

**Page 10 Tax tips:** As we enter official tax season, our resident expert Scott Taylor has some tax tips you can use.

**Page 11 Sprint to the Arctic:** The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter may be small, but it fared well on its toughest test.

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trucknews.com



Constable Ken Usipiuk of the Delta Police does a vehicle inspection for Harbour Link Container Services in Delta, B.C. The fleet invited inspectors to its yard to avoid roadside stops that delay freight. Photo by The Delta Optimist

## Alberta rest areas to stay open, for now

CALGARY, Alta. - Three of four Alberta-based rest stops originally targeted for closure will now remain open, according to the Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA). The AMTA, which has been lobbying the province to keep turnouts open, received the news in a recent meeting with Alberta Transport.

"We are delighted that Alberta Transport had responded to AMTA to make available places where professional drivers and other motorists can pull over and rest," says AMTA executive director Don Wilson. "Providing places for all drivers - especially commercial transport drivers - to pull over and rest is a vital component of any fatigue management program and compliance of load security rules.

The rest stops previously slated for closure that will - for now - remain open are at the following locations: south of Olds; southbound, just north

Continued on page 5

This B.C. fleet invites enforcement officers into its yard to inspect its trucks.

# Have they gone mad?

By Jim Bray

DELTA, B.C. - Freight idled on the roadside while the powers-that-be poke around may not be the trucking equivalent of a colonoscopy, but - whether they're a royal pain or a minor irritation - they still throw a monkey wrench into your schedule.

Yet it's hard to make the case that vehicle inspections are a bad thing; they do keep the vehicles, owners and drivers they snag on their toes. And good companies needn't fear them.

But since time is money, such inspections also affect your bottom line. And that's what prompted one British Columbia trucking company to poke at fate with a pointy stick, actually inviting the authorities to their base of operations so they could give its fleet the once-over - twice, if necessary.

The idea came from Tim McGee, general manager of Delta's Harbour Link Container Services, and was basically an extension of a

scheme he dreamed up while working for a previous company when he had to absolutely, positively get a load across the US border on time.

"I had a relationship with both the CVSE and the Delta police," McGee told *Truck West*, "and we had a time-sensitive run where we couldn't afford to be stuck at one of these impromptu inspections at the scales. So basically, I made the call and asked if I offered a truck and a trailer up for inspection, would they come and inspect it?"

The police were a tad baffled by the request, McGee recounted, but he explained to them that he had a load of fresh doughnuts going from a bakery in Delta to Kent, Wash. - from which point they'd go to every 7-Eleven within five miles of the I-5 between the Canadian border and Portland, Ore.

"I said 'My guy has to be in Seattle by four o'clock and he can't leave until 11:45-12 o'clock,'" he explained, "so if he gets stuck

Continued on page 13

## Q&A with MTA's Bob Dolyniuk

On 2013 prospects, concerns for small carriers and consolidation

By Lou Smyrlis

**TW:** Going into 2013, many carriers in central and eastern Canada are unsure what to expect. Freight volume growth is slow and core pricing for their services is not what they would have hoped for two years into the economic recovery. How are your members feeling about 2013?

**Dolyniuk:** Certainly, carriers are still talking about increasing rates, but the industry is still dealing with capacity issues. As long as we have that capacity in front of us, it's going to create pressure and I think we are seeing that. If you look at our carrier base, the US market is a significant portion of their business and they don't have confidence about that market. There is trepidation about the whole US market. The year has started off soft and it's questionable how strong it will get.

**TW:** It's interesting you mentioned capacity. Industry estimates, and our own, are that capacity has been reduced 12-15% since 2008. Are you saying that capacity remains an issue?

Continued on page 24



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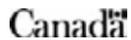
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# Safety as a competitive battleground

## Editorial Comment

James Menzies



**T**he advent of the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program in the US has had a significant impact not only on how carriers manage their equipment and drivers, but also on how they sell their services. Never before has the safety performance of motor carriers operating in the US, including those from Canada, been so readily available to the public and the shipper community. Carriers that have managed their CSA scores effectively and stand out as top-performers among their peer groups are using that to their advantage when soliciting new business and negotiating rates. And who can blame them?

When several carriers are being considered for a piece of business, with rates being equal or close to it, CSA scores are undoubtedly entering the discussion. A carrier sales rep may even do the legwork and present its own scores along with those of its competitors for comparison. Others may subtly point their customer in the right direction and encourage them to do their own research. This tactic is usually accompanied with some degree of fear mongering and the lecturing of shippers on their societal obligations to choose the safest carrier available.

“I think CSA is a game-changer, and while it’s imperfect, it provides a more comprehensive view of each carrier’s safety potential,” Robert Low, founder of Prime Inc. said during a fall Driving for Profit seminar. “And now, with the public nature of most of that informa-

tion, shippers have at least some implicit obligation, if not more than that, to review that information and to make decisions not just based on the lowest price.”

At first, it would seem the trucking industry would be well served by moving the discussion with shippers away from rates and towards on-road safety performance. Theoretically, this should motivate carriers to place extra emphasis on their safety programs and if a direct correlation can be made between a company’s CSA performance and its ability to win new business, getting buy-in for crucial safety programs from upper management should be that much easier. What could be wrong with that?

My concern is that, as a carrier’s safety performance, and its CSA scores specifically, become more heavily leveraged in the freight-bidding environment, that carriers will be less likely to share their best safety practices, that they’ll hold those secrets more closely to their vests than they have in the past. I’ve always enjoyed covering the trucking industry because carriers, though competitors, have traditionally been willing to share insight and expertise on what works – and what doesn’t – in managing their fleets.

This is especially true when it comes to safety, as it should be. Keeping our industry’s collective workforce safe and sending them home to their families at the end of each trip should be a shared goal. It’s difficult to imagine it being any different.

However, when discussing CSA in general, and this issue more specific-



ly, with a couple of fellow trucking journalists on a recent press trip, one of my American peers noted that carrier executives in the US are already more reticent to speak openly about their safety programs, for fear of losing a competitive edge. It seems that an unintended consequence of CSA is that it has created a competitive environment in which CSA scores are so highly valued and heavily guarded, that motor carriers are less inclined to share information and best practices that could lead to a safer industry as a whole.

There’s nothing wrong with viewing safety as a competitive advantage; safe carriers have earned that right. But in my opinion, carriers have a moral obligation to share information that could help protect drivers and other workers within the industry, no matter who they work for. **TW**

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# Small fleets have some large worries

**L**arge carriers are always in the spotlight – they drive trucking association policy, are usually the first to test new technologies, and get a disproportionate share of the headlines. But the reality of the Canadian trucking market is that it’s dominated by small carriers.

Carriers possessing fewer than 10 trucks and earning less than \$1 million in annual revenues make up more than 60% of the country’s for-hire carrier population. During the five-year economic growth spurt prior to the recession, their numbers increased considerably, rising by about 20%. And they have hung on through the recession and the subsequent slow recovery relatively well considering the challenges they faced.

As resilient as small carriers have proven to be through the greatest recession since the 1930s, however, there is good reason to worry about their future.

Simply, the numbers I’m looking at look troublesome.

Our annual Transportation Buying Trends Survey of carrier executives

## The view with Lou

Lou Smyrlis



across the country, conducted in December and January, found that while 38% of large carriers expect to grow their business volumes in 2013, only 27% of small carriers expect the same.

This divide in carrier projections is borne out by research conducted by the American Trucking Associations state-side. While large carriers in the US are doing better, small carriers actually experienced a 4.6% drop in freight volumes from September 2011 to August 2012.

The same divide is found when looking at rates. While three quarters of large carriers expect to charge higher rates, only 39% of small carriers do.

Our research, conducted in partnership with the Canadian Industrial Transportation Association, Cormark Securities and CITT, is also finding a wide gap in purchasing plans based on fleet size.

While two thirds of large fleets (100 or

more Class 8 vehicles) intend to purchase new trucks in 2013 only 17% of small fleets (5-9 trucks) have similar plans.

Considering these differences it’s no surprise that large carriers are considerably more upbeat about business prospects in 2013 than small carriers. Large carrier optimism for 2013 averages 6.6 out of 10, compared to just 5.6 for small carriers.

Seems our smaller carriers have some big challenges ahead of them. But I wouldn’t count them out because the other reality is that transportation in Canada is a tough business. There are many lanes and many customers which simply don’t make economic sense for large carriers to take on.

I believe there will always be a need for well-managed, niche-seeking small carriers in the Canadian marketplace. They have some challenges to overcome, and their numbers may shrink some as a result, but they will not be going away. **TW**

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# CLASS 8 TRUCK SALES TRENDS

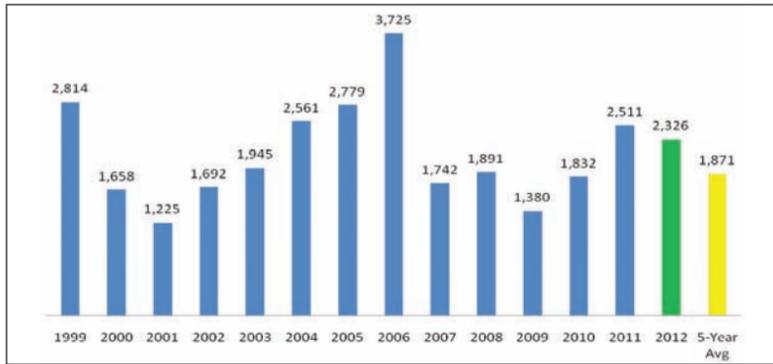
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Class 8 truck sales in December, although above 2,000 once again, continued their 3-month slide below last year's totals. The top three market share leaders – Freightliner, International and Kenworth – all suffered setbacks compared to the previous year. Kenworth's numbers in particular took a turn for the worse during the month. Still, this was the sixth best December total since 1999. Monthly sales were also about 500 units above the 5-year average. Another positive note, both Mack and Western Star experienced gains from December last year.

### Monthly Class 8 Sales – Dec 12

OEM	This Month	Last Year
Freightliner	575	696
International	224	288
Kenworth	276	534
Mack	314	121
Peterbilt	317	308
Volvo	357	403
Western Star	263	161
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2326</b>	<b>2511</b>

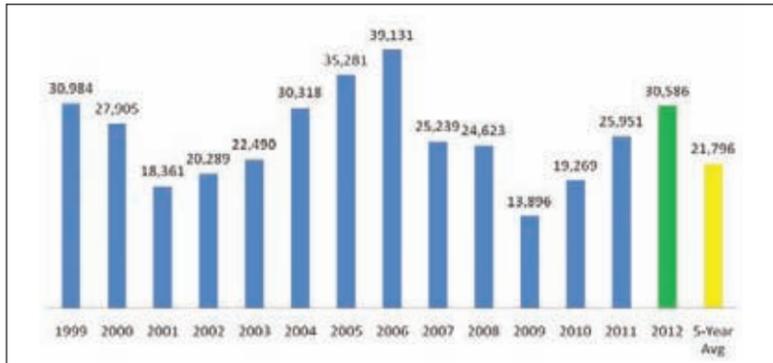
### Historical Comparison – Dec 12 Sales



### Class 8 Sales (YTD Dec 12) by Province and OEM

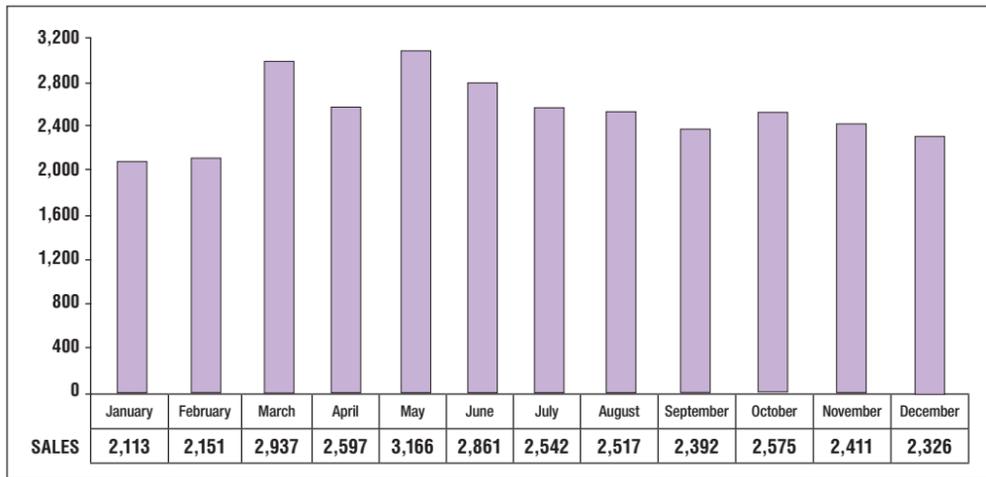
OEM	BC	ALTA	SASK	MAN	ONT	QUE	NB	NS	PEI	NF	CDA
Freightliner	608	822	222	622	3,583	1,271	343	143	29	29	7,672
Kenworth	648	2,432	392	212	997	1,045	125	0	0	0	5,851
Mack	103	415	200	111	951	391	82	42	0	32	2,327
International	154	764	81	300	1,888	861	191	81	26	62	4,408
Peterbilt	373	1,410	313	533	721	612	165	28	0	0	4,155
Volvo	232	305	110	247	1,839	786	111	78	0	9	3,717
Western Star	450	880	92	74	350	404	73	113	7	13	2,456
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,568</b>	<b>7,028</b>	<b>1,410</b>	<b>2,099</b>	<b>10,329</b>	<b>5,370</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>485</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>30,586</b>

### Historical Comparison – YTD Dec 12



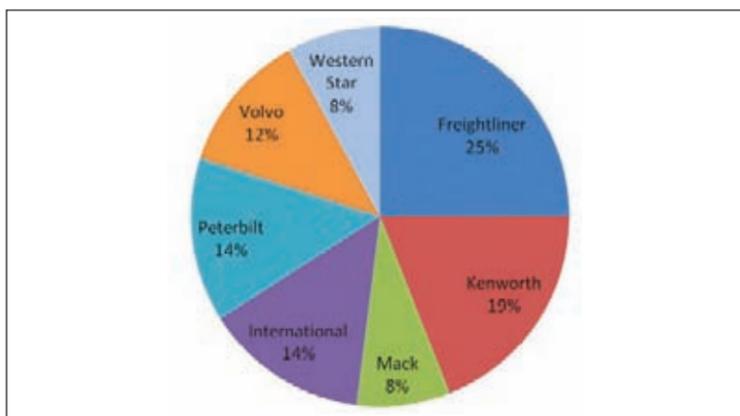
Class 8 truck sales are in their third year of recovery following their crash in 2009. The 30,586 trucks sold make 2012 the fourth best sales year since 1999 and almost 9,000 above the 5-year average. It could have been the third best year but slumping sales over the final quarter nixed that opportunity. The 30,586 trucks sold were also well within our own forecasted estimated range of 30,319 to 31,227. Assuming an 8-year life cycle for Class 8 trucks (a truck could go through several owners), there are more than 35,000 trucks due for renewal. But many fleet owners are reluctant to purchase trucks that actually add to their fleet size due to concerns about the slow growing economy. We forecast sales in the range of 35,000 to 35,986 Class 8 trucks for 2013.

### 12-Month Sales Trends



Truck sales came in above the 2,000 mark for the 15th straight month, reminiscent of the industry's capacity boom years of 2005 to 2007. A worrisome trend, however, is that sales have been declining each month since October and have also been in general decline since the year's high mark of 3,166 back in May.

### Market Share Class 8 – Dec 12 YTD



The sales totals for 2012 now completed, it's time to weed out the winners and losers. Freightliner, last year's Canadian market leader, had a banner year in terms of sales volumes and market share, commanding a quarter of Class 8 sales. Kenworth is in the number two spot for marketshare and enjoying the fact that its strong western network is able to tap into the stronger western economy. But the company faltered in December and ends up with less than 20% market share. Troubled Navistar International finished the year with 14% market share.

Source: Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association

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## Alberta rest areas will stay open thanks to industry lobbying

Continued from page 1

of Hwy. 11; and northbound, just south of Red Deer. The two southbound rest stops will be reviewed by Alberta Transport to see if signage and pavement can be improved to enhance safety, while the northbound site may be relocated as Alberta Transport searches for a safer location. A fourth site (southbound, opposite the Sports Hall of Fame, Red Deer) is still slated for closure.

Alberta Transport says it wanted to close these roadside rest stops because it has concerns over collisions taking place when vehicles merge on and off the highway.

AMTA officials say while they support steps to make accessing rest stop areas safer, they believe there are risks associated with the province failing to provide adequate areas for all motorists to rest and where proper load security checks can take place.

"Providing all road users with places to pull over and take rest breaks when they feel fatigue coming on, is the foundation of keeping the roads safe," says Dan Duckering, president of Duckering's Transport, who attended the recent meeting with Alberta Transport. "While we recognize that the best scenario for all Alberta motorists is the commercial rest areas that allow people to get completely off the road, removing the existing rest areas in the interim, as was proposed, will inevitably increase the number of fatigue related incidents. There are many professional drivers behind the wheel who have

driven 25 or more years accident-free. Their safe driving record is due, in part, to knowing when they need to pull over and rest. Removing places for them to park their big rigs makes the roads less safe for transport drivers and those with whom they share the road."

"Professional transport drivers are among the safest drivers on our roadways because they are in tune with their circadian rhythm," says Rocky Downton of Downton's Transport, who was also in attendance at the meeting. "What sets a commercial driver apart from other motorists is the fact that he or she knows when fatigue is setting in and takes steps to manage it by resting. Reducing rest stops is an enormous step backwards for road safety in Alberta." **TW**

## Feds put \$20M into Deltaport overpass

**DELTA, B.C.** – The Government of Canada will be contributing nearly half of the \$45 million cost for a new overpass on the Deltaport Causeway, part of Port Metro Vancouver's Deltaport Terminal, Road and Rail Improvement Project. The feds will invest up to a maximum of \$19.9 million on the project, which officials are calling "an efficient and cost-effective plan to increase container capacity" at the terminal, while also addressing "some of the transportation pressures port growth has placed on local transportation."

