

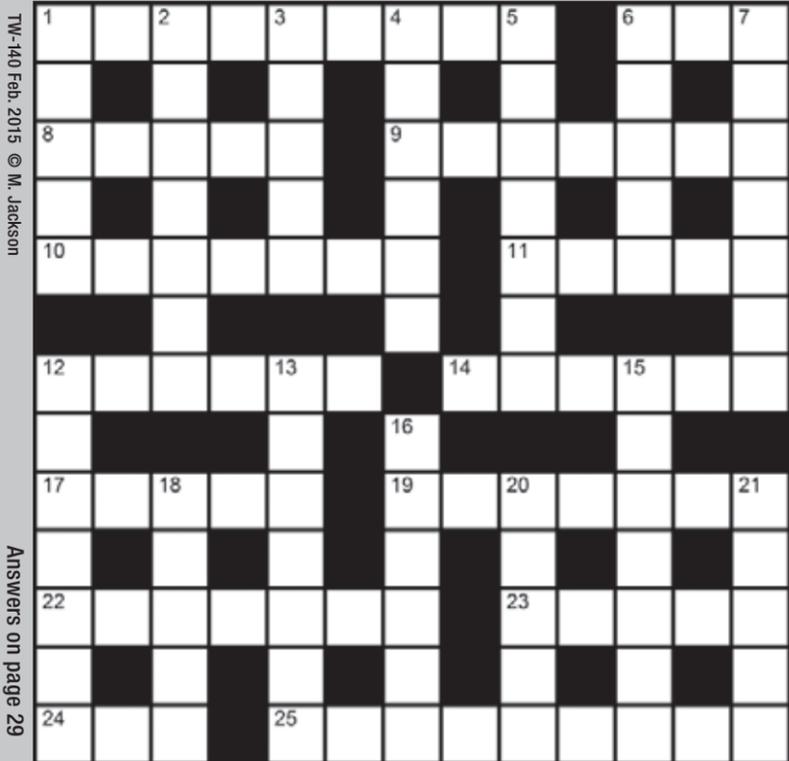
That means partnerships have to be established between government, training institutions, carriers and drivers. I don't see any other means of delivering a program of this depth. This system works in all other trades for companies big and small. Why can't it work in the trucking industry?

Look at this statement about truck drivers that appears in the very first paragraph of the Trucking HR Canada draft document: "The occupation includes more than 300,000 Canadians – nearly 1% of the population and over 1.5% of the nation's labour force."

It is irresponsible to continue on the path that we are on, allowing new drivers to operate on our public roads without the proper training to ensure the safety of the public and the drivers themselves. We need to be honest about the fact that the cost of doing this has to somehow be built into the system. The only fair way to do that is to legislate that change. **TW**

Al Goodhall has been a professional long-haul driver since 1998. He shares his experiences via his 'Over the Road' blog at <http://truckingacrosscanada.blogspot.com>. You can also follow him on Twitter at @Al_Goodhall.

THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE



TW-140 Feb. 2015 © M. Jackson

Answers on page 29

Across

- 1 Super-long road trains' home
- 6 Second, short trailer
- 8 Concord, ON carrier ____ Cartage
- 9 Soap Box racer power source
- 10 Michigan's Motor City metropolis
- 11 Truck-insurance contact
- 12 Tire type
- 14 Kenworth and Peterbilt parent
- 17 BC to AK highway, briefly
- 19 Brake-system type (3,4)
- 22 Car-tire brand since 1901
- 23 Hippie's '60s bumper sticker
- 24 Cargo weight unit
- 25 Winter driving hazard

Down

- 1 Adjusted the headlights
- 2 Changed gears
- 3 Hazzard County smokey Coltrane
- 4 They're often LED, now
- 5 I-20, I-59, I-65 junction state
- 6 Truck-buyer's concern
- 7 International severe-service model
- 12 Pothole, you might say (4,3)
- 13 "Happy Days" drive-in
- 15 City known as Windy
- 16 Legal-gambling venue
- 18 Edmonton-area ____ Transportation Systems
- 20 Lender-reclaimed trucks, briefly
- 21 Truck-stop coffee additive



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- Located in Edmonton
- 455 hp and 10 spd trans
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Snowed-in silver linings

Just before this month's deadline I got sent out on a trip that will form the basis of this column. It was a normal dispatch, nothing out of the ordinary. I was to take a set of pikes out to Calgary, split them and continue onto Langley, B.C. with one of the trailers. I hadn't been to B.C.

for a while and so I was a little apprehensive about running the mountains for the first time in a while when the snow was flying, but it was suck it up buttercup time, so off I went.

It was cold for the first leg of the trip. The wind was howling and that, along with a gross weight of almost 60 tonnes, meant that my fuel mileage was suffering. My rate compensates for this, but still it doesn't fill me with joy when I watch the fuel gauge dropping like a stone. However this isn't a huge problem as I can always pull into a truck stop and take on some more fuel. This is not the case with the other liquid that my truck requires to function, the planet-saving diesel exhaust fluid (DEF).

This vital commodity is hard to find at the best of times. Not all truck stops have this in bulk and the jugs are expensive.

**You say tomato
I say tomahto**

Mark Lee



Not only that, but the irony of the waste they create appears to be lost on the decision makers. Not only the waste, but also the transportation costs. Raw materials and packaging need to be trucked to the manufacturing facility, then it needs to be shipped to the retail outlet. I wonder how many extra truck miles have been created by the need to have this stuff?

The fact that it freezes and is unable to be delivered in bulk is what really drives me crazy. I mean come on, really? You're going to put a system on a Canadian truck that requires a fluid that freezes at a temperature that most Canadians can only dream about in winter?

One of the truck stop chains has at least tried to alleviate this issue by wrapping the pumps with insulation, however this hasn't worked as it should. The theory behind it is a good one, but they never researched the complete lack of intelligence of some of the people that will use it, as the insulation has been de-

stroyed and the hoses have not been put away properly leaving them exposed to the cold temperatures, with the end result being pumps frozen solid.

Because this is a regular occurrence in winter time I have already worked out that I will be facing this problem and have started to fill my DEF tank in locations that have an attendant fill the tank - my home terminal being one such place. However that isn't a 24/7 operation, so sometimes I have no choice but to pay the extortionate prices for the jugs. Spending the extra money annoys me of course, but not as much as the whole situation of using a liquid that freezes in the first place.

So I get to Calgary, split my trailers and park for the night. In the morning there's a change of plans; I'm still going to Langley, but with a different trailer. This one will not be ready until late afternoon. This is just one of those things - on the surface it would appear to be worse than my prior dispatch, however this is a trailer drop, rather than a live unload, so even though I've lost half a day, I will be ahead of myself the next day. Or so I thought.

Then Mother Nature stuck her nose in and things went horribly wrong in a hurry. The roads over the passes were being shut down for Avalanche Control. I could reach Golden, B.C. before my time ran out and by the time I had taken my break they would be closed for the day. Oh well, it's winter. It happens.

So I spent the day in Golden; I had all the facilities I needed, so it was no real hardship. Then Mother Nature decided

to have a little more fun, so she whipped up some wind and threw in some ice rain for good measure. This meant the helicopters that they use to do the Avalanche Control were grounded and so was I, along with all the other trucks that had to shut down.

They had opened the road immediately in front of me, but the town of Revelstoke ahead was full to bursting with trucks that could go no further, so there was nowhere to go, although some trucks left town as they were in a hurry and had a deadline to meet.

I also had a deadline, but it was now impossible to achieve, so my dispatcher was waiting for things to sort themselves out before making a new appointment for my trailer drop. The main factor in this was, it was my call on when it was safe to get moving.