The overpass is designed improve the efficiency, safety and fluidity of traffic to and from the terminal, by eliminating conflicts between rail and truck traffic.

The project involves the construction of a two-lane overpass that will provide grade separation between rail tracks and the Deltaport Causeway access road adjacent to the Deltaport Container Terminal. The grade separation will contribute up to 200,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units) of additional capacity annually at Deltaport. **TW**

## Western provinces harmonize LCV regs

**WINNIPEG, Man.** – The four westernmost provinces in Canada have harmonized rules relating to the operation of long combination vehicles (LCVs).

A Memorandum of Understanding, signed by B.C., Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, creates uniform standards for LCV operation. Specifically, the MOU addresses: weights and dimensions for turnpike doubles; driver qualifications and training; maximum speeds; and hours of operation.

The industry immediately welcomed the changes.

"We are very pleased with this announcement as it will allow many firms, including ours, to operate LCV's more efficiently while reducing their greenhouse gas emissions," said Don Streuber, president and CEO of Bison Transport.

"This is a significant step forward for carriers operating in the west," added MTA executive director Bob Dolyniuk.

"With one set of rules from Manitoba to British Columbia, we have everyone operating on the same playing field, which makes LCV operations that much easier for everyone involved. We look forward to continued work with the other western provincial associations and governments as we move towards our goal of harmonization for other LCV combinations, as well."

"This agreement will benefit our trucking industry because it means big trucks travelling to and from Manitoba will have more consistent requirements including those for weights and dimensions," said Manitoba Transport Minister Steve Ashton. **TW**

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## Canada North Resources Expo coming to B.C. this spring

**PRINCE GEORGE, B.C.** – The first-ever Canada North Resources Expo (CNRE) is coming to Prince George this spring. The event, to be held May 31-June 1, will showcase the leaders and rising stars of the transportation (including air, rail, land and sea modes), forestry, mining, pipelines, energy generation, and oil and gas industries.

“We are so pleased to be the host city for Canada North Resources Expo 2013. As B.C.’s northern capital and the largest supply and service centre for one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, Prince George is the ideal location for this show,” said Heather Oland, CEO of Initiatives Prince George.

“With \$70 billion in resource projects planned and underway in northern B.C. over the next 10 years, there is a lot of business to be done and we look forward to welcoming everyone to Prince George.”

Organizers say the event will focus on the machinery, products, technology, services, talent and manpower needed to get the infrastructure developed, as various “mega-projects” in Northern B.C. ramp up.

Exhibitors actively seeking new talent will feature a “Recruiting Here” sign at their booths. “Visitors are encouraged to come with resume in hand,” event organizers said.

The event will also showcase live equipment demonstrations and a ‘Ride and Drive’ program from Chrysler Canada on-site.

Day two of the event has been dubbed “Future of the Industry Day.” According to organizers, anyone who purchases a regular admission (\$10) on this day or have pre-registered will receive free entry for their families. Attendees who pre-register on the CNRE Web site will receive 50% off the cost of admission.

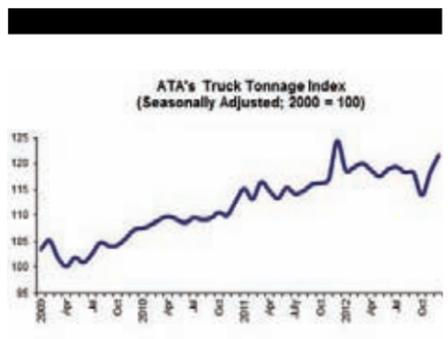
For more information or to register, visit [www.CNRE.ca](http://www.CNRE.ca). **TW**

## 2012 was fourth best year for truck sales

Sales of Class 8 trucks hit 30,586 in 2012, according to data released by the Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association. That made 2012 the fourth best year since 1999 in Class 8 truck sales. The year’s totals were on track to make 2012 the third best year since 1999 but a slowdown in the final quarter nixed that opportunity. The 30,586 trucks sold in Canada were well within our own forecasted estimated range of 30,319 to 31,227.

How do Class 8 sales look for 2013? This year is particularly difficult to forecast because the industry appears to be on a holding pattern in terms of adding capacity. Assuming an eight-year life-cycle for Class 8 trucks (a truck could go through several owners), there are more than 35,000 trucks due for renewal. But many fleet owners are reluctant to purchase trucks that actually add to their fleet size due to concerns about the slow-growing economy.

Our research is also finding a wide gap in purchasing plans based on fleet size. While two thirds of large fleets (100 or more Class 8 vehicles) intend to purchase new trucks in 2013 only 17% of small fleets (five to nine trucks) have similar plans. Balancing the reality that small carriers (which make up three quarters of Canada’s for-hire fleets) won’t be a factor in truck sales along with the fact there are many trucks up for replacement, we are being cautious with this year’s projections. We forecast sales in the range of 35,000-35,986 Class 8 trucks for 2013. **TW**



## US truck tonnage closes 2012 with consecutive gains

**ARLINGTON, Va.** – US for-hire truck tonnage spiked 2.8% in December, on the heels of a revised 3.9% gain in November. The American Trucking Associations For-Hire Truck Tonnage Index closed out the year recording the best consecutive gains of 2012.

However, despite the strong monthly increases, the index was still 2.3% off December 2011 levels, marking the worst year-over-year result since November 2009. For the full year 2012, tonnage was up 2.3% compared to 2011.

“December was better than anticipated in light of the very difficult year-over-year comparison,” ATA chief economist Bob Costello said. In December 2011, the index surged 6.4% from the previous month. Costello anticipates more sluggishness in the index this year, especially early in the year, as the economy continues to face several headwinds.

“As paycheques shrink for all households due to higher taxes, I’m expecting a weak first quarter for tonnage and the broader economy” Costello said. “Since trucks account for the vast majority of deliveries in the retail supply chain, any reduction in consumer spending will have ramifications on truck tonnage levels.” **TW**

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# Low rolling resistance tires work well in winter, study finds

OTTAWA, Ont. – Low rolling resistance (LRR) tires not only improve fuel economy by 4-11%, but they also last as long and perform as well on packed snow as truck tires that are not marketed for low rolling resistance.

Those were the findings of a study from the National Research Councils and Transport Canada, conducted in light of increased market penetration of low rolling resistance tires and complaints from some operators of such tires that they don't perform well on packed snow. Low rolling resistance tires have made considerable inroads into the trucking industry and that trend is likely to continue, thanks to impending EPA and NHTSA rules which will create minimum fuel economy standards beginning in 2014. Canada is set to mirror the US rules with its own requirements, which will

encourage the use of low rolling resistance tires on trucks.

"To comply with the proposed Canadian regulations, it is expected that truck manufacturers and importers will increase the penetration of fuel saving technologies, including LRR tires, to equip on vehicles for sale in Canada," Transport Canada announced when releasing the results of its study. "While some manufacturers, importers and truck owner/operators already equip selected vehicles with LRR tires in Canada, some members within the Canadian trucking industry have expressed concerns that LRR tires may have reduced winter road traction performance compared to non-LRR tires, particularly in snow covered road conditions."

To investigate those concerns, the NRC and Transport Canada engaged

Smithers-Rapra to test a variety of LRR and non-LRR tires in a series of tests including: dynamometer testing; durability testing to FMVSS 119 test procedures; and performance on snow-covered roads on a test track in Kapuskasing, Ont.

Loaded and unloaded trailers were used in straight-line braking tests using five different configurations of SmartWay-verified LRR tires and one configuration using non-LRR tires. Track conditions featured medium- and medium-hard pack snow.

The trial found that: LRR tires provided 29% less rolling resistance than traditional tires; that all LRR and non-LRR tires passed minimum durability requirements, with no discernable difference between the two tire types; and that LRR tires demonstrated comparable levels of snow traction



compared to traditional tires.

"With the exception of the tires that are specifically marketed by their respective manufacturers as a high-traction tire, the results of this preliminary study indicates that the current generation of LRR tires can offer a similar level of snow traction performance as conventional tires, while reducing fuel consumption and emissions," Transport Canada announced.

"Put in the context of Canadian trucking, there are many factors that must be considered when purchasing tires for a tractor and trailer combination. The advent of low rolling resistance tires has given owners and operators one more tire characteristic to consider." TW

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## Canada's LTL sector ripe for consolidation

By Lou Smyrlis

Canada's Less-than-truckload sector is ripe for consolidation, Cormark transportation market analyst David Newman told transportation industry professionals during a webinar on industry trends.

"I think it's going to be a case of who is going to be the first to blink and then we will finally see consolidation. The truckload business is scalable and they've already right-sized. LTL isn't scalable. If you have a case of having to do something about your fixed costs, then that's a case for consolidation," Newman said.

Newman cited TransForce's recent stake in Vitran as indication large players may be getting ready for more than the small, bolt-on type acquisitions that have dominated transportation M&A activity the past couple of years.

Newman, fresh from cross-country visits with Canada's leading carriers, said several large players, such as Contrans and Trimac, are doing extremely well and are in a good position to consolidate the industry.

"Canadian government is certainly trying to prod business to use the dead money in their balance sheets. Companies are well armed with cash, they've gone through the recession, and are a bit older now and certainly valuations look good so if you are going to sell your business, certainly this would be an opportune time. We have a few catalysts for consolidation to happen," he reiterated. In addition to LTL, Newman believes carriers on the tank side of the business may be targets for acquisition. TW

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# Tax tips: Every bit helps

**U**sually, it's easy coming up with topics for this column in March and April. I go to the Canada Revenue Agency Web site, read the "what's new" bulletins, decide what's useful or pertinent to *Truck West* readers, and then translate the CRA gobbledegook into English. I call the column "Tax Talk" and away we go. I'm still calling this column Tax Talk, but it wasn't as easy to write this year. There's less bad news (new taxes) and good news (new deductions) to discuss.

The biggest change on your 2012 tax filing involves contributing to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). As of Jan. 1, 2012, if you are between 60 and 65 and receive CPP benefits while you keep working, you must continue making CPP contributions on your employment or self-employment income. These contributions go toward a new post-retirement benefit (PRB) created for working people who are between 60 and 70 years old.

If you're an employee, you should have reviewed these changes with your employer already. You self-employed folks will experience this change when you file your tax return this year. I covered the PRB in the November 2012 *Truck West*, so I'll refer you to that issue for details. Instead, I want to concentrate on several personal-tax issues

## Tax Talk

Scott Taylor



that generate questions every year:

**Accrual vs. cash:** As a self-employed individual, you report business income by using the accrual method of accounting. You report income in the period you earn it, regardless of when you receive the money. For example, your broker settlement for the period ending Dec. 31 would be December income even though you weren't paid until Jan. 15. Likewise, you deduct expenses in the fiscal period you incur them: ie., your cell phone bill dated Dec. 28 is a December expense even though you paid it in January.

**Pension income splitting:** Pension income earners can save big by splitting their pension income between spouses/common-law partners. With the right ratio, I've seen \$2,000 to \$3,000 refunds come out of this calculation that couples had no idea were there. If you're too young to take a pension, what about your parents or in-laws? Make sure they get their returns done by someone who can calculate this split to their advantage.

**Medical expenses:** These include premiums you or your spouse/common-law partner paid to an insurance company

(not a government body) for medical coverage, along with all your receipts for drugs, eyeglasses, dentistry, hearing aids, and other medical services. If you're self-employed, there may be a tax advantage to listing the premiums as a business expense rather than a medical expense on your return. Check the CRA Web site to see what qualifies.

**Meals:** Meals are deductible at a rate of 50% of \$17 per meal up to three meals per day. As of 2011, 80% of expenses for meals by a long-haul truck driver during an "eligible travel period" are deductible. By definition, an eligible travel period covers at least 24 continuous hours during which a driver is away from his or her home municipality or metropolitan area, and is driving a long-haul truck that transports goods beyond a radius of at least 160 kilometres. Seek tax advice from someone who understands how the rules apply to you and the type of work you do.

**Lodging and showers:** You can deduct lodging and shower expenses, but keep your receipts to support the amount you deduct. Despite what you may hear, there is no logbook/"away-from-home" calculation for showers.

**Cell phones:** You can deduct the portion of the airtime expenses and long-distance charges for a cell phone that reasonably relates to earning income as long as your employer requires you

to have a cell phone (your employer must sign CRA Form T2200-Declaration of Conditions of Employment). However, you can't deduct amounts you paid to connect or license the cell phone or the cost of fees for Internet service.

**GST370:** This calculation allows you to reclaim GST/HST paid within your employment expenses. If you travel coast-to-coast in Canada and the US, you need to prorate your meal claim so you claim GST out of the meals from GST provinces, HST from HST provinces, and, of course, zero GST for meals paid for in the US. Your cell phone bills will also contain GST/HST and can be added into this calculation.

**Children Fitness/Arts amount:** You can claim up to \$500 per child for fees paid in 2012 relating to the cost of registration or membership in a physical activity. Also, you can claim up to \$500 per child for fees paid in 2012 relating to the cost of registration or membership in an "artistic, cultural, recreational, or developmental" activity. Hey, every little bit helps.

That's the point. The best tax tip I can offer is that while taxes are one of the few sure things in life, you can reduce what you're obligated to pay. It takes sound advice, a little discipline, and good planning throughout the year, but it's worth the effort. **TW**

Scott Taylor is v.p. of TFS Group, providing accounting, bookkeeping, tax return preparation, and other business services for O/Os. Learn more at [www.tfsgroup.com](http://www.tfsgroup.com) or call 800-461-5970.



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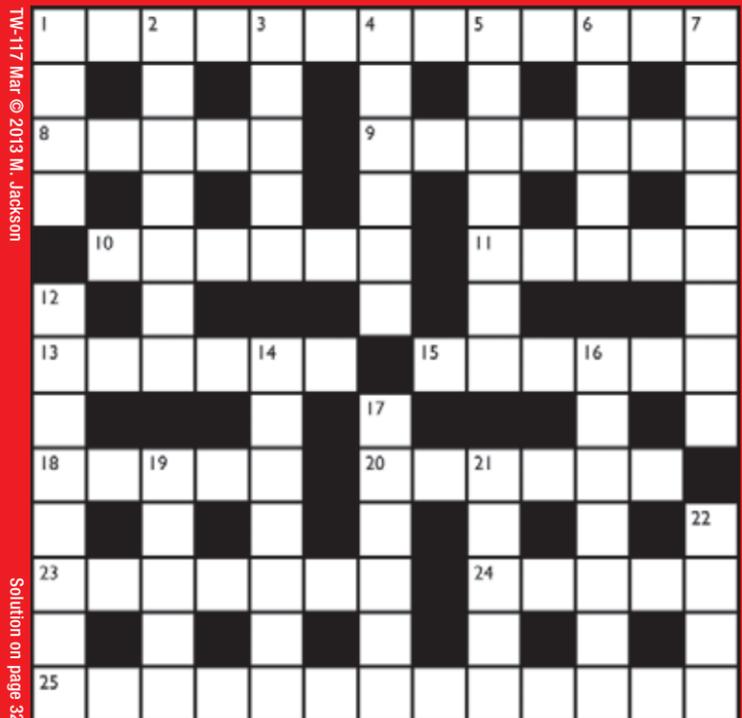


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## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



TW-117 Mar © 2013 M. Jackson

Solution on page 32

### Across

- 1 Occupying cab's passenger seat (6,7)
- 8 Air-brake-system component
- 9 Exceed safe engine RPM
- 10 Words seen on really dirty rig (4,2)
- 11 Camel convoy's desert rest area
- 13 Sun-shielding windshield accessories
- 15 "The Last Frontier" plates' home
- 18 Speed-trap gun
- 20 New-truck upgrade item
- 23 Critical engine-lube component (3,4)
- 24 Radio code for R
- 25 Truck-stop offering, often (7,6)

### Down

- 1 Hitchhiker's hope
- 2 Tractors without sleepers (3,4)
- 3 Up, on road map
- 4 Cop, slangily
- 5 Crude cartel commodity (4,3)
- 6 Mud-flap \_\_\_\_\_, comely chrome silhouettes
- 7 International Truck's parent company
- 12 Exceed rated weight capacity
- 14 Detour traffic
- 16 "Smokey and the Bandit" trucker's handle
- 17 Certain sedans
- 19 Ontario's "Heart of Tobacco Country" town
- 21 Power-boosting engine adjunct
- 22 Michelin super-single tire (1,3)

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Journalists participating in a road test of the new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter encountered some interesting traffic along the way. The cargo van performed surprisingly well in the frigid temperatures.

# Sprint to the Arctic

Can one of the smallest commercial vehicles withstand the harshest of environments?

**I**t's about -38 C when the diesel-powered auxiliary heater fires up automatically at 7 a.m. near Tok, Alaska.

An hour, and about 0.6 litres of diesel fuel later, we climb into the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter to see if it will start. It does, but it also doesn't like it. The 3.0-litre turbodiesel sputters and coughs and needs a fair bit of throttle to get going, but it passes this, its most serious test of its winter ability on our drive from Edmonton to Anchorage.

This is the last of our five-day adventure: It's been an exhilarating, at times harrowing, journey along most of the Alaska Highway.

We've had a dip in the Liard River hot springs in northern British Columbia - changing in a dark, unheated dressing room at -20 C and trudging barefoot through ankle-deep snow - eaten schnitzel at the beautiful, hospitable Northern Rockies Lodge in nearby Muncho Lake, B.C. and been blown away by the haute cuisine at Skky Hotel in Whitehorse.