Speaking to some other drivers this didn't seem to be universal. Some carriers were constantly asking for updates from their drivers and others were insisting that they get moving as soon as the road opened, even though there was nowhere to go as the road was still closed a little further on. It made me feel very lucky to be working where I do as there was no pressure on me at all. It was my call and that was that - exactly how things should be. **TW**

A fourth generation trucker and trucking journalist, Mark Lee uses his 25 years of transcontinental trucking in Europe, Asia, North Africa and now North America to provide an alternative view of life on the road.

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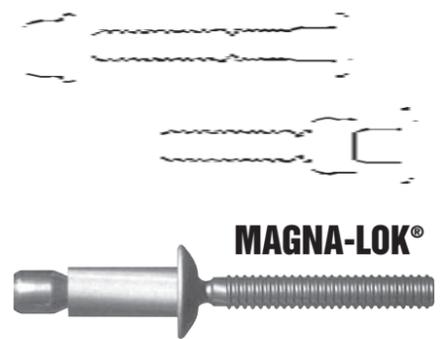
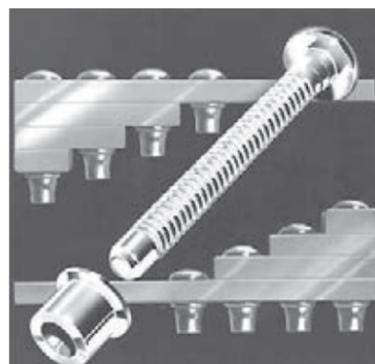
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Deducting the costs of business and working from home

A lot of owner/operators refer to their truck as their office: "I'm going to the office, honey. See you when I get back."

But what about your other office, where you pay bills, review broker settlements, and look up weather and traffic reports as you get ready for your next trip?

If you're like most owner/operators, this office is in your home.

Maybe it's a table in a corner of the kitchen or maybe it's the kitchen table itself.

Preferably you have a dedicated room with a desk, a good chair, a computer with an Internet connection, and filing cabinets.

I get a lot of questions about having a home office and whether these expenses are tax deductible.

The short answer is yes, as long as a) the space is your principal place of business; or b) you use it only to earn your business income and you use it on a regular and ongoing basis to meet clients, customers, or patients.

When you have a home office, you can deduct a portion of ordinary household expenses like utilities, insurance, property taxes, and mortgage interest.

Tax Talk

Scott Taylor



To calculate how much you can deduct, use a "reasonable" basis such as the area of the work space divided by the total area of your home.

If you use part of your home for business and personal living, calculate how many hours a day you use the space for work and then divide that amount by 24 hours.

Multiply this percentage by your total home expenses to calculate the business household cost or office in the home expense amount you can deduct.

Clients often ask me about depreciating part of their home value or depreciating the cost of building their office in the home. Avoid this minefield.

By taking any part of your home value as a business asset you now must declare the proceeds of that room when you sell your home.

Trust me, you don't want capital gain and recapture income tax rules to apply on the business-use part of your home when you sell it.

Office supplies

You can deduct the cost of office supplies like pens, pencils, paper clips, stationery, and stamps.

Office expenses may not include items such as calculators, filing cabinets, chairs, and desks depending on the cost of the items. They may be considered capital items and have to be depreciated.

Phones

CRA doesn't want you expensing part of your monthly home phone cost for business. However, you can expense long-distance charges that are directly business-related so you'll have to track and highlight these calls somehow. Heck, expensing 100% of a cellular phone bill is a risk. CRA always wants you to make some sort of personal-use allowance. This one always makes me mad. "Business" is the only reason to have a big expensive cell phone package with lots of data and US roaming.

Internet

Does your carrier have a web portal? Do you use it to download broker settlements? Upload documents? Communicate with dispatch or the head office? Once you've been dispatched do you not

go online for weather and traffic conditions and border-crossing wait times?

Of course you do.

So you should be expensing part of your monthly Internet cost and the related GST/HST.

Advertising

Marketing your business is a valid expense.

So yes, buying jackets, shirts, and hats with your company name is considered promotional. Paying for your daughter's soccer team registration is not but advertising your company name on the back of her jersey is. Your entry fee to the local charity golf tournament is not a marketing expense but you could deduct the cost to sponsor a hole at the tournament.

Your race car hobby is not an expense but what if your company name is all over your buddy's car?

Everyone needs a place to manage the business side of the trucking business.

The rules for deducting the costs of keeping an office are pretty straightforward but any expense that involves business and personal enjoyment may be called into question.

It's all good if you have to clear the dinner dishes before you get down to your paperwork.

Just be ready to support your claim for part of the kitchen table. **TW**

Scott Taylor is vice-president of TFS Group, providing accounting, bookkeeping, tax return preparation, and other business services for owner/operators. Learn more at www.tfsgroup.com or call 800-461-5970.

OPINION

Look ahead and be prepared

Pilots have a great expression: it's better to be on the ground wishing you were flying than the other way around. That reminds me of a few other wish-I-haddas: plugged the car in last night, checked the air pressure in my spare tire, filled that windshield washer jug last time I stopped. You get the point. A bad situation can turn worse by lack of planning and foresight, as I learned in spades a few years ago.

I was travelling in a nasty snowstorm, eastbound on the 401 around Brockville. I wanted to get off the highway, but with near-zero visibility, I took the wrong exit and wound up a few miles west of Brockville on a lonely off-ramp that was totally drifted in with snow. My little VW Jetta diesel stopped dead in the deep snow and there I sat.

My immediate concern wasn't food or staying warm, but that I might get creamed by a snow plow or a big truck coming off the exit ramp. So today, my winter emergency kit includes an amber beacon I can place on the roof of the car.

I'm Canadian, eh? So I know all about winter. I also travel a lot, so I have good snow tires, I keep my fuel tank filled, and

Voice of the O/O

Joanne Ritchie



I've always carried a shovel, jumper cables, first aid kit, and an extra jacket in case of emergencies.

But the Brockville incident showed me how ill-prepared I was, really, for an emergency. I was totally alone, it was pitch black and minus 20, my cell phone was only half-charged (crummy reception anyway), I had no food in the car, and my water bottle was almost empty. And that jacket really wouldn't help much if I was stranded for long.

After a few hopeless howls, I opened the hood to find the entire engine compartment packed solid with snow. It took a freezing, wet hour or so to clear it out, and luckily, the car started after a couple of tries - I think my air intake was blocked - and I got back on the 401 and made my way to Brockville where I hunkered down in a motel room for the night.

People who know me often chuckle when they see my winter emergency "kit" which takes up a sizable chunk of my vehicle's cargo area. Some might

think it's a little over the top - amber beacon included - but I'm not taking any chances.

I'm on the road a lot in winter, with frequent trips in the Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto corridor, and I make regular pilgrimages back home to the Maritimes.

My trusty little wagon has nearly 350,000 kms on it, so I like to hedge my bets on getting to my destination warm and dry. If I ever have a Brockville-turned-worse experience, I like to think I could comfortably hold out for a few days at roadside.

When I started putting my kit together, I figured I could learn a lot from paying attention to how truckers prepare for emergencies. Who better to learn from? With those millions of miles and years of experience under their belts, and the potential for calamity around every turn, there's nothing they're not prepared for, right?

Not quite. While I learned a lot about road safety and preparedness from the pros, I discovered that many others are just as complacent and ill-prepared as I was. Perhaps there's a false sense of security that comes from travelling with a bed on board, and probably more food and water than most four wheelers would have in their cars, but getting stranded at roadside is equally dangerous for any driver who hasn't provisioned their vehicle in advance.

And it can happen so easily. You can slide off the road in bad weather with little other traffic on the road. Fuel can gel up, leaving you without heat. A road closure coupled with impassable lanes can keep rescue vehicles off the road for days.

All this is especially true on remote sections of highway, but it can happen on busy, well-travelled roads as well. Think I-90 near Buffalo last November or Hwy. 402 near Sarnia a few years ago. Or just last month when an avalanche hazard closed Hwy. 1 near Revelstoke, B.C., leaving hundreds of truck drivers stranded for a couple of days. Some had enough food and water packed to sustain them for a while, but many more didn't.

In addition to the obvious emergency gear I've always carried, what's in my quirky kit? I pack stuff like freeze-dried meals, canned heat, cooking/eating utensils, energy bars, tea bags, water, personal hygiene items, and duct tape; flashlights and batteries, candles, matches, emergency flares, blankets, pillow, sleeping bag, and tons of warm clothes.

I have a signal mirror, beacons, a whistle, orange emergency tape, an assortment of tools, lots of wires and chargers for my gadgets, and a power inverter.

A few old paperback novels and a deck of cards in the kit will help me pass the time waiting for rescue.

There's more, and I'll be very happy if none of it ever gets used. But I'll wager most of you have things on your check list that I've forgotten.

If you have, let me know, and I'll add it. I'm always open to tips from the pros. **TW**

Joanne Ritchie is executive director of OBAC. Are you prepared for the big one? E-mail her at jritchie@obac.ca or call toll free 888-794-9990.

Are some SmartWay tires smarter than others?

There are 150 tire manufacturers with a SmartWay product. We counted. Twice. How do you choose the right one?

By James Menzies

When the EPA SmartWay program began verifying the rolling resistance of commercial truck tires, it seemed simple. Look for the SmartWay decal and be assured of good fuel economy.

Today, however, there's a wide-ranging smorgasbord of tires on the SmartWay menu, ranging in quality from filet mignon to hot dog wiener. Tier one manufacturers have made the list, of course, with a wide assortment of steer, drive and trailer tires. But they've been joined by others you may not suspect, or even have heard of. In fact, at press time there were 150 tire manufacturers with a SmartWay-verified tire on the market.

So how does a buyer sort through the clutter and find a quality tire that will provide excellent fuel economy in addition to acceptable traction and wear life? And does a SmartWay verification speak to the quality of the tire's overall performance?

The answer to that last question is a resounding 'no.' SmartWay measures the rolling resistance of a tire, but no other performance characteristics.

"It's not that hard to make a SmartWay tire, honestly," said Matt Loos, director of TBR marketing for Bridgestone Commercial. "The criteria for achieving SmartWay is based purely on calculated rolling resistance coefficient. There's this bar, and if you get under the bar, whether it's by a little or a lot, you're SmartWay."

Theoretically, a tire manufacturer could submit data for a tire that looks like a racing slick and offers no traction, and still get on the list. Brian Buckham, general manager of commercial marketing with Goodyear, said a manufacturer could produce a tire with a thinner tread to achieve SmartWay certification but the end user would lose out on wear life and traction.

"When you're only trying to hit one of the performance (characteristics), hitting rolling resistance is not that hard," agreed Paul Crehan, Michelin's director of product marketing for North America. "It's what you do with the rest of it that becomes the key to separating between the very good, the good and the not so good. There is no link between SmartWay and good."

The SmartWay program isn't perfect, and it's not likely to change significantly until at least 2018, according to Crehan, since the funding required to overhaul the program would first have to be approved by Congress.

"What we have today is the way it's going to be for at least a five-year period," he said.

This means fleets and owner/op-

erators will have to be discerning when choosing a SmartWay-verified tire from among the list of hundreds.

"We have to be careful," said Loos. "SmartWay is not synonymous with a good tire or a fuel-efficient tire. There's more than just having 'SmartWay-certified' on the side of the tire."

Reducing rolling resistance itself can contribute to greater fuel economy, but there are always trade-offs, especially as it relates to traction and tread wear.

The trick is to find a tire that strikes the required balance between these three performance traits. Every fleet's priorities will be different, Crehan acknowledged.

"What fleets need to do is say to themselves, 'What are our key success factors? What makes our company successful and what type of tire do we typically purchase?' It comes back to, what is your operating philosophy in terms of cost? Are they looking for the lowest initial cost or are they looking for the lowest operating cost, or something in between?" Crehan explained.

Loos agreed. "It can't have the best traction, the best tread wear, the best fuel economy and also be the cheapest," he reasoned.

One of the SmartWay program's flaws is that the rolling resistance requirements have not been updated as tire design has improved. This means even when it comes to rolling resistance – the one variable SmartWay monitors – there's a significant performance variance among the approved tires. Some manufacturers now break down their own SmartWay tires into sub-categories.

"We have a tire that meets the SmartWay limit for drive tires, but we have another drive tire that we internally call 'Super SmartWay' because it's significantly lower than the limit," said Goodyear's Buckham, adding there is about a 15% variance in rolling resistance between the two.

"I think you'll see a day in the not-too-distant future where you may see a score alongside the tire," suggested Loos. "Right now, they're just all passing underneath that limbo bar and everyone gets the same grade."

This isn't to say the SmartWay tire program has been a wasted effort. Tire manufacturers we spoke to said the program has benefited the industry by raising awareness of the importance of rolling resistance and fuel economy.

"We've been saying fuel efficiency and rolling resistance is important for decades," said Michelin's Crehan. "That message is something we've been promoting for a very long time. Now, we don't have to do it anymore because the government – a third party – is saying it for us in a very authoritative way."

The SmartWay tire program itself



If you're looking for a low rolling resistance tire, SmartWay provides a good starting point, but the research shouldn't end there.

does not seem to have lost any traction, as evidenced by the growing list of verified products. It has even expanded to include retreads, which has brought forth some fresh challenges.

The impact casing design has on rolling resistance cannot be underestimated and to remove this variable from the equation, SmartWay adopted a Yokohama casing to be used as the benchmark for all SmartWay testing.

This eliminates the risk of tire manufacturers affixing a not-so-good tread onto a good casing and reaching the SmartWay threshold with a badly designed tread on the merits of someone else's casing.

The list of SmartWay-verified retreads is much shorter, but growing, as more manufacturers undergo the testing protocol.

That in itself is a process. Manufacturers must submit three tires from any line they're looking to have SmartWay-verified to a third-party testing organization. The data is then submitted to SmartWay, which verifies the information and then grants its approval.

"It's specific to a dimension in size," explained Crehan. "So if you change something, you need to go back and re-certify. If you make a change in production that's significant for rolling resistance, you need to re-test."

Since not all SmartWay tires are created equal, has selecting a tire become any less complicated since the arrival of SmartWay? Probably not.

A buyer still must consider a long list of variables and prioritize the various performance attributes, not the least of which is cost, both at the outset and over the life of the tire.

Most large fleets have sophisticated tire programs and have conducted extensive comparison tests. This is trickier for small fleets and owner/operators, who simply don't have the resources to conduct their own testing.

The premium tire manufacturers have tire cost calculators that can be used to compare the various tires on the market, which serve as a great

tool for small fleets and O/Os.

"If you're an owner/operator, you can't afford to go buy six different tires and test them on the two trucks that you have," acknowledged Loos.

Goodyear's Buckham recommends the tire calculators offered by the so-called Big Three manufacturers and dismissed any notion that there's a bias built into these calculators that would render them untrustworthy.

"Every number and comparison we report in our fuel calculator is third-party testing correlated," he explained. "We have correlations with the two independent test labs that the EPA cites in their SmartWay program, so every number that we report in the calculator is a third-party correlated number. I would assume Michelin and Bridgestone are doing the same. We're all big companies and our reputations are at stake."

When it comes to some of the lesser-known manufacturers, however, Buckham agreed some skepticism may be warranted.

"Are they reporting a raw number off their machine or are they doing a third-party (validation)?" he wondered. It's a good question to pose to a tire company when they present their data.

No tire article would be complete without a mention of inflation pressures.