Today, we're leaving Tok, which is about halfway from the Alaska-Canada border to the western end of the Alaska Highway at Delta Junction. The cabin of this particular short-wheelbase cargo van Sprinter variant isn't exactly shirt-sleeves temperature, but it's comfortable enough we can shed our toques and gloves. About 20 min-

## Light-Duty Report

Kelly Taylor



utes of driving later, we're shedding layer after layer as the cab heats up.

Others on this sprint to Alaska aren't so lucky. The van we're driving has a partition between the cabin and cargo area, and our small space heats up to near-sauna levels in a hurry. A few of the other vans are either cargo variants without a rear cabin wall or are passenger versions,

also without partitions. An hour into this trip from Tok and the people in these vans are still cold.

There is also a crew van version that seats five and has ample cargo room, handy for taking work crews and gear to a job site. Partition options on all but passenger vans include a solid wall, a wall with a window and a sliding door.

Mercedes-Benz may seem like an odd supplier of cargo vans, given that until 2010, we in Canada knew it only as a luxury brand.

But in Europe, Mercedes-Benz is a full-line vehicle manufacturer, from tiny micro cars all the way up

to large, heavy-duty cargo haulers. Its experience in building cargo vehicles stretches all the way back to 1896 and Gottlieb Daimler's Motor-Lastwagen.

Will the hoity-toity image of Mercedes hurt Sprinter sales? Time will tell, but they're already at 7,000 units sold in Canada, with countless others operating here after having been bought in the US by American parent companies.

After five days in the arctic hinterland, it's easy to see why Sprinter is gaining in popularity. The auxiliary heater, which is standard but in our vans is operated by an optional programmable timer (\$250), ensures a toasty cabin and an engine full of hot coolant. There are handy touches that professional drivers will appreciate, from a bounty of cargo bins and storage trays to a comfortable driving position with a host of adjustments, including seat height, tilt steering wheel and adjustable tilt on the seat cushion.

There are also bits about Sprinter to please the company accountant: high resale value, extended 25,000-kilometre service intervals and excellent fuel efficiency. Our best average was 11.3 litres per 100 kms, on the second day when we had temperatures around -10 C and we weren't idling for extended periods. Mercedes pegs the fuel costs at 13 cents per kilometre, six cents less than the nearest competitor. Resale value after five years is, according to Canadian Black Book, 32%, also best-in-class.

How did we like the Sprinter after 3,176 kilometres from Edmonton to Anchorage? Well, it handled treacherous winter conditions admirably, starting every day with nary a hitch and tracking easily on icy, hilly, twisty roads. The tires, Continental Cross-Contact winter skins, certainly helped.

The stability control worked in all conditions, even on that -38 C day in Tok. What I appreciated about the stability control is that it was smart enough that if you caught a slide early and corrected appropriately, it let you do the work. If you didn't, it took its direction from you - based on where you were steering - to set the vehicle back on track.

It's also adaptive, so it behaves differently when the van is empty, when it's loaded, and when it's loaded unevenly. It even saves you from loads that greatly increase the vehicle's centre of gravity.

There were a few opportunities for improvement: The driver's seat, while adjustable in many ways, lacked lumbar support. As well, Bluetooth hands-free is available, but not standard. As distracted-driving laws continue to increase, that might be an oversight. As mentioned, cabin heat was an issue on vans without a closed passenger compartment and the longer wheelbase vans were tossed around pretty good by sidewinds.

Sprinter comes as a cargo van and a passenger van in two wheelbases, three lengths and three roof heights. There's also a 2500-series chassis cab dually that can be upfitted to every thing from an ambulance to an RV to a mobile kitchen. **TW**

*Kelly Taylor is a veteran automobile journalist and a recipient of the Journalist of the Year award by the Automobile Journalists' Association of Canada.*



# Achieving a healthy lifestyle begins with an aspiration

I closed off my February column with a commitment to share some thoughts about how I keep myself motivated to exercise and eat right while dealing with the rigors of the trucking lifestyle. I started laughing at myself over this.

After all, I'm a truck driver, not some sort of motivational guru. There is no sugarcoating the fact that it is as hard as hell to put in all the hours we put in as professional drivers and still find the time to exercise and prepare healthy meals. The availability of time, or lack of it, is most often cited by drivers as the reason we don't take better care of ourselves. I don't disagree with that statement at all. It's a fact.

The irony is that successful professional drivers possess the personal traits required to create the time in their lives to make that lifestyle change. Professional drivers are self starters, they have the ability to plan and organize, they have the ability to solve problems as they arise, they are able to roll with the punches, they are patient, they are tenacious, and they possess a high level of commitment.

I can share three things with you



Over the road

Al Goodhall

that I have learned since I smoked my last cigarette in the fall of 2000 and kicked off my quest to improve the quality of my life. These are not mind-blowing ideas or practices. I haven't developed some sort of revolutionary health plan. To me these three things are just common sense.

- I have maintained an aspiration to make healthy choices and practices a priority in my life;
- I have an ongoing and flexible plan to adopt those healthy choices and practices;
- And I have developed a support network to help me stay focused on those healthy choices and practices.

So, you see I don't have any big motivational secret or quick fix solution to the health challenges we face every day as professional drivers. In effect, I don't allow my personal health and well-being to be less important than the freight I handle every day.

When I started, it didn't look this simple or straightforward to me. It was a messy struggle that started with a deep desire for change.

I often say there is no point trying to make a change in your life if you don't want to change. It's why I use the word 'aspiration' and not 'goal' or 'objective.' To aspire to change speaks to an emotional need, a passion, an ambition, a deep desire. It's often a significant emotional event you have experienced that triggers the deep desire to make a change in your life. For me it was a noticeable decline in my health between the ages of 38 and 40. I described myself at that time as a train wreck just waiting to happen.

I possessed, and practiced, all the high-risk factors associated with heart disease. I believed then that if I didn't make a change I'd be lucky to make it to retirement. It was a very emotional time for me. I think it was the first time I had come face to face with my own mortality. So this is where my aspiration to make healthy choices and practices a priority in my life comes from. It is a very powerful source of motivation for me. It's a place I have left behind and will never go back to.

So when it comes to your health and well-being, what is your greatest aspiration? Forget about how you would accomplish it at the moment, forget about goal setting and planning. Don't think about having to exercise or quit smoking or change your eating habits. Put those thoughts aside for the moment. Just picture yourself five to 10 years down the road.

How do you picture yourself? What would you have to change in your daily life to meet that aspiration? The answer is different for each one of us. It takes a lot of introspection, a lot of time being brutally honest with yourself to answer those questions. It's not comfortable for most of us to do. It's far easier to leave your life on cruise and wait until you run into something.

But having a lifelong aspiration is the 'Big Idea' and it won't resolve all the issues you face in the daily grind of a driver's life, or any life for that matter.

That's where devising a flexible plan and developing a support network comes in. This is where you do all the hard work, especially at first. The trick I learned is not to try to do too much, not to set your sights too high. Slow and steady wins the race when it comes to forming new habits. More on this next month. **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 [Twitter.com/Al\\_Goodhall](http://Twitter.com/Al_Goodhall).

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Delta police were initially caught off-guard by the unusual request from a trucking company to have inspectors come over for a look at its equipment, but the arrangement worked well for both parties.

Photo by The Delta Optimist

# Come on in, have a look

Continued from page 1

doing an inspection, it won't be good."

His request granted, McGee sent the truck over for the inspection, which it passed. Precedent set, they did this a couple more times, leading to a situation in which "when it came time for the random inspections - the big blitzes that they do - they wouldn't touch our guys because they knew they'd already been inspected and they're good to go."

Once ensconced in the centre seat at Harbour Link Container Services, McGee thought about taking the idea to the next step: scheduling inspections for the whole fleet, on-site.

"Instead of them getting stuck for an hour-and-a-half inspection for both the truck and the trailer and then, if there's any out-of-service issues, you have to worry about your load," he explained, "we just took a proactive stance, and made sure that the proper pre-trips and post-trips were done, that the driver maintained the equipment, that his brakes were set all the time. We just went really hardcore to ensure we weren't stuck at any roadside inspections, and that if we were, it was quick and easy."

Delta police were once again a tad bemused, but, said McGee, "We met a couple of times and expressed what our intent was - I think they were caught a bit off-guard by our request - but they thought about it and talked to the superintendent and then came back and said they'd do it."

The inspections were done over a three-day period, and were the same full-meal deal they could expect from a roadside pull-over.

"We had the jacks on-site," McGee said, "and went through the whole process with them, very thorough inspections to the point where if there was

something they thought didn't look quite right but it wasn't yet at the point where it would be illegal, they'd give us a chance to fix it right away before they let the truck go."

One might think that such a comprehensive inspection regime would wreak havoc on the facility, as well as costing the company money by taking trucks off the road for the duration. McGee, however, said the balancing act wasn't as precarious as one might think.

"We're fortunate enough that we have a fairly large fleet," he said, "and the week they came in wasn't an extremely busy week."

How it worked was that when a truck would come into the yard, it was placed next in line for inspection.

**'It gave us the opportunity to see what issues we had to pay attention to.'**

**Tim McGee, Harbour Link**

"We didn't pre-select any of the equipment because we wanted to get a really true picture of where we stood," McGee said, "and so we made sure the guys didn't know what was happening so it would be a fair inspection. We didn't separate any of our lease/operators from our company trucks; they all got inspected, whatever was available at the time the bay was empty."

And there were a couple of issues discovered, though nothing serious. "We ran into some minor issues that were brought to our attention, both our equipment and the trucks," McGee said, "but there were no out-of-service issues."

Which, in itself, was actually good news. "It gave us the opportunity to see what issues we had to pay attention to, and so now it's part of our program," McGee added.

It worked out pretty well for the police, too.

"What they did was create an opportunity for us to go in, work with the business itself, inspect the trucks and give them recommendations around what needed repairs," said Const. Ciaran Feenan, media relations officer for the Delta Police. "I do know they had some vehicles that needed attention, but there was nothing major."

McGee said the police dedicated three officers "to give us a hand and they saw just as many trucks in that three days as they would at the scale or sitting on the side of the road."

They not only went over the hardware with a fine-toothed comb, they got involved with the people, too.

"They provided a lot of insight," McGee said, "and the best part was that they used the time when they were doing the inspections with the drivers to really educate them about making sure their brakes are properly set and small things that an average driver

wouldn't necessarily normally catch."

Feenan agreed. "What it did was allow us to go and build relationships, talk about the issues and just make an awareness about what (the inspectors) do."

Once the inspections were completed, the inspection team also spent some time with Harbour Link's management team, apprising them of "what they found, what needed to be repaired, what was borderline and needed to be looked at soon," McGee said.

The whole ball of wax was part of Harbour Link's commitment to living and doing business in Delta in the best way possible.

"Delta's a fairly small community and the way we look at it is that we're a community trucking company," McGee said.

"We run the streets of Delta, we run back and forth to Deltaport, our facility is located in Delta. We're one of Vancouver's larger drayage companies, servicing all four ports and the two rail facilities and with the number of trucks we have on the roads - and knowing that our families are on the road as well - we want to ensure that if something were to happen, that we know we did our best to ensure that it wasn't one of our trucks that was involved."

That, of course, fits right in with the police's mandate.

"One of our strategic goals with the Delta Police Department is to have the safest roads in B.C.," Feenan said. "We have a large trucking contingency that comes through our roads and our highways every day and so, by having initiatives like this, we're able to be proactive and preventative at the same time to ensure safety on our roads."

With one such inspection extravaganza under his belt, McGee is hopeful they can do it again. "We've talked about it," he said, "and depending on the Delta Police at the time, that'll determine if they want to participate again. I hope they will continue on and make it a once-a-year-type thing. We're trying to be as proactive as we can."

And it looks as if the "Delta Force" is up for the mutually beneficial challenge. "Certainly, if they felt they needed (it), we would be more than happy to work with them," said Feenan. "It's one of those community-based policing initiatives where we want work with the community."

Is this an idea whose time has come - even to the point where such inspections could become mandatory? "Certainly, at this point, it's a voluntary kind of agreement," said Feenan, noting that their strategy isn't going to change going forward, at least for the foreseeable future.

"We'll run the commercial vehicle inspection initiative here in Delta in April, which we always do," he noted, "where we work with a collaborative unit of multijurisdictional agencies in and around road safety in Delta. So this is just another initiative that our commercial vehicle unit is trying to be proactive with."

As for whether any other companies are looking toward taking such proactive measures in the meantime, Feenan said, "Any of the companies within Delta, in terms of our community, are more than welcome to be proactive in their businesses and have a commercial vehicle unit come out and inspect their trucks." **TW**

# It's time to get a handle on emissions-related breakdowns

**I**would like to use this column as a way of sharing some of the things I've learned over the years, mostly about improving fuel economy and lowering maintenance and operating costs.

Coming from the UK, where diesel fuel is extremely expensive and rates are low, it's a subject dear to my heart.

I've done extensive research, had many hours of training from industry experts and put a lot of what I've learned into practice, so it would be very simple to hit the keyboard and e-mail the results to the editor - money for old rope, really.

However, I just can't. Something always comes up that changes things and there seems to be a pattern to that something. Yes, you've guessed it, emissions. Or to be more accurate, the failure of the emission control systems on modern trucks.

A good friend of mine runs a trucking company with 20 trucks. His fleet is all under three years old, with the exception of a couple city trucks. If you knew nothing about modern trucks and listened to this guy talk, you would think he was jinxed or was paying the price

**You say tomato  
I say tomahto**

Mark Lee



for misdemeanors in a previous life. In the last six months there has not been a single week where he has had his whole fleet out on the road earning money. Some weeks a quarter of the fleet is in a shop somewhere in North America and every single problem is somehow related to EGR, the DPF or SCR.

As I write these words, he has three trucks off the road. These three trucks have been off the road for over a week. Two of them had spent a week in the shop before this visit too.

One of them had a new SCR system fitted and was off the road for a week. It then went 1,200 miles before shutting down, this time with a DPF fault.

It needs a complete new DPF system fitted; the only problem is that there are only two available in North America, one in Chicago, the other in Canada. The truck, meanwhile, sits in Texas.

The second truck also needs a new DPF system, despite having a new one

fitted the previous week. It is currently on day seven in the shop and the light at the end of the tunnel is conspicuous by its absence.

The third truck has SCR issues, so far three days in and the shop has gotten as far as diagnosing that it has SCR issues, but they do not know the specifics. I've spoken to all three drivers and they tell me they are not alone, there are other drivers in the same position at each of the dealerships.

And to make matters even worse, each of the trucks has a different brand of engine. Two different truck manufacturers are involved too, so these problems are not isolated. In my opinion, the whole EGR, DPF, SCR thing is a disaster. Worse still is the sad fact that not only are there big problems with the systems, when they do go wrong, nobody seems to know how to put them right. They keep throwing parts at the problem hoping that it will go away.

And to add insult to injury, the parts are never in stock, in one case last year at this specific company a truck was waiting for parts for three weeks.

Out of the 15 new trucks, not one of them has been trouble-free. Two have needed engines rebuilt with less than

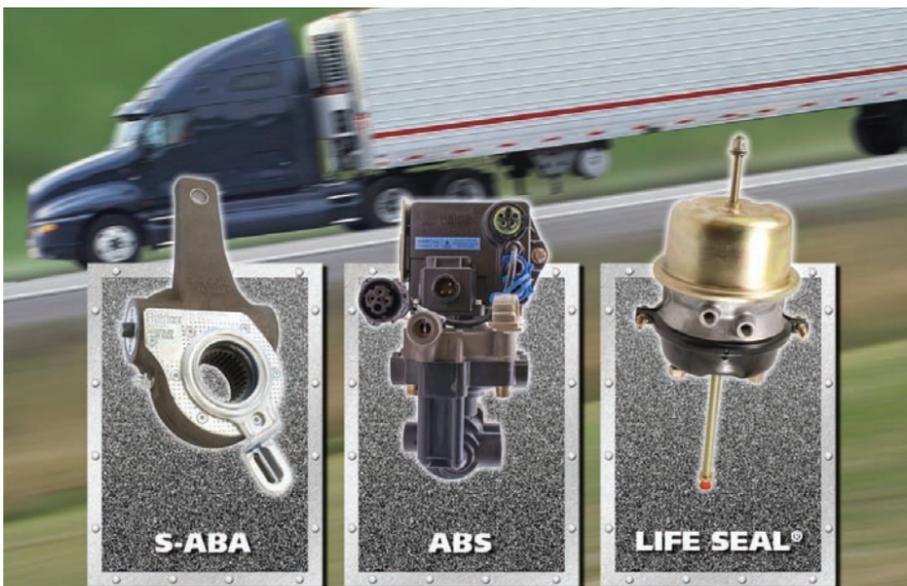
300,000 miles on them, both caused by EGR cooler failure which led to excessive bearing wear caused by coolant in the oil. These two are part of a batch of three trucks that are pre-SCR. The third one is suffering from low oil pressure, a sure sign of bearing wear.

The only good thing about any of this is that the work is all covered under warranty. The loss of earnings, lay-over pay and hotel bills are not, and this sorry saga is having a major effect on my friend's business. He did have plans for expansion, the work is there, but he doesn't want any more headaches than he already has, so no more trucks will be added in the near future.

Not until somebody, somewhere, can get a grip on these malfunctioning emissions control systems and he can send a truck down the road, confident it will be able to return without spending a week in the shop along the way.

Now to finish on a positive note, he has four trucks that are trouble-free, the two city trucks, which are old over-the-road tractors with the bunks removed. They have pre-emission engines and he also has two gliders with pre-emission engines: no EGR, no DPF, no SCR, no breakdowns. A coincidence? I think not. **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. You can read his blog at [www.brandtruck.com/blog](http://www.brandtruck.com/blog)*



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By Adam Ledlow

The stunning collapse in the value of many Internet companies near the turn of the century – known as the burst of the “dot-com bubble” – had far-reaching consequences, with many still being felt to this day. The most obvious was the stock market crash and the recession that followed in the early 2000s, but another was a tendency to be wary, if not outright dismissive, of new Web-based programs and platforms. Many companies were burned during the boom period, and were damned if they were going to let it happen again.