Low rolling resistance tires are no more or less susceptible to air loss, but they require the same vigilant attention as any other tire when it comes to monitoring inflation pressures.

Not only will running proper inflation pressures protect the casing and ensure greater retreadability, it will also reduce failures and improve fuel economy.

Ignoring tire pressures can negate any fuel economy gains a low rolling resistance tire can offer.

"If you lose air, your rolling resistance goes up and you use more fuel," cautioned Buckham.

Low rolling resistance tires do tend to run cooler, he added, which can help preserve the casing for multiple retreads. **TW**

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BORN READY.

Aero Delivery: Calm, cool, collected

One fleet that makes moving perishables and frozen goods look effortless

By Sonia Straface

SASKATOON, Sask. – Moving frozen and refrigerated freight is a cold job, but someone's got to do it.

And doing it well, is Aero Delivery of Saskatoon, Sask., a local business that has been a presence in the industry and city for more than 60 years.

The company's history dates back to the 1950s, before it ever began hauling refrigerated goods. The shift into the cold happened in the early '80s and

since then Aero has been focused on moving mostly perishables. Today, the company has 30 trucks (a combination of straight trucks and tractors) and close to 30 trailers. Its official employee count across both facilities (there's another in Regina) is 57.

Aero's president, Brett Marcoux has been with the company for a decade. He is full of energy and it's evident he's used to the cold as he gave me a quick tour of the 36,000 sq.-ft. facility and 10,000 sq.-ft. freezer and cooler space



Though there are only two locations, Aero Delivery president Brett Marcoux (third in from the left) hints growth could soon be on the horizon for the company.

without so much as a shiver or reference to the below-freezing temperatures.

"Our focus has grown from general goods to specialized refrigerated and gone from local to Alberta and Manitoba," he said. "We don't deliver to the States. We also have refrigerated storage. And that's always been the business model. We also manufacture our own brand of ice too, Fresh Pack Ice-makers, that sells in grocery stores and gas stations."

Recently, Aero has begun to really hone in on the storage aspect of the business because of how large its facility is. The company takes pride in being able to haul and store for its customers, giving them a leg up on the competition, especially in Saskatchewan where there is a demand for refrigerated services.

"We really feel like we have value in our niche," said Marcoux. "All of our trailers are multi-temperature. We really try to go after the customer who not only need to move the product but who might need to store it. We even have a warehouse management system where someone can go online and create an order on our site and we deliver to the end customer. We feel like, as a company, we're a real value. We're not just hauling the product – we're assisting in more than just the transportation facet."

Even though Aero is filling the void in the refrigerated goods aspect of the industry, it isn't exempt from the hurdles that have been affecting the trucking industry of late. The company says it is struggling with the driver shortage, like everyone else, even though it offers its drivers a stable work schedule.

"In the city our drivers work 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday to Friday," said Curtis Magas, facility/planning manager at Aero. "On top of that, most of what we do is Monday to Friday."

Highway runs move on schedule, according to Marcoux.

"We've moved away from the model of a wild card you-never-know-where-you're-going-next-week schedule," he said. "We don't send (our drivers) out for weeks at a time because we have the flexibility to work around peoples' schedules a little bit more and we find that we get some positive feedback from that. We don't have a lot of away-from-home time."

Dina Burgess, corporate services manager at Aero agreed.

"We're one of the few transport companies that can balance work and home life," she said.

Marcoux said the shortage isn't because of the stigma trucking has, but because of the province's economic strength.

"Trying to find general labour, or even to find someone to drive locally has become more of a challenge and that's a comment on the general market in Saskatchewan," he said. "The labour market in Saskatchewan is very challenging. We have instances where we put out recruitment ads in all means and forms of communication and sometimes we'll get little or no response."

"I don't think it's just trucking that is experiencing the blue collar labour shortage," added Burgess. "I think a lot of trades are – plumbing, welding – young people have gravitated away from that."

Thankfully, the company boasts a below industry average turnover rate, which it credits to its culture and approach to customer service.

"We have a core group of individuals that have worked here a long time," said Marcoux. "We have a solid group of people that understand the business and create a strong culture here and we really try to market ourselves as a place where people can go and say 'I actually like coming to work and working with these people here' and I always say, 'we take what we do seriously, but we don't necessarily take ourselves seriously.' We can live in a very negative space in transportation as a whole and we try and vet that ourselves and add some humour."

The upbeat and humorous environment was palpable as I sat in the room with a handful of Aero managers and supervisors. They were able to laugh at those who stayed quiet during the group interview and poked fun at those who strolled in 20 minutes late.

When asked about the company's biggest challenges, everyone agreed that hiring quality drivers with experience is getting more difficult, along with Saskatchewan's crumbling roads and the maintenance on vehicles because of the west's harsh winters. Magas kept things upbeat and said that the company is looking at a bright future because of its dedication to customers.

"The biggest thing for us is our customer service because it opens up so many opportunities," said Magas. "They understand that our name is synonymous with getting it done. That has created a lot of positives and we've seen it for a lot of years. Based on that, I think (our success) is going to continue."

As the company's head, Marcoux said he believed the biggest challenge for the company has been managing its growth.

"Our business has changed a lot in the last three to four years," he said. "Last year was an example of growth without a lot of strategy behind it; we had to scale back in terms of what we did. This

Continued on page 29



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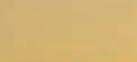
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Inside the IFTA/IRP audit process

To a trucker, IFTA and IRP are a decal and a cab card needed to get through a scale or a roadside inspection.

To a fleet administrator, they're a set of rules to follow in order to file fuel tax returns and vehicle registration renewals. To the people paying the bills, they're an unwelcome but necessary expense.

To the provinces and states that are signatories to these agreements, IFTA (the International Fuel Tax Agreement) and IRP (International Registration Plan) are tax collection and distribution mechanisms.

Don't you forget it.

No matter what you think of them, IFTA and IRP exist to help governments collect their fair share of fuel taxes and registration fees.

And like many tax programs in Canada and the US, they're based on what amounts to an honour system.

They count on the trucker to keep accurate trip reports and fuel records. They count on the fleet administrator to file returns and renewals on time, and to keep accurate records to back up their claims. They count on the people paying the bills to, well, pay their bills.

The 3% standard

This honour code goes only so far. Periodically, carriers are audited to make sure they comply with IFTA and IRP. Each member jurisdiction has agreed to audit 3% (excluding new licensees) of its license base every year. Let's put that into context.

In 2013 (the latest year available), Alberta had 2,817 IFTA licensees (less 94 new licensees) and conducted 70 audits, or 3%. British Columbia had 1,671 IFTA licensees (less 201) and managed to audit 45, or 3%. Saskatchewan had 907 licensees (less 114) and audited 24, or 3%.

(Nice work, Western Canada.)

Not every member meets the 3% standard, though.

Big jurisdictions like Ontario, California, and Pennsylvania with lots of carriers have to produce hundreds of audits each year in order to make their quota. That's a challenge when you're a government strapped for resources. Yet shortfalls are taken very seriously.

Both IFTA and IRP have compliance review committees which meet monthly by conference call and host a workshop annually for government and industry. They keep close tabs on the number of audits each jurisdiction performs. If a jurisdiction is out of compliance, it has a grace period to get into compliance.

If a member fails to meet the 3% audit standard, it risks being kicked out of IFTA and IRP.

Why the fuss?

Unlike an income tax audit, where the auditor represents one party (the federal, provincial, or state government), the person conducting an IFTA and IRP audit is working on behalf of

Permits & Licensing

Sandy Johnson



every member jurisdiction.

If one jurisdiction ignores its audit obligations, it risks compromising not only its own tax revenue but revenue that rightfully belongs to other provinces and states.

Take New Jersey, for example.