Emerging in the years immediately following the dot-com burst was a new form of online interaction, which eventually came to be known as social media. Today, social media, via channels such as Facebook and Twitter, is still victim to that post-boom wariness, struggling to find universal acceptance as a business tool in a number of industries, including trucking.

Though it's been hailed by some as one of the most important trends in business over the last decade, social media is still at loggerheads with a number of detractors, who label it as fad at best and a complete waste of time at worst. And for many trucking companies, the lack of perceived benefits of social media has been enough for them to avoid the online party altogether.

“Most trucking company CEOs cannot see the value in social media except for some very specific purposes (ie. driver recruitment),” says Dan Goodwill, president of Dan Goodwill & Associates.

Here in North America, research from Palmer Marketing indicates that Canadian trucking companies are even less enthused about social media than their American counterparts. Jerry Popowicz, director of Internet strategy at Palmer, says there are likely two major factors as to why US trucking companies have a greater social media presence than those in Canada – and both boil down to size.

With US trucking companies making up roughly 90% of the largest for-hire carriers in North America, many trucking companies don't have the manpower necessary to put a forward-thinking marketing department in place, says Popowicz.

“Bigger companies also have bigger marketing budgets and there are only two Canadian companies that crack the top 30 for-hire carrier list in North America,” he told *Truck West*. “TransForce, which is the largest Canadian company on the list, doesn't have a social media strategy in place, and because it has many divisions under its umbrella, suffers from marketing fragmentation. Many Canadian carriers just don't spend enough on marketing because of budget, so even if they have a forward-thinking marketing department, they just don't have the money.”

But Popowicz says that the sluggish adoption of social media is far from limited to the trucking industry. “Companies that are focused on the consumer have adopted social media in much greater numbers than B2B-focused organizations, so I don't think that slow adoption is exclusive to the trucking industry,” he said.

# Late for the party



Canadian trucking companies have been slow to adopt social media into their business plans. Will a changing industry convince fleets to finally ‘get social’?

## Turning the tide

But the tide appears to be turning. The annual Best Fleets to Drive For competition, put on by the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) and CarriersEdge, identifies for-hire trucking companies that provide the best workplace experiences for their drivers. CarriersEdge president Mark Murrell says there has been a marked shift in trucking company attitudes about social media since the program began.

“In the 2009 edition of the program (the first year), the words ‘Facebook’ and ‘Twitter’ do not appear in any fleet report or driver survey at all – no one using, discussing, or even asking about them,” Murrell told *Truck West*. “In 2013, close to two-thirds of the participating fleets were actively using some form of social media.”

One such fleet is Saskatoon, Sask.-based Yanke Group of Companies, an avid social media user and – perhaps not coincidentally – the only fleet in North America to make the Best Fleets to Drive For list in all five years since the program began.

Yanke first dipped its toe in the social media pool about two years ago, in

an effort to – as social media manager Carlene Deutscher puts it – present itself as a “leader in the industry and (stay) on top of technology.”

Deutscher admits that Yanke's main goal at the outset was to harness social media's recruitment possibilities, “but it didn't take long for us to realize that it was an excellent way to communicate and engage with our professional transport operators. We noticed that their family members enjoyed being able to keep up to date with that was going on, either on the road or in the office. We had operators commenting that they liked being able to look at pictures and finally know what the voice at the end of the phone looked like. It's almost like our social media platforms were being used to further bond and unite our employees.”

Despite having but two years of experience under its belt, Yanke's social media reach is extensive, using some of best-known platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube, in addition to Prezi (for dynamic presentations), SurveyMonkey (for internal surveys), MailChimp (for newsletters), as well as a forthcoming corporate blog in 2013, which will include content from

members across the Yanke universe including dispatchers, drivers, and multimodal and executive staff.

“We're engaged into the world of social media and are always watching and anticipating the next trend,” Deutscher says.

Another trend-setting trucking company is Oakville, Ont.-based Caravan Logistics, which confirmed its need to integrate social media into the company's business plan after reading a *Truck West* article two years ago (*The new social network, cover story, January 2011, Truck West*).

“Social media was becoming a large part of daily life, and conversations were happening about the industry and us. Caravan Logistics was not listening or being heard,” said Sonia Merena, marketing and public relations, Caravan Logistics.

Not wanting to be left out of the conversation any longer, Caravan launched its social media initiative two years ago, hoping to create a source of two-way communication between the company, its drivers and the general public.

“Facebook has helped to strengthen the bond between office staff and our professional drivers; creating a space for drivers, office staff, and the general public to interact and ask questions, provide answers or share personal experiences while on the road,” Merena says.

“Our Facebook fans share a lot of great and personal moments with us and we love it. Fans share their memorable moments or special occasions, such as their wedding pictures with a Caravan Logistics truck or announce their engagements or baby news.”

Merena says even the owners are actively engaged in Caravan's Facebook page, writing feedback or liking photos posted by others. “It's all about sharing and contributing; one big social media family.”

An extension of its Facebook page, Caravan's Twitter account has been an outlet to communicate with potential customers and find sales leads, but mostly targets the general public, allowing them to write comments or questions directed at the company.

“It is very important to know what is going on in the community and to let people know that you care about their opinions, especially with the environmental push and the size of your trucks,” Merena says.

## Smaller fleets more ‘social’

While Palmer Marketing's research revealed that Canadian trucking companies are less likely to engage in social media than US-based firms, it also found that bigger companies lag behind smaller ones.

“Bigger fleets are run by committees, and this sometimes becomes a barrier to quickly putting a proper marketing strategy in place,” says Palmer's Popowicz.

“If you're an owner of a smaller fleet and are in tune with online marketing trends, you will be more likely to implement them on your own, and much quicker within your organization, as the sole decision-maker.”

One company bucking this trend is Winnipeg's Bison Transport, one of the largest for-hire carriers in Canada. After being involved in social media on

Continued on page 18

# Canadian trucking companies lacking social media strategy: Palmer survey

Continued from page 17

“a limited basis” for the past few years, Bison expanded its activities “in a strategic way” in 2012, creating “well-defined goals for all platforms” in the process, says corporate marketing manager, Lionel Johnston.

Now active on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube, Johnston says the company’s main objectives are to “communicate our brand, provide customer service, share career opportunities and to provide a forum for discussion.”

With an increase in Facebook fans, more engagement on Twitter, and

trackable conversion rates towards its Web site, Johnston says Bison has certainly seen successes since making its foray into social media, but cautions companies still on the fence to consider their approach carefully before venturing forward.

“For the companies that dismiss social media, they likely have either not tried it yet, or tried it without a proper strategy,” he says.

And the lack of a proper social media strategy seems to be something of an epidemic for Canadian trucking companies. According to an internal survey conducted by Palmer Marketing, of the

top 30 largest Canadian carriers, 40% have a Facebook business page, but only 10% of those companies seem to have an actual Facebook strategy in place.

“The amount of total ‘likes’ for all of those companies is well under 5,000, which is a very low number, and speaks to the opportunities available for Canadian transportation companies,” says Popowicz.

“While most companies have a LinkedIn page, only a handful (33%) utilize it for recruiting, brand or company awareness, or communicating the company’s value proposition. Twitter seems to be the least active social media platform

among this group, with the engagement level being at 30%.”

Goodwill says that in order for trucking companies to be successful, they must have a social media strategy with a clear focus and objectives.

“The social media tools one uses should be matched up against the objectives. Is the objective to obtain sales leads? Then one needs to offer some sort of white paper that requires the completion of an online form. This can be done by writing a blog on certain topics and showing expertise in an area,” Goodwill says. “If the objective is to use the media for recruiting, LinkedIn and Facebook can be very useful. Metrics can include quality sales leads, prospective candidates for jobs, Twitter followers, etc.”

“Companies need to look at social media as a marketing channel, just like they view the traditional channels of print, radio, TV, etc.,” adds Popowicz.

He points to a driver recruiting campaign using social media as an example. “It would probably be a lot less expensive, but more effective than doing recruiting through a traditional marketing channel. We have clients that have successfully recruited drivers from a Facebook recruitment campaign, by using targeted advertising.”

CarriersEdge’s Murrell says multiple fleets from the Best Fleets to Drive For program are reporting that they’ve hired appreciable numbers of drivers and owner/operators directly through Facebook – with some attracting upwards of 25% of their new hires via the platform.

Popowicz points to LinkedIn as another great networking platform that, in addition to helping companies build their business and promote their brand, is also good for management-level recruitment.

## Social media wariness is waning

While some Canadian fleets have been slow to join the social media party, dismissive attitudes towards social media in general are waning in the industry, with most carriers focusing less on if they should be getting involved and more on how to get involved most effectively.

For Montreal, Que.-based carrier Trans-West, an ardent social media user across a variety of platforms, making social media part of company culture is “imperative” to the industry’s future success.

“The labour shortage in the transport sector is alarming. To address this issue, it is imperative that we listen to the current generation of truck drivers. Our long-haul drivers are using new technologies more and more in their professional and personal lives, both on the road and at home,” says Trans-West social media coordinator, Sophie Jacob.

“Making optimal use of these tools and our presence on the Web allows us to communicate better with drivers, regardless of the platform used. Being attentive and accessible, and providing meaningful exchanges are indispensable if we want to maintain fruitful relationships with the drivers of today and tomorrow.

“The high participation rates and the comments we receive from our long-haul drivers confirm to us that these new means of communication are here to stay.” TW

## Before we begin...

If you’re now ready to make social media part of your business plan going forward, consider these points from Dan Goodwill, president of Dan Goodwill & Associates before – and shortly after – you get started:

- Before you jump in, take some time every day to read tweets from certain people whom you respect.
- Find out what is being said about your company in social media.
- Join a few LinkedIn groups that are directly related to particular areas of interest.
- When someone asks a question that you can answer well, do so. Demonstrate expertise.

- Watch grammar and punctuation. Poorly written tweets, posts and blogs are a direct reflection on you and your company.

- Figure out a strategy to highlight where your company has a definite expertise. Reinforce that expertise by helping potential clients cover a load or move a truck. People and companies get noticed, not by sending out promotional e-mails, but by demonstrating expertise, by being positive and helpful.

- There is no point in setting up a Twitter or LinkedIn page and then waiting for people to come to you. They won’t. TW

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# Focus on yard security will ensure nothing 'falls off the truck'

**Y**ou know cargo theft must be a problem in the trucking industry when stolen goods are described as something that "falls off a truck." It might be more accurate to say some of the goods simply roll through the front gate. A 2011 study on behalf of the Canadian Trucking Alliance – and sponsored in part by Northbridge Insurance – valued cargo theft as a \$5-billion-a-year problem. And much of that cargo is on-board trailers stolen directly from fleet yards.

## Ask the Experts

Evelyn Cartmill



The threat hardly ends with high-value products like liquor, automotive parts, and video games. Thieves have recently been targeting everything from diapers to produce because the goods can be quickly divided, sold and consumed. The ill-gotten gains often move into the black market before anyone

receives a call about their abandoned, empty trailers sitting on a back road.

Still, it is possible to secure a fleet yard and send discouraged thieves searching for other targets. A well-maintained fence will be an important feature when protecting any site, but even that can be enhanced by limiting the number of entrances and exits, and including gates with electronic locks which open only with a key fob. Live security personnel or other fleet staff can check every driver in and out of the yard, and block any load that is not scheduled to leave.

Landscaping will make a difference on

its own. A few well-constructed earthen berms or strategically placed rocks can keep thieves from cutting through the fence in a secluded area of a yard, driving through the opening, and coupling up to their trailer of choice.

And a few extra lights and security cameras around the yard can serve as both a deterrent and a crime-fighting tool. Even if a load is still targeted, a well-aimed camera will offer a clear view of every vehicle plate and driver's face, while a 30-day recording can be used to spot any unusual activities that occurred before the cargo was actually stolen.

Trailers that must be parked on their own can be secured with products ranging from kingpin locks to electronic tracking technologies. Some options will just offer a bigger deterrent than others. For example, a poorly constructed kingpin lock might shatter under the force of a fifth wheel; cone-shaped designs can keep jaws from actually aligning with the pin. But cargo thefts tend to be more than crimes of opportunity. Thieves who are looking for specific freight need to steal information long before they hook up to a trailer.

The details about a load can be shared innocently enough. Drivers have been known to brag about their cargo during lunches at a truck stop. Inside a fleet office, the member of a contracted cleaning crew may thumb their way through the records dumped in a recycling bin rather than being carted away to a shredder.

Another member of the staff might take the opportunity to peek at the bills of lading that were stacked on a counter rather than being secured in a filing cabinet. Once armed with the right information, thieves can focus their attention well beyond a fleet yard, whether the trailer is parked at a closed strip plaza or in the far reaches of a massive truck stop. Fleets can help to protect against these thefts by informing drivers about secure yards that are available along a planned route. Orientation programs also offer a great chance to inform new drivers about security protocols that should be followed at home and on the road.

Consider how something as simple as parking techniques can make a difference. Trailers that are parked back to back, with the barn doors facing each other, will be harder to unload in a hurry. And a trailer coupled to a tractor will always be harder to steal than a unit with an exposed kingpin. Dispatchers have their own role to play when protecting the freight. Rather than arranging for a high-value load to be picked up and stored in a fleet yard for several days, they can try to schedule a pick-up when the cargo actually needs to move.

Another option is to unload the contents of an unsealed trailer into a secure warehouse. Or maybe a consignee will accept the freight earlier than expected. These may seem like small steps, but they can all play an important role in protecting the cargo under your care and control. **TW**

*This month's expert is Evelyn Cartmill, risk services specialist. She has served the trucking industry for over 15 years in the areas of human resources, safety and compliance. Northbridge Insurance is a leading Canadian commercial insurer built on the strength of four companies with a long-standing history in the marketplace and has been serving the trucking industry for more than 60 years.*

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# Clean air standards caught in Canadian jurisdictional limbo

**T**he heavy truck air quality regulations culminating in the 2010 “smog-free” truck engines have been heralded by governments and industry alike as among the most important clean air initiatives in history.

The regulations (which were introduced in the US and Canada) have been credited with reducing the incidence of asthma and lung cancer. They are held out as an example of international cooperation and harmonization.

Getting there was no easy feat. In order to comply with the law, engine manufacturers invested billions of dollars in research and testing. Customers paid an “environmental premium” on the purchase price for the new equipment. They also saw fuel economy decrease (a trade-off for cleaner air) and maintenance costs rise.

These additional costs were and are painful. But, most people in the industry have taken the view that the emissions standards are the right thing to do – for the planet, for our children; and, ultimately for the industry which has for too long been a convenient whipping boy and easy



## Industry Issues

David Bradley

target for environmentalists and politicians.

The pain that individual companies felt was mitigated in part by the fact that everyone was supposed to be in the same boat; that your competitor was going to have the same challenges as you in trying to get your customers to pay more to cover the increased costs. It was supposed to be a collective pain.

However, there are always those who will seek to get a leg up on everyone else by trying to find a way around the rules. By now most people in the trucking industry have at least heard about the repair shops and garages that seem quite happy to dismantle or otherwise tamper with the new trucks’ air quality controls for a fee. Some of the people involved in this activity are doing so on the quiet, under the noses of the regulators. Others are more brazen and are taking out advertisements

or promoting their “service” on the Web – in plain view of the regulators.

Surely, the regulators – especially Environment Canada, which introduced the regulations in the first place – don’t want to see people tampering with the engines in a blatant attempt to get around the emissions standards. Surely, they have some mechanism for actually enforcing their own law. You think?

When CTA brought this issue to Environment Canada’s attention, we thought they’d be all over it. Instead, we were told that the regulations do not apply to modifications to vehicles after their first retail sale – even though it is acknowledged what these shops are doing affects emission performance, it falls under provincial/territorial jurisdiction.

So, CTA’s next step was to contact the provincial departments and ministries of transportation and offer to work with them to develop a strategy to target those facilities that are circumventing the emissions standards. It took some time, but some of the provincial representatives eventually acknowledged they do have the authority. Current provincial efforts are

focused on perhaps tackling the issue through the periodic mandatory vehicle inspection. We’ll see.

The incessant ping-pong between the feds and the provinces is commonplace. Look at our industry’s experience with the federal hours-of-service regulations, for example. A disjointed approach to national standards and the enforcement of them is as Canadian as Hockey Night in Canada.

But that doesn’t make it right. We hear a lot from governments these days about how they want to reduce red tape to make things better for the business community. That’s a good thing.

But, in the trucking industry as big or bigger concern than “red tape” is the lack of harmonization both in terms of regulations and their enforcement across the country and the resulting distortions visited upon the marketplace. A lack of enforcement of federal standards, in this case the emissions regulations, not only denigrates the credibility of those standards, it also tilts the playing field in favour of those who don’t comply.

In part the problem is constitutional. Other times it’s administrative or just the way things have always been done. It doesn’t matter. It’s dumb and it’s costly and surely we should be mature enough as a nation to start dealing with these sorts of things in earnest. **TW**

*David Bradley is president of the Ontario Trucking Association and chief executive officer of the Canadian Trucking Alliance.*

# Revising NOC could help with driver shortage

**W**e seem to have general agreement that there is a shortage of qualified truck drivers in Canada, and now the attention of the industry and the government needs to be turned towards remedies. There are a number of examples of important initiatives that have already been taken by the industry and a couple of important things yet for the government to do.

In the spring of 2012 the Canadian Trucking Alliance convened a Blue Ribbon Task Force to broadly examine the driver shortage. They should be applauded for their much publicized report that was, in many ways, self-critical of the industry’s own practices. That was an interesting and frank approach.