New Jersey manages more than

12,000 licensees. It was out of compliance having conducted zero audits. That's right, zero. Now don't go stampeding to get an IFTA license in New Jersey; as of 2013, the state is meeting the 3% quota.

But can you imagine the chaos if New Jersey carriers were unable to get an IFTA license?

Be ready

If you have trucks in the IFTA or IRP program, it's tempting to look at that 3% figure and think you'll never get audited.

Well, think again.

The plates and decals on your truck are the duck floating on the surface of the lake.

The audits conducted both on carriers and jurisdictions are the real motors of IFTA and IRP. They're the heart of the tax collection and distribution machine.

Today auditors are handling IFTA and IRP all in one shot. Your exposure during an IFTA audit will extend to vehicle licensing as well.

Who knows? Maybe your base jurisdiction hasn't met its audit standard and is getting ready to make up for lost time this year.

Maybe 2015 is the year your number comes up. It happens eventually.

Next time you think of IFTA and IRP, think how equipped you are to weather an audit. It's worth the effort to be accurate when you consider the risk of a big assessment. **TW**

Sandy Johnson is the founder and managing partner at North Star Fleet Solutions in Calgary. The company provides vehicle tax and license compliance services for trucking operations ranging from single vehicles to large fleets. She can be reached at 877-860-8025 or northstarfleet.com.



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Trailers wanted

Trailers are in high demand. Why that's good and bad for your trucking business.

By James Menzies

Unprecedented demand for new trailers – mostly in the US – is extending lead times for new trailer builds as used inventory has been snapped up off dealer lots. New trailer orders reached an all-time high in 2014, at 360,000 units.

But why should you care? There are a couple of reasons. For starters, demand for new trailers speaks to the general health of the North American trucking industry and overall economy. Don Ake, FTR's vice-president of commercial vehicles, wrote in a blog over the summer that “the trailer market doesn't trail – it leads” as an economic indicator.

Ake watches trailer production the same way many economists track the cardboard box market, the theory being that most goods are packaged inside boxes. However, those boxes are in turn loaded onto trailers and with trailer manufacturing's longer lead times, it provides insight further in advance than cardboard box production can. Plus, cardboard boxes typically only contain consumer goods while trailers of different types reflect demand for commercial building supplies and industrial goods as well.

Ake also argued the trailer market is a more reliable indicator than Class 8 truck orders, which are heavily influenced by federal regulations and improved technologies.

“And what is happening in the trailer market now? Good things, many good things,” Ake wrote. “An analysis of trailer market segments indicates that consumer spending will be strong the next 12 months, and disposable income is growing. Road and other infrastructure spending is expanding at a healthy clip, while housing starts are still moderate.”

The other reason you should care about trailer demand is that it will affect lead times for your own fleet's orders, which in turn will affect the availability of used and rental trailers. Demand for new trailers is so high, lead times for most manufacturers now sit at four to eight months and whenever a US mega-fleet places an order for a thousand or more units, they get pushed out even further. (Prime Inc. placed an October order with Utility for 2,500 trailers, representing the manufacturer's single largest order ever).

In the past, fleets could turn to the used market to address their immediate needs while waiting for their new trailer orders to come in, but that market too is rapidly evaporating.

“The used trailer market is drying up,” said Nick Lambevski, president of Transport Trailer Sales and the recently installed leader of the North American Trailer Dealers Association. “Normally, if you can't get new, you rent. And that has gotten busy as well. Rental companies are running at higher capacity. Or, you buy used to tie you over. That really is changing. The US has picked up a lot and we're getting caught in this. Canadian trucking companies are going to have to wake up and start thinking about

2015 and making plans. In the past, there has always been stuff sitting in stock so if they get busy, they just buy (stock). On the used side, there seems to be more and more sold into the US. (The US) is getting busier and sucking up our used trailers and once they go down there, they're not coming back.”

Mark Diamantopoulos, vice-president of sales for Trailer Wizards, confirmed that even rental trailers are in short supply.

Trailer Wizards boasts a nationwide inventory of 22,500 trailers and in late November was running at an unprecedented 92% utilization rate. It has been forced to shuffle trailers between its various locations across the country to meet the needs of customers who in some cases won new business, but lacked the trailers with which to service it.

“The US fleets are doing so well they are ordering trailers in large quantities,” Diamantopoulos said. “A thousand or 1,500 trailer (order) in the US pushes out manufacturing dates substantially, especially when we are building 60 trailers a day in one factory.”

As for used trailers, “Right now, we have zero inventory for used trailers,” Diamantopoulos said. “We can't keep anything in stock.”

The story is the same at every trailer dealer we spoke to for this story.

“Lead times are stretched out more and dealers on the van and reefer side are out of stock across the different lines that they have,” said George Cobham Jr. of Glasvan Great Dane. “We've had to tell customers that they need to make a decision sooner than they may have wanted, because when the US market turns on, it bumps production out quickly and it can mean that someone can wait twice as long as they're used to for a trailer. Some big fleets are even turning to buying stock because production is out so far.”

Buying stock trailers out of dealer inventory – if you can even find stock units – means fleets may not get trailers that are specified to their liking. Many dealers are adjusting to this by stocking higher-spec' trailers so they can please the more discriminating customers who are resorting to buying stock.

“We're bringing in more diverse specifications with more technology on them now,” said Cobham. “We're not bringing in one-size-fits-all trailers. We're trying to package different spec's for people who have different appetites for technology.”

This means that at Glasvan Great Dane and other dealers, you're more likely to find stock trailers with higher-end options such as disc brakes, tire inflation systems and lightweight components.

This is a welcomed change for dealers, who during the recession were selling not just fewer trailers, but more basic spec's that weren't necessarily optimized for life-cycle cost and performance.

Conny Weyers, president of Trailers Canada, said he's encouraged by the renewed focus on high-end spec's and says it speaks to the trucking industry's

current health.

“When things are tough in this industry, people tend to buy cheap,” he said. “We have seen a definite change in attitude over the past few years. We've seen a lot of buying taken away from the accounting people and it's back to the owner and the shop people – people who really know what they need.”

The tendency of trucking companies to “buy cheap” during the recession is another factor driving the strong demand trailer manufacturers are seeing today, says Tom Ramsden, vice-president of sales and marketing with Manac.

“Back in 2009 the trailer industry experienced one of the most dramatic decreases in new incoming orders.

The pressure to cut costs was paramount and for the most part the easiest way to accomplish this was to remove what some considered to be ‘nice to have’ options on trailers,” he explained. “Fleet managers were being pressured by upper management to do their part by cutting specifications and in essence buying cookie-cutter trailers and now, five years later, our customers are seeing the effects of these cuts to their specifications through increased maintenance costs.”

Planning for demand in a cyclical, at times volatile, industry such as the trailer market takes some skilful planning and risk-taking by dealers.

Continued on page 24



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24 TRAILERS

Trailer business is booming

Continued from page 23

"We brought in more stock this year than any year in the past - almost 30% more - and at the time I thought, how are we going to sell all this gear?" said Cobham. "Starting in February, it just turned right on."

Canadian fleets, whose modest orders are typically dwarfed by the thousand-plus trailer orders from the big US fleets, may need to become more strategic in predicting their trailer requirements and getting their orders in earlier than in the past, at least while demand remains high.

"Customers are being forced to assess their 2015 trailer requirements well ahead of time to ensure that they have equipment available to them for the coming year," Ramsden said.

Lambevski suggests Canadian customers spread their orders out across the year. This also helps protect against swings in the value of the Canadian dollar. A large order placed when the Canadian dollar is low could prove to be a costly mistake if the dollar rebounds soon after. When it comes to planning, there are lessons to be learned from the tanker trailer industry, he added.