Around the same time the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada and Motortruck Fleet Executive magazine published the comprehensive Benchmark Study of Canadian Private Fleet practices (still available by contacting the PMTC office). Sections of that report delve in to the best practices of fleets in areas such as hiring, retention, rates of pay and benefits, as well as training and incentive programs.

The report provides readers with insight into how other fleets function, along with some of the industry’s best practices in driver hiring and retention. There’s a good deal of information that fleets can use to assess their



## Private Matters

Bruce Richards

own operations. In its heyday the Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC) developed a comprehensive driver training program that received both darts (too long and too expensive) and laurels (comprehensive and a good foothold on the career path). CTHRC went further by auditing schools to ensure that the curriculum was being used properly.

The industry continues to wear a poor image the way a beaver wears a pelt – hard to shake off. But, if we could change that image it would lead to more interest in the industry from young people and that would surely bolster the dwindling cadre of professional drivers. Better entry-level training is part of upgrading the profession and would yield long-term benefits in the supply of new entrants.

Despite these efforts on the part of industry, success stories in solving the shortage of qualified drivers are few in number. In fact, the recent economic downturn may have had more to do with alleviating the problem than anything else. A shortage of freight and consolidation of carriers equals less demand for drivers.

But the problem has not gone away,

and it will be exacerbated as the economy rebounds and demand for transportation services increases.

With that in mind, the industry needs to continue its efforts to improve working conditions and make truck driving a job in which an individual can earn a good living and have some pride. But there are other issues that need attention that affect the shortfall. For example, the classification for a truck driver in the National Occupation Classification (NOC) is overdue for a review and here’s why that matters.

Absent an influx of Canadian youth looking for jobs as truck drivers, it is natural for carriers to look outside of Canada for qualified people that might want to immigrate. Those people are there and are willing to come to Canada, but the NOC presents some Olympian-level hurdles.

The NOC has assigned truck driving as a ‘Skill Level C’ occupation, which means that truck drivers don’t rank high on the list of desirable immigrants.

That makes it difficult for an overseas driver willing to immigrate to bring his or her skill set to the Canadian trucking industry. Some of these drivers have a good deal of experience in Europe, for example, and could be a fit for the Canadian industry.

NOC levels run from a high of A to a low of D, so you can readily figure out what the government thinks of the skills required of today’s truck driver.

To quote the Web site of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Level C occupations “generally require completion of secondary school and some job-specific training or completion of courses directly related to the work.” In our view that is one big over-simplification.

In part because of the NOC level, employers wishing to utilize immigration as a source of truck drivers are limited to various temporary worker programs.

While this is of some help in the short term, employers are less likely to invest in training and other traditional employee-related programs for these drivers, whom they will only have for a relatively short period of time.

This, unfortunately, contributes further to the high levels of driver turnover in the industry, and does nothing to address the long-term issue of the industry’s need for skilled drivers.

PMTC and other industry groups would like to see the National Occupation Classification upgraded to better recognize the skills required to drive trucks in Canada today. This would be an important step toward making immigration a realistic source of drivers that the industry requires. **TW**

*The Private Motor Truck Council is the only national association dedicated to the private trucking community. Direct comments and questions to trucks@pmtc.ca.*

# Why small fleets can't hire new drivers

**A**s small carriers, we often watch job applicants leave our offices confused as to why, despite seemingly acceptable credentials, they were not hired as drivers. Maybe I can shed some light.

First, newly-licensed applicants need to gain at least two years' experience with a large carrier before a small carrier can hire you. Our insurance providers will not allow us to hire anyone with less than two years' experience, and even that often involves a premium increase.

Even if you prove yourself to be an exceptional talent, as some new licences are, we can't hire you. This has been the case for many years, so

## Small Fleet, Big Attitude

Bill Cameron



if a driving school tells you otherwise, they are not simply confused or mistaken, they lied.

Small carriers are locked in to a very firm set of insurance provider-dictated recruitment rules. In some cases, a driver we may not accept can apply at a large carrier and be accepted almost immediately, creating obvious confusion for newcomers to the industry.

Large carriers may be able hire new trainees, recent immigrants, or those with shaky driving histories. This is

because the large carrier will often be self-insured, meaning the lion's share of their insurance coverage is for liabilities. Deductibles on vehicle damage are so astronomically high, claims are rare.

How did a driver I couldn't hire become acceptable just because the truck has a different name on the door? This can be very frustrating for the small carrier, as well as the driver, as there are many drivers who are quite qualified, but lacking in experience.

Imagine finding the ideal driver for your empty truck, yet being unable to hire them due to insurance guidelines that only apply to small carriers. My equipment is an important asset, not just a unit number, and nobody operates it unless I have complete faith in their ability.

Older, experienced drivers and owner/operators need to bear in mind the primary difference between dealing with small and large carriers.

At the large carrier, you will deal with someone whose title is recruiter. The recruiter's duty is to recruit, not to retain. They are often under pressure to hire new drivers. As a result, if your ability or attitude is slightly lacking, but your abstract and resume look alright, you will likely be hired.

Apply at the small carrier, and your recruiter likely wears the following hats: human resources, payroll, safety, dispatch, maintenance, senior driver, and/or owner. As such, this person has a huge financial and personal stake in the company. If you are the most qualified, hardest worker to ever walk through the door, but your attitude is horrible, you will remain unemployed.

I once interviewed a man in his 50s, who boasted a 35-year safety record, who arrived with a briefcase because it was the only container he had large enough to contain all his awards. His impression was that I would obviously hire him immediately, and use him as the benchmark for all future hires.

I've been on road tests that disappointed me, but until that day I had never been on one that had me fearing for my own safety. It seems his clean driving record didn't reflect his driving ability, just incredibly good luck, something he was painfully unaware of.

An angry phone call from him a week later confirmed that no other small carrier would hire him either, but he didn't remain unemployed. Some desperate fool hired him.

As a side note, you'll notice that carriers of all sizes are guilty of certain recruiting sins. One ad that caught my eye before the recession was from an Ontario carrier that advertised flatbed company driver positions paying "up to" 73 cents per mile. A company insider explained this number to me. They took the highest grossing driver's T4 earnings, and divided it by the miles he travelled. That number, unfortunately, included safety bonus, uniform allowance, holiday pay, overdimensional bonuses, layovers, tarp fees and LTL bonuses.

That's hardly a true mileage rate, is it? As usual, if it sounds too good to be true, it's usually not true. The real base rate in this case was 42 cents per mile. The recruiter obviously had exceptional math skills. This, unfortunately, is a common practice.

The biggest downfall to these issues, is the lasting impression it leaves with younger drivers. After being rejected by small carriers, they will gravitate to a large carrier. After gaining experience, they could try employment at both small and large carriers, weighing the merits of each. Unfortunately, we are all creatures of habit, and your first job in a new industry will likely set an unbreakable pattern. **TW**

*Bill Cameron and his wife Nancy currently own and operate Parks Transportation, a four-truck flatdeck trucking company. The company was founded in 1999 with a 20-year-old truck, rented flatbed trailer and a big dream. Bill can be reached at williamcameron.bc@gmail.com.*

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By James Menzies

Insurance companies love data. They really do. And they're very good at analyzing and interpreting data. So, it should come as little surprise that insurance providers are looking for ways to tap into the telematics data being generated by their fleet customers.

The term telematics is loosely defined as driver behaviour or vehicle performance data that's transmitted from a vehicle to a Web site or other device for analysis. The term insurance telematics is just now entering the Canadian trucking industry's dialect, though in other parts of the world such as Europe, it's practically mainstream.

Scott Cober, vice-president, national leader with Marsh Canada's trucking practice, told the Toronto chapter of the Fleet Safety Council recently that by 2017, there will be 89 million users of usage-based insurance around the world. Usage-based insurance, or UBI, can be broken down into two categories: Pay As You Drive (where premiums are set based on mileage driven) or Pay How You Drive (where premiums reflect driving behaviour, as measured by on-board telematics).

Insurance companies are particularly interested in PHYD insurance, which allows them to set premiums that are more indicative of future crash risks. The current norm is for insurers to set premiums that are based largely on past crash history, which says little of a fleet or driver's likelihood of future crashes.

Cober said driving behaviour is twice as predictive of future claims than any other factor, which is why insurance providers are eager to access the telematics data being generated by fleets. Nine of 10 US insurers offer some form of usage-based insurance, but Cober said in Canada, only Industrial Alliance is actively selling insurance in this manner. Their program is aimed at young drivers, who can save significantly on their auto insurance premiums by volunteering to install an on-board device that collects data on their driving behaviour and then shares that data with the insurer.

But Cober predicted that by the third of fourth quarter of this year, several more Canadian insurers will be offering



Insurance companies will soon be asking fleets for their telematics data, which could result in lower premiums for safe operators.

## You've got data. Now, your insurer wants it.

some form of usage-based insurance.

Cober said trucking fleets that are actively using telematics to monitor and, when necessary, correct driving behaviour, often see a 5-15% reduction in their insurance premiums. This is in addition to double-digit savings in fuel economy. One of the greatest challenges for insurers is that there is no standard for what data is collected and how it's transmitted, or what thresholds are used to define risky driving behaviour.

There are hundreds of telematics systems on the market and each one is different. Cober said he's most impressed with the camera-based systems that record what took place inside and outside the cab in the seconds before, during and immediately after an accident. In many cases, he said, the truck driver is exonerated by these systems and when the driver is at fault, "at least you know it right off the bat, so we can set up the reserve and settle it."

Canada has the strictest privacy regulations in the world, so installing the camera-based systems requires written permission from drivers.

Other telematics systems collect data on how a truck has been driven, analyze it and then create easy-to-interpret driver scorecards. These are great, but insurers are struggling with the inconsistencies between systems.

"The insurance industry needs a standardized scorecard," Cober said.

Angelique Magi, vice-president of strategic initiatives with The Guarantee Company, agreed that standardization would make it easier for insurance companies to set fair premiums.

"We all have our own back-end systems. Data is great, as long as we have a place to put the data and more importantly, to analyze the data," she said. "What we need in the marketplace, frankly, is a way to get your data to talk to our systems. That's what we wrestle with. It doesn't mean insurers are going to ignore telematics. We welcome fleets using telematics, it's to the degree that you use it. If you can demonstrate that it's part of your culture and show over time how you facilitate change in your organization or have benchmarks and have seen improvement, that's where insurance companies really pay attention."

Magi said that carriers that are using telematics effectively to drive improvements in driving behaviour should make their insurance broker or provider aware of this, even in the absence of formal insurance telematics programs.

"Keep asking your broker or insurance company, 'When am I going to get credit for this?'" she urged.

While the use of telematics data by insurance companies is still in its infancy in the Canadian market, there's no question the trend will continue to grow. Cober said the insurance industry has identified 2014 as the "tipping point" for insurance telematics. He also warned that as the movement gains steam, the safer, more progressive fleets will take advantage of telematics to lower their insurance costs while those who shun the technology will be left in an ever-shrinking pool of higher-risk carriers, and will ultimately pay higher premiums as a result. **TW**

## The future potential of truck telematics

Imagine a prospective new hire showing up at your recruiting office with a USB drive in hand, containing his or her complete driving record over the previous six months.

Every trip, every day, every mile. Every speed limit violation, every evasive manoeuvre, every panic stop. All of it presented right there in an easy-to-read scorecard format.

That could be a reality sooner than you'd think, thanks to the rapidly growing world of truck telematics, the machine-to-machine transfer of data that streams information on how a truck is being operated to a Web portal or device where it can be analyzed by a fleet owner, safety manager or insurance company.

Speaking to the Fleet Safety Council's Toronto chapter in mid-January, Scott Cober, vice-president, national leader with Marsh Canada's trucking practice, said vehicle telematics is more accessible than ever and can even be captured on the latest generation smartphones.

The latest iPhones come equipped with digital compasses and accelerometers, and Cober predicted it will only be three to five years before smartphones are capable of providing quality, detailed data on how a vehicle has been operated.

A driver will be able to plug his or her own phone into a portal in the vehicle and then collect their own driving performance data.

Angelique Magi, vice-president of strategic initiatives with The Guarantee Company, said the younger generation drivers are already comfortable with technology and will be likely to embrace telematics and understand the benefits of what it can do for them.

"That generation of driver will welcome technology and see it as an incentive to work with a particular company," she said. "New drivers could show up for an interview with a USB card that says 'This is how I drive, this is my driving record for the past six months.'"

With many fleets reporting they now hire only 10% of the drivers they road test, this information would prove invaluable during the recruiting process and a way for safe professional drivers to ensure employment with their carrier of choice.

Both Cober and Magi believe telematics is

reaching a tipping point.

"The technology side is changing so fast," Cober said. "It's being pushed to smartphones and tablets. You don't need hardware anymore."

As for the future of telematics, Magi said it will continue to become more all-encompassing.

She said the technology exists today for so-called "biometric telematics," which measures much more than how a vehicle is being driven.

"The device sits in the cab of a truck and it encompasses the entire atmosphere," Magi explained. "It can smell, monitor the driver's heart rate, it can detect a change in posture and it can immediately tell if something has gone wrong with your driver physically."

This could help eliminate accidents related to driver fatigue or health-related issues.

While that may seem extreme, Cober pointed out telematics technology could at least easily be adapted for the tracking of cargo. So many fleets employ trailer tracking, but the technology also exists to attach pill-sized tracking devices to cargo itself.

Then, instead of retrieving empty trailers following a heist, fleets would improve their chances at recovering the actual goods that were stolen. **TW**

# In conversation with Bob Dolyniuk



Bob Dolyniuk

Continued from page 1

**Dolyniuk:** There is still excess capacity. If there wasn't a capacity issue, rates would be climbing faster than they are today. I don't see rates jumping upwards by leaps and bounds, which tells me that if shippers are not happy with Carrier A, they are going to Carrier B at a lower rate. I think truckload, particularly, has a capacity issue.

**TW:** Our research shows large carriers are considerably more optimistic about business prospects in 2013 than small carriers. They are also much more likely to be planning to put higher rates in place and be investing in new equipment than are smaller carriers. Are you concerned about the future of small carriers in Manitoba?

**Dolyniuk:** During the recession, everybody was holding on, but, at that time, the banks weren't looking to repossess equipment, because, at that time, used equipment wasn't worth much. We said at the time you are going to see the hammer drop once the economy starts picking up again. And that's what we've seen.

We've seen the demise of smaller

companies, we've seen consolidation and you are going to see it continue. Because everybody had extreme capacity through 2008 to 2010, you had carriers running where they never ran before. They had the idle equipment and they were grabbing freight wherever they could. Throughout that, we were seeing larger carriers pursuing freight that the smaller carriers were traditionally handling. When it comes to such activity, he who has the deepest pockets tends to win.

**TW:** You mentioned consolidation. Definitely, there is an appetite for purchasing smaller, well-run carriers to pick up their business and/or their drivers. But do you think we will see in the near future in Canada a big buyout or merger, something that would be the Canadian equivalent of the Yellow-Roadway merger we saw in the US a few years ago? Is there an appetite for that?

**Dolyniuk:** I guess if the money and the will are there, anything is possible. You look at the TransForce and Mullen models and both have been extremely successful models with the way they've allowed the companies they've purchased to operate independently. TransForce still has dollars in the bank they are looking to do something with. I would say if anyone is going to do something like that, they would be the ones to be in a position to do it.

**TW:** From the large carriers you regularly deal with in Manitoba, do you see an appetite to risk going after a big deal?

**Dolyniuk:** I can't say so from the people I regularly speak with, but you also have to take a look at some of the non-trucking holding companies that have purchased large trucking companies as investments.

What's to stop such holding com-

panies from making such a trucking company purchase and holding on to it for three to five years and then flipping it? That has reasonable potential down the road. They purchase well-managed companies that create a good return for shareholders and when the time is right, they will sell it. But during the process, they let the companies operate independently.

**TW:** What do you see as the top two issues affecting Manitoba carriers in 2013?

**Dolyniuk:** Even though I mentioned capacity, human resources, hands down, is a primary concern. Our board has been talking about this issue for the last year-and-a-half and we have a number of initiatives underway to deal with the issue today and down the road. There are three major initiatives that our board wants to pursue that will strengthen current human resources and pull new human resources into our industry. Everybody is looking for the one silver bullet to do it all, but that silver bullet doesn't exist. It's going to take a number of actions in a number of different directions to address it.

Prior to the recession, we were looking to drivers from abroad. Companies are starting to do that again; it's starting to build up steam. Certainly, the carriers in Atlantic Canada are active on that front and it has become clear that carriers in Manitoba are looking for foreign workers more and more.

There is also the Aboriginal communities and we've tried a number of times to get the communities involved in the industry. We've had limited success, but I still see an untapped potential labour force there.

In Manitoba, the Aboriginal communities are the fastest growing segment of our population, so, potentially, they could be our workers for tomorrow. We are also looking at our Canadian Forces and their Military Employment Transition Program designed to assist Canadian Forces members who are transitioning out of the military to obtain employment in the civilian workforce. There is also how we market ourselves to our existing employees so we can keep that which we have.

And then there is the issue of how our

industry is perceived by the public and how we market ourselves to the public. You hear people saying, 'I want my kid to grow up to be a doctor or a dentist.' How many times do you hear people saying I want my kid to grow up to be a professional truck driver? Part of the exercise is making the public more aware of the occupation and that it is a good occupation. I liken it to Europe where the trades are looked upon with respect. If you talk to guidance counselors in Canadian high schools their focus seems to be on university first and foremost. As a country, we seem to forget that there are many good occupations that don't necessarily require a university degree or college certificate and truck driver is one of those.

Part of the job is making the public realize the significance of the job and that it isn't the stereotype, BJ and the Bear, cowboy image. If we can show the public the professionalism of the industry, we wouldn't be the industry of last resort so to speak, as we tend to be on many occasions.

**TW:** I agree with you, but there is one thing about trucking in Canada that is different from the experience in Europe. Because of our geography, long-haul drivers tend to be on the road much longer than a European driver would be. If people are reluctant to be away from home for two to three weeks, how do we get past that?

**Dolyniuk:** Historically, companies have found ways to get their people home on a regular basis in domestic operations. Our biggest challenge is fleets operating in the US under the US cabotage laws.

It basically boils down to American protectionism. Until we overcome that, it's going to be a big challenge.

If you can't legally do switches down there to get your drivers back home, your option is either setting up a US operation or being very selective of the freight you are taking if you want to get your people home on a regular basis. Prior to deregulation when Canadian fleets weren't operating as extensively as they are today into the US, getting people home once a week was less of an issue. **TW**



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# Six Best Fleets to Drive For in 2013 based in Canada

Six Canadian trucking companies have made the 2013 list of the top 20 Best Fleets to Drive For by the Truckload Carriers Association (TCA) and CarriersEdge. The annual survey and contest, now in its fifth year, identifies for-hire trucking companies that provide the best workplace experiences for their drivers.

This year's Canadian winners are:

- Brian Kurtz Trucking - Breslau, Ont.
- Erb Group of Companies - New Hamburg, Ont.
- Steed Standard Transport - Stratford, Ont.
- TimeLine Logistic International - Saskatoon, Sask.
- Trimac Transportation - Calgary, Alta.
- Yanke Group of Companies - Saskatoon, Sask.

Yanke holds the distinction of being the only company to be named a Best Fleet for all five years since the program was launched.

"I think that's a real achievement, considering how much we've seen fleets improve their programs since we started," said TCA president Chris Burruss. "It's very difficult to get named a Best Fleet to begin with, let alone remain on the list for five consecutive years."

A pair of Canadian companies also made the contest's list of "Fleets to Watch" (honourable mentions) for demonstrating innovation in their driver programs: Celadon Canada of Kitchener, Ont., and Transpro Freight Systems of Milton, Ont.

The nomination process began in the fall of 2012, when company drivers and owner/operators were asked

to nominate carriers that operate 10 or more trucks. After confirming the validity of the nominations and the trucking companies' desire to participate, CarriersEdge interviewed human resources representatives and executives of the nominated fleets and evaluated against a scoring matrix covering a variety of categories, such as:

- Total compensation package - including base pay, bonuses, vacation, and sick day allotment;
- Health benefits;
- Pension plans;
- Professional development opportunities (training, coaching programs, etc.);
- Career path/advancement opportunities;

- Commitment to employee personal growth, including work/life balance, driver family support, and employee-directed charitable contributions;
- Commitment to continuous improvement, including dispute resolution processes and inclusion of driver feedback in policymaking;
- Team building and driver community development activities;
- Annual driver turnover rate; and
- Fleet safety record.

A selection of each fleet's drivers was also surveyed, with their feedback compared to management's and incorporated into the final score. The responses were then tallied, resulting in the selection of this year's winners and honourable mentions.

Mark Murrell, president of CarriersEdge, said: "It's a pleasure to report that we had a 50% increase in nominations and participation for the fifth anniversary of the program. Clearly, being named a Best Fleet to Drive For is a prestigious title that is motivating companies to constantly raise the bar on the offerings they provide their truck drivers."

Now that the winners have been named, the next phase of the contest is to announce the highest scoring fleets from each of two categories: Best Overall Fleet for Owner Operators and Best Overall Fleet for Company Drivers.

The overall winners will be announced at the TCA Annual Convention, March 3-6 at the Wynn Las Vegas in Las Vegas, Nev.

For more information on the contest, visit its Web site at [www.BestFleetsToDriveFor.com](http://www.BestFleetsToDriveFor.com). TW

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**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

2) How many vehicles are based at or controlled from this location? Please indicate quantities by type:  
 - No. of Straight Trucks \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Trailers \_\_\_\_\_  
 - No. of Truck-Tractors \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Off-Road Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_

3) Does this location operate, control or administer one or more vehicles in any of the following Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) categories? Please check YES or NO:  
 14,969 kg. & over (33,001 lbs. & over)...  YES  NO  
 11,794-14,968 kg. (26,001-33,000 lbs.)...  YES  NO  
 8,846-11,793 kg. (19,501-26,000 lbs.)...  YES  NO  
 4,536-8,845 kg. (10,000-19,500 lbs.)...  YES  NO  
 Under 4,536 kg. (10,000 lbs.)...  YES  NO

4) This location operates, controls or administers:  
 Diesel powered vehicles...  YES  NO  
 Refrigerated vehicles...  YES  NO  
 Pickups or Utility Vans...  YES  NO  
 Propane powered vehicles...  YES  NO

5) Do you operate maintenance facilities at this location?  YES  NO  
 IF YES, do you employ mechanics?  YES  NO

6) Indicate your PRIMARY type of business by checking ONLY ONE of the following:  
 a)  For Hire/Contract Trucking (hauling for others)  
 b)  Lease/Rental  
 c)  Food Production / Distribution / Beverages  
 d)  Farming  
 e)  Government (Fed., Prov., Local)  
 f)  Public Utility (electric, gas, telephone)  
 g)  Construction / Mining / Sand & Gravel  
 h)  Petroleum / Dry Bulk / Chemicals / Tank  
 i)  Manufacturing / Processing  
 j)  Retail  
 k)  Wholesale  
 l)  Logging / Lumber  
 m)  Bus Transportation  
 n)  Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

7) Are you involved in the purchase of equipment or replacement parts?  YES  NO

8) Are you responsible either directly or indirectly for equipment maintenance?  YES  NO

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## Mullen Group to spend \$80M on new equipment

**OKOTOKS, Alta.** - Mullen Group will spend \$80 million on new equipment in 2013, a decrease of \$23 million compared to 2012.

Most of the \$80 million in approved capital spending will go towards buying new trucks, trailers and specialty equipment, the company announced. Of that, \$25 million will be spent on equipment for the trucking/logistics segment while the remainder will go to the oilfield services segment.

"I am pleased that the board of directors accepted the recommendation of our senior executive team," said Murray Mullen, chairman and CEO of Mullen Group. "This capital will ensure that our business units can remain competitive in what I can summarize as a very challenging market."

Mullen also announced it would be increasing its annual dividend by 20 cents per share and paying it monthly, rather than quarterly.

"While we expect 2013 to be a challenging year with little opportunity to grow our business due to economic and industry conditions, Mullen Group will continue to generate significant cash from operations," Mullen said. TW

# Muir's Cartage drops company drivers

One of Canada's longest-running fleets has decided to no longer employ company drivers. Instead, it will use owner/operators and a third-party driver services agency.

By James Menzies

**CONCORD, Ont.** – On Jan. 3, just days after the Christmas rush, all 33 company drivers working for Muir's Cartage were brought together and informed collectively that they would no longer work for the company with a 100-year-plus history. Ted Brown, executive vice-president with Muir's, told *Truck West* the changes were necessitated by the "market forces experienced by the entire industry." Going forward, Muir's will rely on owner/operators and drivers provided by third-party agency Inter-Link Driver Services.

Brown told *Truck West* the move was necessary in response to "significant changes specific to our major customer relationships that remain strong, but simply require a change in our overall infrastructure and how we deploy our fleet and drivers."

Some of these changes, Brown said, have been phased in over the past few years. As for the Jan. 3 announcement that it would no longer run company trucks, Brown said it "was a necessary component to fully meeting those demands going into 2013 and remaining a competitive provider of excellent service well beyond."

Prior to the Jan. 3 announcement, Muir's operated three distinct driver groups: a city and highway owner/operator fleet; a scaleable third-party channel with agency partners; and a company driver fleet.

"After Jan. 3, our model will consist of a mix of owner/operators and our agency strategy – the application of either depending upon our existing and new customer requirements," he said.

Customers, said Brown, stand to benefit from increased flexibility and efficiencies.

"Asset utilization will determine which driver solution we will deploy and we'll be better positioned to meet the cost challenges of our partners," he said.

Asked if he expects other Canadian trucking companies to rely more heavily on owner/operators, Brown said "We're certainly seeing more em-

**'These changes are never easy for anyone involved, be they the drivers or the people who they worked with.'**

**Ted Brown, Muir's Cartage**

phasis on the need to flex and adapt to the challenges of our customers. Each transportation company will continue to assess its specific needs as it adapts to this constant change."

As for the drivers affected by the reorganization, Brown said "These changes are never easy for anyone involved, be they the drivers or the people who they worked with – in

some cases for many years. We communicate robustly here though, and our team understands the changing environment and have been resilient throughout the many changes of the past four to five years. We were pleased that a significant number of the drivers affected chose to join our 3P provider and have been able to resume driving for Muir's as part of their service."

Asked if owner/operators may be concerned that the restructuring is indicative of underlying problems at Muir's, Brown said "Muir's has carried out these changes in order to increase its ability to compete within the conditions of which we're all aware. We've seen continued improvement here over 2011 and 2012 and anyone

currently with us or considering joining us should be encouraged by our enhanced ability to succeed in the years to come."

Muir's Cartage is one of Ontario's longest-running trucking companies. It has been in business for more than 100 years. In 2007, the company sold its cross-border truckload division to Kriska Transportation. Today, Muir's operates as a core carrier to big box retailers, and offers regional LTL and truckload services as well as warehousing.

Last year, the fleet operated 145 tractors, down from 211 in 2011, according to the Top Tier report on Canadian trucking capacity, published by *Motor-truck Fleet Executive*. **TW**

## Vitran divests supply chain organization

**Vitran has reached an agreement to divest its Supply Chain Operation (SCO) division to Legacy Supply Chain, based in Portsmouth, N.H., for US\$97 million in cash, subject to certain working capital adjustments.**

**Vitran intends to use a portion of the net proceeds from this transaction to fully reduce its outstanding debt under its senior revolving credit facility and to support the development of its LTL business. Vitran's board of directors is also evaluating various options for the use of the remaining net proceeds.**

**"We are extremely excited at finding an excellent fit for our SCO business with Legacy Supply Chain. Together, SCO and Legacy Supply Chain will become a formidable and diversified supplier for customers requiring North American supply chain solutions," Vitran's president and chief executive officer Rick Gaetz stated in a release. "We will continue the recovery and growth of our existing business and believe we have positioned Vitran to be a formidable LTL transportation provider in North America. Our LTL team is energized to aggressively develop the company into the future."**

**Legacy Supply Chain CEO Ron Cain added: "We are delighted to have SCO join Legacy Supply Chain and are excited at the prospects for our combined company moving forward. We are very pleased with Vitran's SCO business, employees and the cultural fit between our two companies." TW**

## Western Perspective

I think the question of whether to run a company truck, an owner/operator, a lease/operator or a mixed fleet really comes down to what each individual company's business objectives, service offerings and competitive advantages are. Additionally, it also depends on whether the company is readily able to finance the trucks required to serve and grow its business or if capital investment is required elsewhere. Do you buy a truck and are you able to attract a driver or do you hire a driver with a truck? Many fleets have that dictated to them by their banks, shareholders or what they can afford to invest in their pay packages, while others choose when, where and how they will compete.

We have run a mixed fleet for many years and the primary reason for doing that has simply been that we are looking for great drivers, period. We are in the people business and there is no question that our industry draws people from all walks of life and attracts people who are in all stages of life. In our view, the future for all drivers, owner/operators and lease/operators remains bright. So long as you are a safe and professional operator and you understand cost and the value you bring to the business partner you choose, I see nothing but opportunity for any driving professional.

– Rob Penner, COO, Bison Transport



## Western Perspective

This has been an interesting topic for a few decades now and fleets have valid reasons for moving toward one group or the other, or simply incorporating both lease/operators and company drivers into their operations.

Fleets have moved towards lease/operators and owner/operators to sidestep the capital costs of purchasing tractors. Lease/ops and owner/operators also shift insurance costs, fuel costs and fuel efficiency away from the fleet. Maintenance costs can also be a prime reason for fleets to reduce company drivers in favour of L/Os or O/Os. We will likely see more fleets be forced to look for options as fewer company drivers are available throughout Canada. Fleets who favour company drivers may include fleets that have better success managing professional drivers.

Also, fleets that cross-shift two or three company drivers on one tractor, know the value of operating with these professional drivers.

Typically, our industrial fleets and oilfield fleets also operate with company drivers. Is there a right and a wrong direction to take with L/Os, O/Os, and company drivers? No. Fleets have valid reasons to go the direction they choose and will most likely stay the course.

On a personal level I have always said: The talent operating the unit is far more important than whose name is on the registration. If you find a champion driver who needs a truck, provide that person a truck. If you find a champion who has a truck, sign him or her up.

– Roy Craigen, Transcom Fleet Services



# Inside Bison's LNG fleet program

Bison Transport is the first fleet to deploy multiple LNG-fuelled tractors in Alberta. Is it an experiment, or indications of a major fleet-wide transformation?

By Jim Bray

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Natural gas continues to wriggle its way into the transportation industry's heart as a fuel of choice, the latest example of which is Bison Transport, which has entered into a five-year agreement with Shell Canada to run 15 liquefied natural gas (LNG) tractors in Alberta.

It's not only a new move for Bison, it's also the first step in launching Shell's LNG refuelling infrastructure in Wild Rose Country and will see Bison using Shell's Flying J outlets in Calgary, Edmonton and Red Deer to refuel its LNG fleet once all is up and running.

But that's getting a tad ahead of the story, since as of this writing the Flying J outlets weren't quite ready to go. Yet Bison's LNG fleet – or at least part of it – was already cooking with gas as of late January. That's according to Trevor Fridfinnson, Bison's vice-president of western operations, who told *Truck West* that "a convergence of factors have made it potentially economically viable," noting that the company thinks the move could be the right thing for the industry as a whole, from a sustainability aspect. "You put those factors together and it lined up as now is a time when we're willing to go down that path."

A few operations have made similar commitments in other parts of Canada, but Bison claims this is the first time a company operating in Alberta has done a conversion on this scale. And as Fridfinnson said, it made sense to move now. "One of the biggest things that relates to fuel is supply and infrastructure and so forth," he noted. "We had a willing partner in Shell that was heavily investing in natural gas, so the supply is here and we have appli-

cations with a regional density in Alberta that lend themselves to this."

Bison is initially targeting its LCV application, pulling twin 53-ft. trailers at a full 140,000-lb GVW, consuming "a fair amount of fuel," Fridfinnson said, but which "from an overall perspective are very fuel-efficient because we're moving two trailers with a similar amount of fuel. And that's how you can drive the economics of it: if you can burn enough of the fuel, you can overcome the capital costs involved, which are significant in this case."

Fridfinnson also said that, while the 15 trucks planned for Bison's initial nat-gas foray are spec'd out to be LCV trucks, they won't necessarily be used only to pull the twin trailers. "If there are scenarios where we can augment and add some additional miles in the same truck in a single-trailer application, we will do so. But the LCV is the base model that we expect to use."

Initial routes are principally Calgary to Edmonton and back, which can be accomplished on a single tank of fuel. And that "round-trip on a tank" aspect is part of why Bison didn't have to wait for the Flying Js to become gas-friendly before launching the initiative.

"Shell has put a temporary fueller on-site for us here in Calgary to get us started," Fridfinnson said, "and that is here until the rest of the infrastructure



Trevor Fridfinnson, vice-president of western operations with Bison Transport stands beside the temporary LNG fuelling station at the company's Calgary base.

is built up to deliver it. Then they'll move it."

Bison had six of the 15 trucks in operation by late January, all of which are brand new Peterbilt 386s with the Westport GX 15-litre engine.

"We're renewing our fleet anyway," Fridfinnson said, noting that "we replaced 275 tractors last year, so that's part of what we do." But getting to drive a spanking new truck is a nice carrot for drivers, too, as incentive to get them to embrace the move to gas.

"We're trying to make participating in this program by doing it in a new truck

actually operates, it shouldn't really be looked upon as merely a pilot project.

"At 15 trucks, it's really more than that," Fridfinnson said. "We're trying to demonstrate that we're motivated to make this work and to demonstrate it on a reasonable scale."

Bison is also planning for a time when LNG is more widely available. "We're taking a look at LNG in other jurisdictions," Fridfinnson said, "most notably in British Columbia because they've got an aggressive program through their natural gas utility that is trying to convince transportation companies to take the plunge by covering off a certain amount of the incremental cost associated."

That government support wasn't available in Alberta, where the deal is between private sector operations only – a fact Fridfinnson finds unfortunate. "With all new technologies, you sometimes need those incentives to get over the hump," he said, "and I think that's probably why we haven't heard about a number of other fleets following suit. And given the amount of natural gas in this province and the importance of natural gas to this province, it's a bit surprising."

## All gas, all the time?

Despite Bison's bullishness, Fridfinnson doesn't see a completely LNG-fuelled fleet anywhere on the horizon. "It's not realistic probably for any reasonable timeframe," he said. "The infrastructure has got to be really significantly built out and there are operating nuances of natural gas that are really going to make infrastructure the critical piece. If you cannot have ready access to it like you do with diesel, then you run the risk of having operating challenges – for instance, if you don't keep the fuel cool and do all the rest of it, then it loses its effectiveness."

Fridfinnson said he thinks estimates that 40% of commercial vehicles could be using natural gas in 10 years are premature, though he does anticipate a trend. "It's not going to be an insignificant number," he said. "There's definitely room for some significant uptake."

And of course the chicken and egg factor will definitely be in play, in that you can't run a lot of natural gas trucks until someone is there to sell you the

'The reception (from drivers) has been good, but we've got things that we need to continue to work through.'

Trevor Fridfinnson, Bison

part of the appeal to our driving group. We're fortunate that we have a culture in general that embraces change."