"In the tanker business, they place orders well in advance. They will do their budgets in July-August and place orders in September-October for spring delivery," Lambevski explained. "The bulk of their buying is done and if they pick up a contract they weren't expecting, they can buy out of stock."

Tanker fleets tend to take a more strategic approach to ordering new trailers, in part because the trailers can cost nearly as much as a new power unit. While a van trailer can cost \$25,000-\$35,000, a pneumatic tanker can run \$120,000 or more.

"They do have to get more strategic," Lambevski said of today's van fleets. "Their other options are disappearing. Used trailers and rental supply are tightening."

Trailer Wizards' Diamantopoulos said many of the large Canadian fleets are good at planning their trailer requirements and getting orders in early. But smaller fleets tend to struggle with this and when you have a limited number of trailers to begin with, landing a new contract can suddenly leave a small fleet in desperate need of trailers.

Like Glasvan Great Dane, Transport Trailer Sales planned for the uptick in demand as well as it could. But it's risky to build inventories in anticipation of demand that can subside as quickly as it spiked.

Lambevski said his company will continue to be aggressive in bringing in new inventory.

"We have to be aggressive, at least through 2015," he said. "All indications are it's going to stay busy. Lately, those who have stock and have been aggressive have been rewarded. But I've also been on the other side of it. When things die, they die quickly and at that time, whoever doesn't have trailers on the ground is winning."

While demand for dry vans seems to be outpacing that for all other trailer types, sales have also been robust for flatdeck and tanker trailers. Float and dump trailer demand has been more constrained. **TW**



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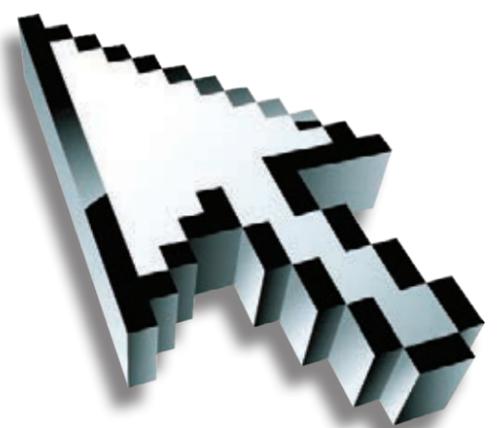
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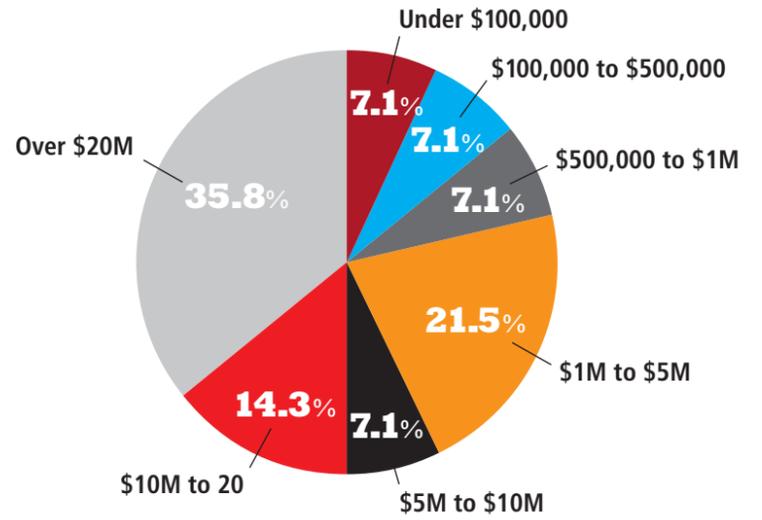
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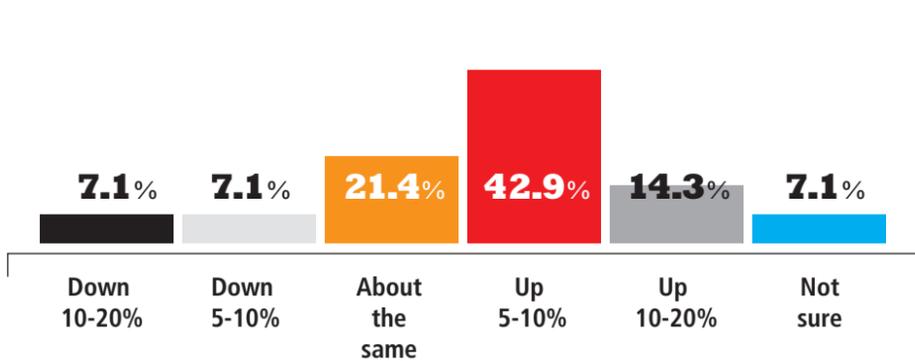
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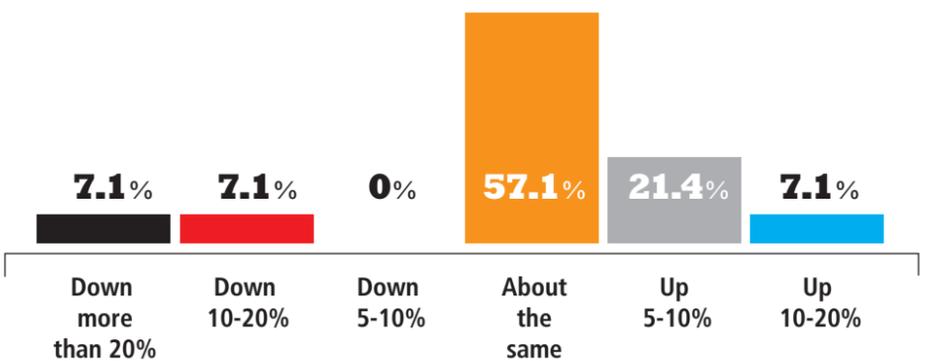
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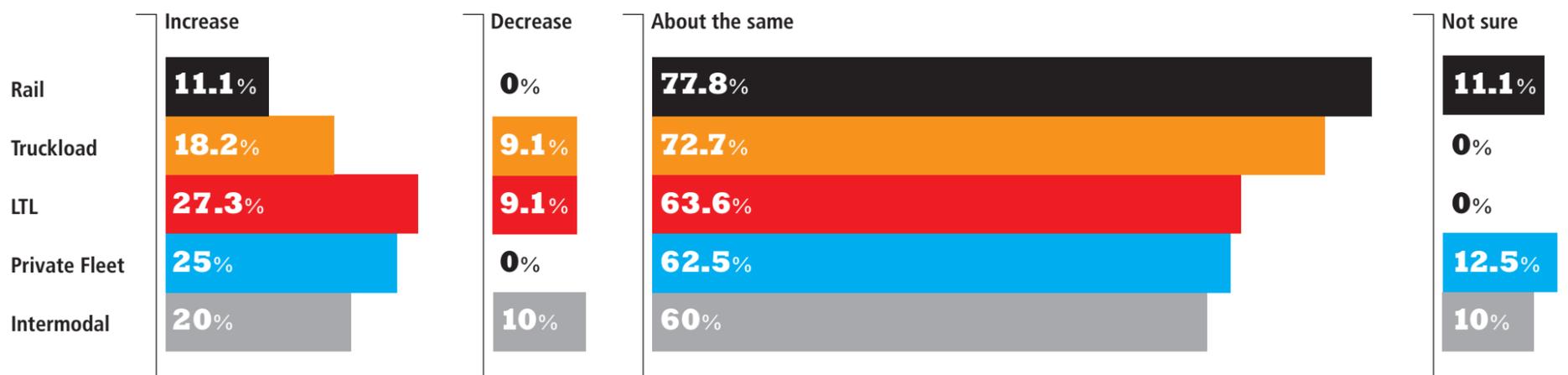
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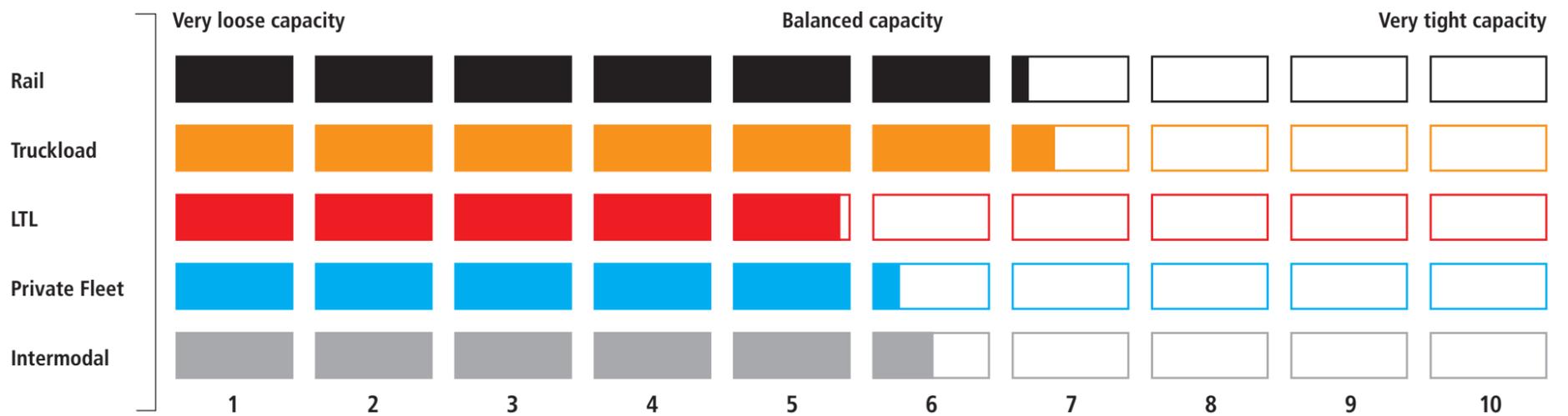
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oderating fuel prices look to be taking a toll on Western Canada's economic growth, causing Western Canadian shippers to forecast a slowing of freight volume growth, our annual Transportation Buying Trends Survey reveals. Whereas 57% of Western Canadian