That said, change brings with it uncertainties. "As with anything else," Fridfinnson said, "there are uncertainties and different things to learn about the truck – how to fuel it and how to be mindful of it – so, put simply, the reception (from drivers) has been good, but we've got things that we need to continue to work through to make sure we get our training right."

That includes passing on new knowledge gained about working with LNG. "As we learn more about how you operate with natural gas, we have to make sure the experience remains positive," Fridfinnson said.

And even though only a few trucks are involved in this conversion compared with the vast number that Bison

stuff when and where you need it. But even there, change is coming.

"The liquefaction capability takes money," Fridfinnson said, "and Shell's investment in Alberta at Jumping Pound, which will be up around the end of the year, will make them able to draw directly from their facility here. That will make a difference."

All this talk about moving to natural gas may seem a tad ironic, since the stuff has been around as a fuel for years – as a supposedly dwindling resource. But as the old song said: "To everything there is a season," so maybe now it really is natural gas's "Turn, Turn, Turn" to be in the spotlight.

The irony isn't lost on Fridfinnson. "Five years ago (our move to LNG) would have been harebrained," he admitted. "There were people going around trying to get you to sign up for \$10 fixed natural gas costs for your house and there was a finite amount (of gas) and so forth, but things have changed and the general consensus is that there's a 100-year plus supply of the stuff given the way they can extract it now. It's not like it's brand new and it's certainly more widely subscribed to around the world than it has been in North America, so it's just a matter of finding the tipping point to get a wide scale conversion going."

Bison has obviously made the assessment that the tipping point is very close. "We like to say that we're not on the bleeding edge, but we're not far behind it," Fridfinnson said. As for Bison's talked-about expansion of its gas-powered fleet to British Columbia, Fridfinnson said the company will probably make that decision later this year.

"We've been actively looking at that angle and seeing whether or not that's the next logical place to extend it," he said. "If we can get between Calgary and Vancouver then that's viable, but how do you make sure that you have a mid-point fuelling option that's going to work for that?"

Runs strictly through the Lower Mainland aren't really in the cards, because "the big thing for us is that the way you recoup the costs of the heavy-duty engine conversion is that you do it in an application that burns enough fuel to generate enough volume of savings," Fridfinnson said. "That becomes the hitch point."

As for when Flying J will actually start selling gas in Alberta, Fridfinnson said the latest information he had is that they should be on-stream in Calgary by the end of February, with the Sherwood Park outlet on-stream by the end of March. Fridfinnson said if everything works out as Bison hopes, the company will pay off its incremental cost of conversion, which he estimates at about \$90,000 per truck, in two years. But he's also mindful of Murphy's Law. "There always tend to be deviators from plan and most of them are cost creators as opposed to cost inhibitors," he said, "so we have to be mindful of that and we've budgeted on what we think is a realistic case scenario. But if we encounter certain challenges that could move as well."

In the meantime, it's full-speed ahead – figuratively, anyway – in Bison's experiment with using LNG to propel its power units. That doesn't mean they'll just press on, however, expanding the LNG fleet regardless of its experiences in this learning phase. "We're going to be actively assessing this thing throughout the entire life cycle," Fridfinnson said. **TW**

## Encana opens first-of-its kind LNG facility

**CALGARY, Alta.** – A new liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility has opened in Alberta, which facility owner Encana Corporation says is the first of its kind in the province. The Cavalier LNG facility is located about 15 km east of the town of Strathmore, Alta. and will play a "key role" in providing the alternative fuel to the heavy-duty transportation industry, according to Encana officials.

Eric Marsh, executive vice-president of Encana Corp., said there is a "very strong value proposition for natural gas use in the transportation sector," noting that LNG is 20-40% less expensive than gasoline or diesel in many regions. Marsh also pointed to the environmental benefits of LNG, including its production of up to 30% less carbon dioxide emissions than oil and 90% less smog-causing particulate matter.

The Cavalier LNG facility receives its feedstock from Encana's neighbouring Cavalier gas plant. The natural gas is then treated to remove impurities such as water, carbon dioxide and Mercaptan, and thereafter directed into a cryogenic heat exchanger where liquid nitrogen (-196°C) cools the methane to a liquid state (-160°C). The LNG is stored in cryogenic tanks on-site for truck fuelling or bulk tanker loading.

First customers of the Cavalier LNG facility include

Calgary-based Ferus Inc., an energy services company specializing in delivering integrated solutions to the energy industry, as well as the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) which last year announced that it is testing two mainline diesel-electric locomotives fuelled principally by natural gas. Encana is providing complete LNG fuelling solutions to CN for this pilot project including the fuel, transportation and equipment. Officials say the CN project is the first of its kind in Canada.

"Natural gas is a viable transportation fuel for the rail sector, and CN's pilot project demonstrates the transportation industry's growing awareness of the economic and environmental benefits of natural gas," said David Hill, Encana's vice-president, operations, natural gas economy. "There is significant growth potential for natural gas in the transportation sector when you consider the sheer abundance of this resource that has been unlocked in North America through huge technological advances in unconventional production. Combining the on-road trucking with the rail and oil and gas supply chain segments represents around 30%, or 22 billion cubic feet per day, of total North American transportation fuel consumption." **TW**

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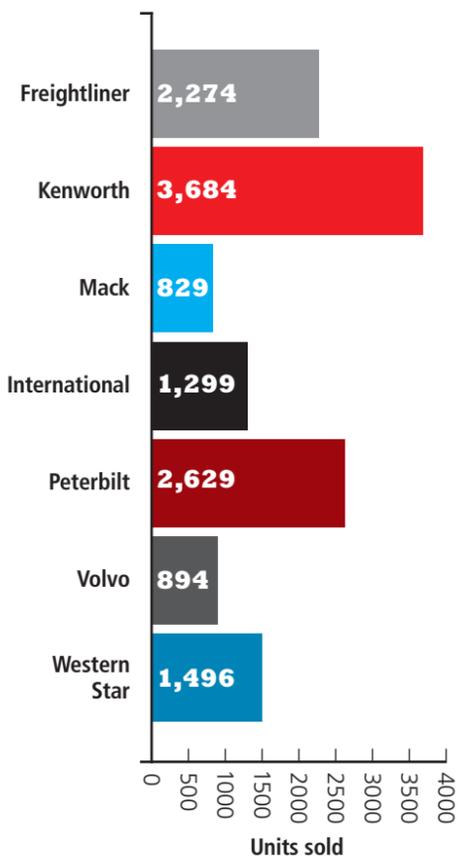
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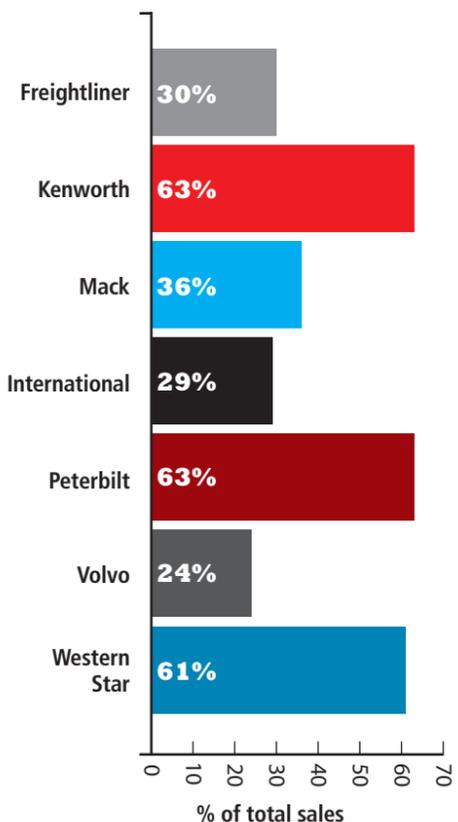
# POISED TO PROSPER

NEW TRUCK PURCHASING PLANS FOR WESTERN CANADA CARRIERS OUTPACING REST OF COUNTRY

**Most popular Class 8 brands sold in Western Canada in 2012**



**Share of total sales provided by Western Canada in 2012**



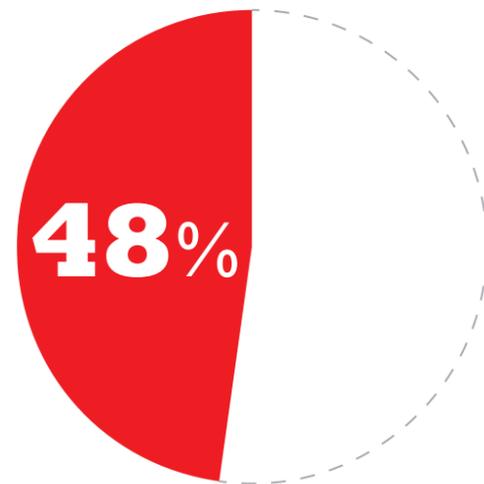
**67%**

That's the percentage of Western Canada motor carrier executives with plans to purchase new Class 8 trucks this year.

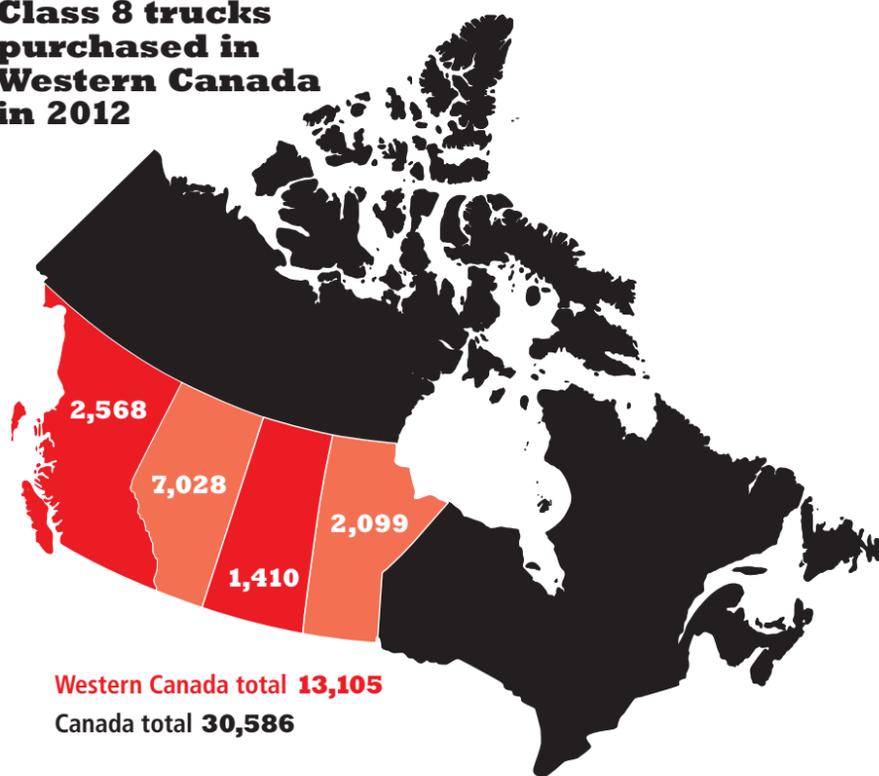
**C**lass 8 trucks registered in Western Canada already make up 48% of the country's total Class 8 population, but that share may grow. Buoyed by an economy stronger than the rest of Canada, Western Canadian motor carriers have more ambitious plans for investment in new trucks in comparison to all other regions.

The more than two-thirds of Western Canada carrier executives who indicated they would be purchasing new trucks in 2013 is considerably higher than the 44% of Central Canada-headquartered carriers who said likewise and also higher than the cross-Canada average of 53%, our own

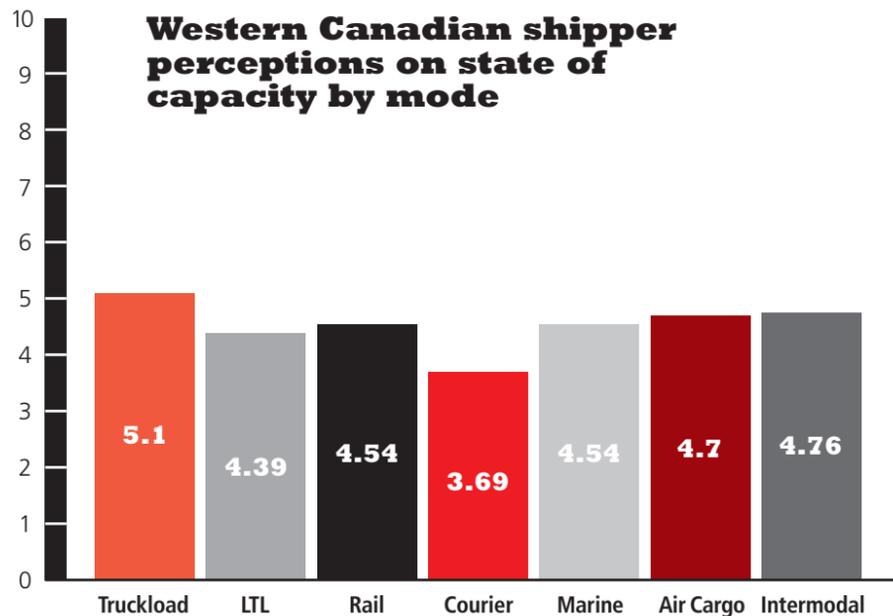
**Share of Class 8 trucks registered in Western Canada**



**Class 8 trucks purchased in Western Canada in 2012**



**Western Canadian shipper perceptions on state of capacity by mode**



annual Transportation Buying Trends Survey indicates. The survey was conducted in December and January in partnership with the Canadian Industrial Transportation Association, Cormark Securities and CITT.

Records from the Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association (MVMA) show there were 13,105 Class 8 trucks sold in Western Canada in 2012 - 43% of the 30,586 Class 8 trucks sold nationwide. Despite the heavy investment in new iron, our research reveals that Western Canada-based shippers are growing more concerned about the level of capacity in the Truckload sector. Provided with a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 signifying excess capacity, 10 signifying under capacity,

and 5 signifying balanced capacity, they scored Truckload as 5.10. In other words, shippers see Truckload starting to trend towards an under capacity situation.

When Western Canada carriers do purchase new trucks, they show different tastes than the rest of Canada, MVMA sales records show. Whereas Freightliner is the market leader for the country, the Paccar brands (Kenworth and Peterbilt) are the clear winners in Western Canada. In fact, Western Canada makes up almost two-thirds of sales for both Kenworth and Peterbilt.

In the next issue of *Truck West*, we examine shipper and carrier projections for rate increases. **TW**

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## Volvo to reward safest fleets

GREENSBORO, N.C. – The search is on, once again, for the safest fleets in North America, with Volvo seeking recipients for its annual Volvo Trucks Safety Award. For the fifth consecutive year, two fleets with the safest driving records and top safety programs will receive \$25,000 to be used toward their safety-related activities. Michelin will once again be joining Volvo Trucks as sponsor, officials announced.

“Improving highway safety remains a top priority for Volvo Trucks and the trucking industry,” said Göran Nyberg, president of Volvo Trucks North American sales and marketing. “We’re proud to again have an opportunity, along with Michelin, to celebrate the industry’s best and highlight the areas that help make them successful. Safe trucking operations do not occur by chance. Fleets must be in tune with all

aspects of their operations, from their safety cultures and programs to equipment selection.”

The award is open to all Canadian and US fleets operating at least five Class 8 units. Fleets must have at least one Volvo tractor in operation to be eligible for the award. Entrants will be ranked by their accident frequency rates. Participating fleets will also be judged on their accident prevention activities.

The deadline for entry is July 31. The winners of the award will be announced during the American Trucking Associations’ Management Conference & Exhibition in October.

The two grand prizes will be awarded to the fleets with the best records in two divisions based on annual vehicle miles travelled: less than 20 million miles and more than 20 million miles. **TW**

## Bendix warns non-OE friction material doesn’t always meet stopping requirements

ELYRIA, Ohio – Bendix Spicer Foundation Brake is warning customers against the use of non-OE friction material when replacing linings on Bendix brakes. The company says it has tested and analyzed stopping distances on a variety of aftermarket friction products and that in the new reduced stopping distance era, OE friction material is safest.

“We have invested millions of dollars in R&D to develop new brake designs that meet and exceed the government mandate for reduced stopping distances on new vehicles. Since these vehicles will continue to share our roads after servicing, it’s vital that we help fleet operators make informed decisions to maintain that same high level of safety and performance,” said Eddie Wilkinson, president of Bendix Spicer Foundation Brake.

In August 2011, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) mandated a 30% reduction in stopping distance for new three-axle tractors with GVWRs up to 59,600 lbs. Phase two of the mandate, aimed at tractors with two axles, as well as severe service tractors with GVWRs above 59,600 lbs, takes effect Aug. 1, 2013.

“We spend a great deal of time talking to our fleet customers, and through that ongoing dialogue have come to realize some general misunderstanding exists concerning maintenance of the new high-performance brakes,” said Gary Ganaway, director of marketing and global customer solutions for BSFB. “Bendix wants to make sure the industry understands the impact on stopping distance, so we conducted testing and analysis to demonstrate the potential trade-off in performance.”

Ganaway said the longtime standard test for certifying brake linings, FMVSS 121, is no longer adequate in a RSD environment. Most linings that pass the dynamometer requirements don’t meet today’s requirements, he said. In testing, Bendix said its own RSD-compliant vehicle using Bendix High Performance ES (extended service) brakes stopped in 215 ft. at 60 mph, well under the 250-ft. limit. However, it said none of the comparison friction used in the relining of RSD brakes met the new requirements. The worst of them had a stopping distance of 311 feet, 45% worse than the Bendix OE lining, the company claims. **TW**

## Custom Truck Sales opens new Manitoba facility

BRANDON, Man. – Kenworth dealer Custom Truck Sales has opened a new parts and service facility in Brandon, Man. The new facility, located just off the Trans-Canada Highway at 1240 Highland Ave., boasts nearly 14,000 sq.-ft. of space, including seven service bays, an overhead crane in its 8,000 sq.-ft. service department, a 1,500 sq.-ft. parts showroom, a large parts warehouse, a wash bay, and a driver’s lounge.