shippers experienced an increase in their freight volumes compared to the previous year in 2014, only 28% are expecting growth in 2015 with the vast majority expecting growth to be flat. Our survey was conducted in the final quarter of 2014. **TW**

By Edo Van Belkom

In the summer months, Northern Ontario's Highway 17 was one of the most scenic routes in the entire province, perhaps even in the country, but in the winter it was bleak and unforgiving and a real test of a driver's skill and mettle.

All of which made Mark wonder why he was driving this stretch of highway in January.

Mark had been driving so long and had been through so many adventures that he no longer had to prove anything to anybody, but here he was, negotiating snow and icy roads just like he'd done years ago when he'd take any sort of long-haul load that came his way.

"Thank God," he exclaimed when he saw the sign that let him know that the Husky truck stop at Dryden was just a few kilometres away.

As he began to slow Mother Load to allow her to properly cool down, Mark scanned the radio for a local weather forecast. The radio practically went through the range twice before catching a strong enough signal from CKDR in Dryden.

Apparently, there was a storm front moving in over the next few hours and the OPP was warning drivers of possible drifting snow and icy road conditions. "So," the host said, "stay home if you don't have anywhere to go."

Good advice, Mark thought. But there would always be a few cowboy truckers who thought they could get their rigs through anything. No doubt the wrecking crews would be patrolling the entire length of the highway looking for stranded truckers to rescue, but Mark decided he was too old for adventure driving and he'd likely sit this one out.

As he pulled into the truck stop, Mark saw a dozen or more rigs all lined up for a good night's rest, as well as a handful of trucks idling out by the pumps while drivers busily worked around the drive wheels connecting chains for the next leg of the journey to Kenora.

"Crazy as a dollar coin or desperate for money," he muttered under his breath as he pulled Mother Load into a parking spot.

Getting out of his truck, Mark noticed that the driver closest to him, hooking up a set of chains to an International was having a bit of trouble.

While he didn't want to drive the highway himself today, he knew other drivers could probably drive the highway safely at slower speeds with chains on their drive wheels.

And if a driver was determined to drive the highway, they might as well do it with properly fitted chains.

"Can I give you a hand?" he said, coming up behind the kneeling driver who was struggling with a set of chains.

"Get lost," came the response.

It was only then that he realized that the struggling driver was a woman. "Sorry, just trying to help."

"Thanks, but I don't need your help," she said.

"Suit yourself," Mark said. Then he noticed another driver nearby in the very same predicament. He approached the driver and made the same offer.



Just one of the guys

PART 1

"Sure," he said. "That'd be great."

With a half-smile on his face, he glanced over at the woman cursing at the chains that just didn't want to go around her tires, then began giving assistance to the second driver.

In no time at all, the chains were on the man's truck. Mark made it a point to look over at the woman - who was still working away - and say in his loudest voice, "Job goes a lot quicker with two people doing it."

"Yeah. Thanks, Buddy," the driver who he'd just helped said. "Let me buy you a coffee."

Inside the truck stop, Mark ordered dinner and ate it slowly since it was obvious he wasn't going to be going any further west today.

The food was what you'd expect from a truck stop with lots of gravy, vegetables that had once been frozen and a steakette that was just a few notches above hamburger.

Even so, it was hot and tasty and the group inside the truck stop was unknowingly putting on quite an entertaining show.

Over by the window that overlooked the gas pumps were a group of four men.

They were all intently watching the woman who still had not yet hooked up the chains to her rig, laughing at her loudly at every stumble and misstep she made.

There has to be a problem, Mark thought.

She looks like she knows what she's doing, so there has to be a real problem with the equipment for her to take so long.

At last, a half-hour later, as Mark was sipping his

second cup of coffee, the woman entered the truck stop.

But instead of relief, there was a look on her face that was halfway between annoyance and terror.

And in seconds Mark knew why. "Not like putting on a dress, is it?" said one of the men at the table.

"Side of the road's no place for a woman," said another, loud enough for the woman to hear. "Kitchen and bedroom, that's where they belong."

Unfazed by the comments, she placed her belongings at an empty table, then strode confidently toward the bathroom.

When she was out of sight, the men at the table by the window laughed.

Initially, Mark had been disappointed by the brutish nature of the men's comments, but he recalled how she'd spoken to him outside when he'd offered his help to her, and figured she had it coming to her.

After all, even if there was a problem, a driver is responsible for the condition of his or her equipment and should know how to use that equipment when it's needed. Chains generally go on in minutes, not hours.

The door to the women's bathroom opened a short time later and the inside of the truck stop went quiet.

Still walking proud, the woman headed straight toward the table of men by the window.

No one said a word as she walked right up to them and stood as close as she could to the loudest of them all, towering over him like a teacher over a schoolboy.

"If you've got something to say," she said so everyone in the restaurant could hear. "Get it off your chest now, so I can tell your wife how much of a jerk her husband is the next time I see her."

That seemed to disarm the men.

"Don't worry, she already knows," the ringleader said.

It was funny, and everyone laughed, but clearly the teasing was over...for now. Without another word, she turned and headed for the chair that held her belongings, leaving the men slack-jawed in her wake.

As Mark watched her he felt a strong sense of admiration for her in his heart.

It couldn't be easy being a woman in an industry dominated by men, but she seemed to be handling it well.

As she passed his table, he nodded in her direction, knowingly, as if to acknowledge her as one of his colleagues. **TW**

Mark Dalton returns next month in Part 2 of *Just one of the guys*.

Did you know that there are two full-length novels featuring Mark Dalton?: Mark Dalton "SmartDriver" and Mark Dalton "Troubleload." For your free copy, register with ecoENERGY for Fleets (Fleet Smart) at fleetsmart.gc.ca.

Illustration by Glenn McEvoy



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Aero makes cool deliveries

Continued from page 18

year we put a lot of strong focus on being good at three things instead of half-good at 10 things. We understand our strengths and weakness a lot better now. We are fortunate, as much as the labour shortage does affect us. There's a lot of opportunities in the province right now."

Without saying much, Marcoux made it clear that the business does intend to grow (and perhaps rather quickly as our conversation on the topic told me).

"Are you planning on growing the business?" I asked.

Silence.

"Yes," said Marcoux, finally.

"Organically or through acquisitions?"

Silence.

"We're open to both," he said, eventually. "We've been fortunate to have organic growth being where we are but acquisitions are always on our radar."

Interesting.

"Is an acquisition on the horizon?"

Silence.

"Potentially," he said with a grin.

Keep your eyes on Aero. If my gut is right, they'll be taking the icy plunge soon. **TW**



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JIM'S BRAYINGS



Welcome to Jim's Brayings, a quick look at some interesting community news items from across the west that we think will interest you. If you have some news you think will be a good match for this column, pop me off an e-mail at jim@transportationmedia.ca. We can't run everything, of course, but we'll try to get in as much as space permits...

Happy New Year! Here we are at the beginning of a new year, full of fresh dreams and looking ahead to what we hope is a happy and prosperous 12 months in 2015. And despite the issues we face, economically, politically, socially – insert your favourite “****ly” here – there's always cause for optimism even if things look grim.

A new year offers a great excuse for new thinking and new ways to do things – maybe even to shaking up the establishment, even if only in our own small way. My dear wife jumped the gun in this, coming up with a grand scheme in December that I just have to tell you about so you can use it in 2015 if you so desire. Her idea not only served us well, it let us thumb our noses at an airline I used to really like while redirecting some of our cash to support at least a small part of the trucking industry. I'm talking about baggage fees, on which my formerly favourite airline (WestJet) led the way last year by inflicting them on their so-called “guests.” This former upstart little airline that could – which for some bizarre reason still thinks it's a discount airline – started charging customers for checked bags, leading not only to more expensive flying but to more people bringing aboard carry-on luggage to avoid the extra kilo of flesh.

WestJet rationalized this, at least in part, as a way to unbundle services, so people who don't want the full meal deal don't have to pay for it. They said one in four of their “guests” doesn't check bags anyway, so why should they have to pay for it? This would carry more weight if those without checked bags had their ticket price go down, but they don't: those who check bags pay more via the new fee while those with only carry-on still pay the same.

Anyway, my Dad comes to visit us in Calgary from Ottawa each Christmas, and this year, my wife had the brilliant brainstorm (“Braynstorm”?) to ship out his suitcase in advance. So we checked the rates and Fedex Ground, which supposedly uses trucks rather than planes, charged us \$45 and change (taxes in) with the promise to deliver it within three business days. That's more expensive than the checked bag fee, but for that premium

they picked it up at my Dad's front door and delivered to mine, on time, the day before he arrived. So not only did my Dad, a senior citizen, not have to pack a heavy bag to/from the airport, he didn't have to wait at the baggage carousel when he arrived. He loved it! We did the same thing for the return trip.

WestJet's greedy grab made us think outside the box. And because of that they lost two baggage fees and gave us the opportunity to support a segment of the trucking industry. A win-win for us, and a way for lowly little us to tell WestJet to take the checked baggage fee and profit share it right up their fundamental orifices. Feel free to steal this idea.

Ron Singer, RIP

Just before Christmas I received the sad news that Ron Singer had passed away. Ron was one of the first people I met and interviewed when I started this gig a half decade or so ago and I had the chance to repeat the privilege several times after that. I liked Ron, who was always open, outspoken and passionate.

Ron, owner of Ron Singer Truck Lines, died working the business. His trucks served across the west but he was also a passionate driver and racer; I remember interviewing him multiple times about the triumphs and tribulations of the North American Big Rig Racing (NABRR) and his Heavy Metal Motor Sports team, which included his son, Ron, Jr. Ron was also involved heavily in the industry over all, including stints with the Alberta Construction Truckers Association, the Alberta Trucking Association, Owner Operators' Business Association of Canada and the North American Truckers Guild. He also wrote some columns for this publication.

He was a huge help to me when I started covering this industry, because the only thing I knew about it was what I remembered from my experience driving buses in B.C.'s West Kootenay decades earlier. He brought me up to speed with many of the issues he thought were important – and there was no shortage of

such issues, thank goodness from the point of view of a writer looking for stuff to cover. I'll always be grateful to Ron for his insights.

It might not seem from Ron's accomplishments that he had much time for a family, but he was married to Rosalinda for 33 years and their daughter, Jennifer, followed him into both the business and the industry which, though we never discussed it, must have made him very proud. Jennifer is successful in her own right as well, and I've been lucky enough to get the same kind of support from her that I got from Ron. Much appreciated!

A far out trip far east

Yannick Morvan, a lease operator for Edmonton-based Grimshaw Trucking, wrote me recently about a trip he's planning – a drive from Edmonton to Saigon, Vietnam, by road where possible. His planned route will take him to Halifax, then shipping his truck across to Liverpool, England, then off to France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Russia, China, to Vietnam. Whew! That's one heckuva trip – and it's all for charity.

Yannick, who also uses the “alias” Filoche, is looking for sponsorship to help him in his journey. He says he has two sponsors lined up already, but needs more because “I spent around \$150,000 myself for the truck and trailer.”

According to his friend, Marc De Muynck, another expatriate Frenchman who now lives in Vietnam and is heavily involved in the charity Yannick is supporting (“Les Enfants du Dragon” – “the Children of the Dragon” – <http://lesenfantsdudragon.com/>) Yannick's plan is to transport humanitarian materials for the children in the Saigon-area shelters the charity supports, as well as to raise additional funds from the different countries he visits. The end game is to help “Les Enfants” build an orphanage.

Sounds like a heckuva project! If you want to help in this worthwhile endeavour, drop by Yannick's Facebook page (just search for his name when you've

logged into FB) and make contact.

More PIC-tures of success

Alberta's Partners in Compliance program continues to expand, with a half dozen new members announced just before the end of 2014. The family-owned Prairie Bus Lines, with operations in Red Deer and Sylvan Lake, has a fleet of 130 school buses and motor coaches and 133 drivers. Fort McMurray's Sparksman Transportation operates a fleet of 90 units, including buses, shuttles and SUV's. The company's motto, “There and Back – Safely & Timely Service,” reflects its commitment. And Jacey's Trucking and Mechanical – also headquartered in Fort McMurray – is a small trucking company led by owners Joe and Christine Letemplier. Jacey's fleet of six units and drivers operates in the “hyper competitive transportation climate of Fort McMurray,” according to the info release.

Rocksteady Oilfield is a Peace River-owned and operated oilfield service company whose management team has a combined 20 years of oilfield experience, most of which has been in heavy oil operations with extensive field and plant experience. Calgary-based Griffin Logistics is a new company, specializing in oilfield-related cargo and long haul transportation – including a scheduled service to Houston, TX and other points in the U.S. And Bulk Systems (Alberta) Ltd., an Alberta-based division of Trimac Transportation, has an average of 58 trucks with many dedicated runs within the province.

Congratulations to all six new PIC members. You've shown your commitment to excellence – and safety, of course – and can now proclaim it on your vehicles via your yellow PIC plate. For more information about PIC: www.partnersincompliance.com. **TW**

That's it for this time. As always, if you know of a newsy item you think your industry peers should know, fire me off the info to jim@transportationmedia.ca. We'll do our best to see it get into print.

New!



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