“The Brandon facility expands our parts and service support for local fleets in western Manitoba and for trucks travelling the Trans-Canada Highway through Manitoba or Highway 10 south to North Dakota and the oilfields,” said Jim Clark, branch manager of the Custom Truck Sales locations in Brandon and Winnipeg. “Custom Truck Sales has been a Kenworth dealer since 1965 and we strive to provide The World’s Best parts, service and trucks to customers.”

The dealer group also operates locations in Estevan, Regina and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

The Brandon facility is open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Saturday from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. The dealership also offers 24-hour emergency service. For more information, call 204-728-6681 or visit [www.customtruck.ca](http://www.customtruck.ca). **TW**

## Redhead Equipment named Canada’s top Mack distributor

REGINA, Sask. – Mack Trucks has named Redhead Equipment of Regina, Sask. its 2012 Distributor of the Year for Canada.

The annual award recognizes the top-performing distributors within Mack’s North American dealer network based on sales, facilities, service, general management, customer satisfaction, parts, personnel and community service.

Other regional Distributor of the Year awards were doled out to a number of Mack dealers across the US, including Tri-State Truck Centre of Memphis, Tenn., which was named top Distributor of the Year for all of North America.

“Our distributors are essential partners for Mack Trucks,” said Kevin Flaherty, president of Mack Trucks North American sales and marketing. “We appreciate the depth of product knowledge and the commitment to customer satisfaction that these award winners display as they deliver exceptional service.” **TW**

## Yokohama adds latest commercial tire to SmartWay-certified list

FULLERTON, Calif. – Yokohama’s new TY517 commercial tire has been added to the US Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) SmartWay list of verified technologies. Yokohama, which now has nine products recognized as SmartWay “low rolling resistance tires,” will be debuting the TY517 at the Mid-America Trucking Show this March.

SmartWay Transport, a collaboration between the EPA and the freight sector, is designed to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas and air pollutant emissions.

The TY517, Yokohama’s latest ultra wide-base drive tire, is now available in size 445/50R22.5.

“The TY517 meets the SmartWay program’s verified low rolling resistance criteria because it runs cooler and helps reduce fuel consumption, which cuts costs for fleets and benefits the environment,” said Rick Phillips, Yokohama’s director of commercial sales. “We’re proud to be recognized by the EPA for our environmental initiatives and look forward to being part of the SmartWay program for years to come.” **TW**

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# Meritor produces 10 millionth trailer axle



Employees at Meritor's Frankfort, Ky. axle plant take a moment to celebrate a significant milestone – production of the company's 10 millionth trailer axle.

By James Menzies

FRANKFORT, Ky. – Meritor recently celebrated production of its 10 millionth trailer axle. The event was marked by a ceremony at the company's Frankfort, Ky. plant, where all its trailer axles for the North American market are now produced.

The Frankfort plant has been home to Meritor's trailer axle production since 2001. The 195,000 sq.-ft. plant sits on a 30-acre site that was originally opened in 1994. Currently, 181 employees work there and the plant is running a shift and a half, producing trailer axles and brakes. The plant has received \$2.2 million in upgrades over the past three years, increasing capacity and improving productivity.

"North America is the centre of our

trailer business and what we do out of this facility serves as the centre for what we do globally," Craig Frohock, general manager of Meritor's trailer and aftermarket businesses said during a special ceremony at the plant. "This facility services the US and Canada market and this is where the core of our business is."

Meritor also has an international presence, producing trailer undercarriage products in South America and the Asia-Pacific regions as well.

The 10 millionth trailer axle was to be shipped to Wabash for installation in one of its trailers before being delivered to customer Werner Enterprises. Representatives from Werner were unable to attend the ceremony due to bad weather, but a wide variety of guests were on-hand, including media, political representatives, suppliers, customers and of course, the Frankfort plant employees who halted production to commemorate the milestone.

Meritor officials seemed upbeat about the pace of the recovery and their prospects for sales.

"The market is recovering at a nice, steady pace," said Pedro Ferro, president of Meritor's aftermarket and trailer operations.

"We don't see a recovery like we saw back in 2006 when the market really exploded and we saw dealers left with a lot of inventory and we were left with a lot of inventory and there was this big cliff. This time, I'm encouraged by the pace of the recovery. I think some segments of the trailer market are weaker than others; flatbeds have softened, construction hasn't gotten back to where we think it should be. But I'm encouraged by the pace (of the recovery) this time and I don't think we'll have a boom and bust. I think the recovery will continue in 2013 and 2014. I'm very optimistic about it. As far as the whole trucking industry is concerned, I don't think there's going to be explosive growth this year, but it should grow at, I would say 3-4% between this year and next." TW

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Logos for TRUCK NEWS, TRUCKWEST, and Motortruck Fleet Executive.

## Beaver Truck Centre now offers leasing, rentals

WINNIPEG, Man. – Beaver Truck Centre has launched a new leasing and rentals division. Beaver Leasing and Rentals will carry both Volvo and Hino trucks for daily rental or long-term, full-maintenance lease.

"We understand the customer's livelihood depends on their trucks being on the road with a minimum of downtime," Beaver said in a release. "When you sign up for a full-service lease from Beaver Leasing and Rentals, we look after all your breakdown issues including the repair costs, towing costs and replacement vehicle, if required, to keep you on the road making money."

Angelo Macchia and Lisa Carriere will be heading the leasing and rentals areas of the new division, respectively. TW

# Downtime is getting worse

Volvo brings fleet owners together to discuss downtime. And gets an earful about an industry-wide problem.

By Lou Smyrlis

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – If football is a game of inches, trucking is a business of minutes. Every minute a truck spends in unproductive downtime costs dearly. Yet the latest truck technologies, engines in particular, are adding to the problem rather than alleviating it.

That's the stark message trucking company owners gathered for a press conference at Volvo's new Nacarato truck dealership in La Vergne, Tenn., passed on to dealer and OEM officials. The declining equipment reliability when coupled with less than efficient dealer practices are greatly adding to downtime.

Volvo asked the motor carriers for their frank comments on their challenges during a candid one-hour discussion. It then referred to them in framing its argument that the industry had to place greater focus on uptime, while bringing the media and truck owners up to speed on its latest strategies and tools towards this regard.

"The biggest challenge that we struggle with is the engines that we have. I spend so much of my time dealing with engine maintenance issues," said Stan Pritchett, owner of Beacon Transport, a 133-truck fleet.

Referring to engine manufacturers in general, Pritchett said his truck downtime "has become tremendous."

"No longer can I say that because

I buy new equipment, I'm not in the shop a lot. I'm looking to run new engines and I want my equipment to stay running," he reinforced.

Mike McFarlin from M&W Transportation, a 95-truck fleet out of Nashville, Tenn., certainly sympathizes with Pritchett's issues.

He is bearing the same burden.

"Downtime is horrendous," he said, adding it is particularly bad when trying to get service at a dealer different from the one where you purchased your trucks. He emphasized this is an industry-wide problem, stressing that the ability, training and staffing of technicians at many dealers needs to be considered in view of the technical problems being caused by ever more complex equipment.

Kirk Rutherford, whose private fleet serves Bridgestone dealers, also complained loudly about independent dealers who don't work as a network.

"I can bet on 110% performance from the home dealer. But at other dealers, you get the attitude that you didn't buy it here so get in line. The local dealer is taking care of the people he goes to church with and his kids play soccer with," he lamented, adding that as a result, if his trucks are within a few hundred miles of the home dealership he prefers to bring them there rather than deal with the closest dealership.

"When we roll in to your dealership, someone needs to be looking out for

my own interests. We need support across the country," he stressed.

McFarlin conceded that tools brought in by OEMs to better diagnose equipment are helpful, but questioned the value of a quick diagnosis if it then takes several days to get the part necessary to complete the repair.

"In my opinion that part should be in stock," he said.

FedEx. But he said accurate information is more important than continued but vague assurances that his truck will be worked on.

"The information is more important than the truck at times. I want to be told that it's going to take three days to fix it rather than 'We'll get to it as soon as we can,'" he said, explaining the right information gives him more time to make alternative plans.

Another issue raised was flexibility – or rather the lack of it – when it comes to payment. For example, dealers may decide to not release a truck until payment for the repairs has been made.

"I work for a \$13-billion company, our name is on the trucks, and I'm going to stiff you for a \$2,000 charge? Fix it, and I will deal with the bill later," Rutherford said.

To which Carpenter added that no matter how much he may love his drivers, he doesn't think it's wise to give them a credit card with an unlimited spending

limit to handle any emergency.

Volvo executives and the owners of the Nacarato dealership acknowledged these industry concerns and answered with a variety of strategies, programs and tools they hope will address them. **TW**

**'I can bet on 110% performance from the home dealer. But at other dealers, you get the attitude that you didn't buy it here, so get in line.'**

**Kirk Rutherford, fleet owner**

Pete Carpenter, president of PAC Trucking, another Nashville-based trucking firm, said there also needs to be improvements in communication. Downtime is particularly important to Carpenter as his entire 21-truck fleet is contracted to serving

## Remote diagnostics help reduce downtime

**NASHVILLE, Tenn.** – Being able to access and transmit critical truck engine data from trucks on the road to key decision makers responsible for their maintenance in a manner timely enough and accurate enough to allow smart decisions to be made is key to reducing downtime, Volvo Trucks North America executives believe.

After listening to several motor carrier executives speak openly about the downtime plaguing the industry due to premature engine failure (an issue experienced by all engine brands) at a Volvo press event Jan. 10 (see related story, above), David Pardue, vice-president, aftermarket sales, was one of several Volvo executives who said they are working hard to be part of the solution.

"The need for information is quicker and more thorough and what we are satisfied with today we won't be satisfied with tomorrow," Pardue said.

Volvo believes part of the answer lies with its Remote Diagnostics service, now a standard feature on every Volvo-powered VN model highway truck. The service provides proactive diagnostic and repair planning assistance with detailed analysis of critical diagnostic trouble codes. It's the first service being offered under the new Connected Vehicle Services category of the Volvo Trucks Support Services bundled aftermarket offering.

The remote communication platform facilitates live dealer and customer communication through Volvo Action Service, Volvo's 24/7 support team. Proactive

diagnostics streamline service procedures with confirmation of parts on-hand before a truck arrives at a service location, increasing uptime, the company says. But Conal Deedy, product manager, communication and electronics, cautioned against the trap of "technology for the sake of technology." There are thousands of fault codes on today's commercial trucks that can be monitored and quickly reported – but that doesn't mean they all should. Rather, the focus should only be on those critical to keeping the truck on the road.

"It has to be about using technology to improve service and uptime. Our customers want actionable data that is accurate. They don't want to be overloaded with fault codes," Deedy said.

Deedy also pointed to some impressive statistics racked up by the Remote Diagnostics program since its launch last May (it was tested for a year prior to that with over 1,300 Volvo VNs being part of the field tests. Challenger Motor Freight was a test fleet in Canada). There are now more than 5,000 Volvos equipped with Remote Diagnostics and so far the service has managed to: reduce average diagnostic time for targeted fault codes by 71%; reduce average repair time for targeted fault codes by 25%; and improve average uptime by one day per event.

"Remote Diagnostics is streamlining the service procedure. It's getting the right information to the technician," Deedy said.

Remote Diagnostics comes free of charge for two years with the purchase of all new Volvo trucks.

Another wrinkle soon to be added to help streamline the service procedure when the truck comes into a Volvo dealership is a QR code label and reader capable of capturing all the vehicle information en-

rypted on the QR code label, such as the vehicle identification number, mileage, etc. and create a registered case number before the vehicle is assigned to a technician.

This application, which will be made available on every Volvo coming out of the factory by around the end of the first quarter, will also capture the entire inspection and maintenance process, date stamp it, and maintain it as part of the vehicle's history on a secure server. Customers will be able to log in and read up on the history of their vehicles. The truck's file can also be assigned to other Volvo dealers should the truck require service beyond its home dealer.

Those are the latest efforts Volvo has made to boost uptime and fine-tune service performance but, as Pardue pointed out, the company has been focused on these goals for several years. Back in 2005, after listening to its customers, it came up with a 10-point Service Commitment; a year later it introduced its triage strategy to better and more quickly diagnose repair issues; in 2010 it provided 24/7 Internet parts purchasing so parts could be ordered after the parts department had closed for the day; and last year, in addition to Remote Diagnostics, it issued a 10-point Dealer Support Commitment to help support Volvo dealers in living up to their service commitments.

Volvo Trucks' dealer network is also expanding, resulting in additional truck service bays, Volvo-certified technicians, and larger parts inventories. For example, the new Nacarato dealership, which hosted the press conference, keeps \$2 million worth of parts inventory on-hand and is capable of servicing 30% more trucks at its new 80,000 sq.-ft. facility with 28 service bays. **TW**

By Edo Van Belkom

Mark headed west, the collision in Ontario well behind him. While it hadn't been his fault, and he'd actually helped the insurance company root out an organized fraud ring that had obviously been operating with impunity for years, he'd still been victimized by the accident.

In exchange for all his efforts, Mark had hoped for some sort of break on his insurance bill, but there'd been none of that. Despite him personally saving the insurance company thousands - perhaps even tens of thousands of dollars - his bill had still gone up because of other scams and frauds going on in the Greater Toronto Area.

Mark needed to get out of the city and a long drive across the country was just what he needed. And while the accident was thousands of kilometres ago, the sour taste of the city still wasn't out of his system and he wouldn't mind another long-haul back east that would have him avoiding city driving for another few days at least.

And so, after Mark delivered a container of snowmobile parts to the docks in Vancouver, he decided to contact his dispatcher Bud, and see what the man could do for him. Mark reached for his phone, made sure his hands-free device was working, then used the contacts list to find Bud. It rang six times before there was an answer.

"Hello?"

"Catch you at a bad time?"

"I was in the bathroom. What do you want?"

"It's Mark."

A second's delay, then, "Mark who?"

Mark sighed and shook his head slightly. Didn't this every get old? "Marxism."

"What?"

"You know, the ideas and writings of Karl Marx that laid the foundation for the creation of communism."

"Oh, that guy," Bud said.

"Yeah, you know, 'Workers of the world unite; you have nothing to lose but your chains.'"

"You feel chained, do you?"

"If anything is certain, it is that I myself am not a Marxist.' He said that too."

"No kidding?"

"Yes, he did."

"Alright," Bud sighed. "Besides giving me a history lesson, what do you want from me, Dalton?"

"A load would be nice."

"You want to be one of those worker-types, do you?"

"Yes," Mark said. "It's what I do, and I do enjoy eating my meals indoors."

"What?"

"You know...regular meals, a roof over my head. Only in this case it's a truck."

"Okay," Bud said. "You're in British Columbia right now?"

"Just got out of port."

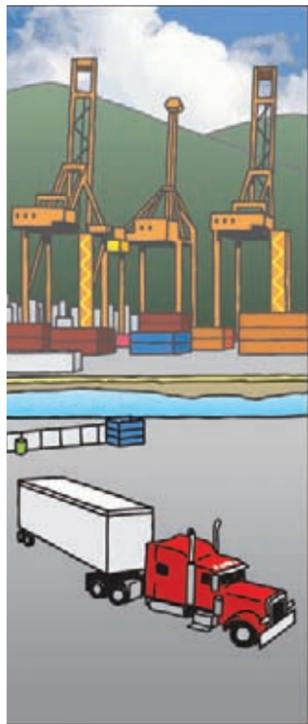
"Then how about a load of livestock to Quebec?"

Mark didn't answer right away. B.C. to Quebec was a sweet load, but to be honest he didn't know anything about livestock other than he liked his bacon crispy and his steak medium-rare.

"Don't you need a licence or something to drive that stuff? I mean...the product is alive and I'll just bet the receiver wants it that way on delivery."

"Yeah, well, I asked the customer about that and apparently there's a quality assurance program in Canada for hogs, but not for beef, chicken or sheep. There are courses you can take for those animals and they've been offering them for the last five or six years, but there is no official requirement in order to drive them."

Okay, Mark thought. Bud had done his homework. And while it would be a great adventure, it sounded like something for which you'd need some experience in order to know what you were doing. After all, it didn't take much imagination to think



# Like a lamb to slaughter

PART I

of something that might go wrong.

"I don't know if it's for me, Bud. Seems like an awful lot of responsibility. I like driving and being on my own because - outside of shippers and receivers - I don't have anyone depending on me... which includes animals. I mean, it's not like you can just pull off the road if it starts snowing or the weather turns bad. And if you have a breakdown, there's probably all sorts of pressure to ensure the animals are safe and comfortable."

"You're probably right on all counts," Bud laughed under his breath. "But I'm disappointed in you, Dalton. Do you really think I would offer you a load that you couldn't handle?"

Mark thought about it, then said, "Yes, I do. I think you would do exactly that. In fact, I imagine you giggling in delight over this load and all the trouble I could get into."

Silence for a moment. "Okay," Bud said. "You know me too well. All that's probably been true in the past, but not this time around."

"Oh, yeah. Why's that?"

"You won't be driving on your own."

"Oh no?"

"No. You'll be with two other drivers and they'll have more than enough experience to go around."

"Ah," Mark said. This was an interesting twist. By driving in a convoy with drivers who knew what they were doing, he could learn from their experience instead by the seat of his pants. He didn't have to think about it much longer. "Okay, I'll do it."

"Great," Bud said. "But I have to tell you it's just not a trip east. It also includes a return load back west after you reach Quebec."

"More livestock?"

"Nope, regular goods," Bud said. "Apparently the trailers get cleaned out after every delivery of livestock. Steamed, disinfected, the whole nine yards. They're probably cleaner than your average goods trailer on the road."

Mark didn't have any trouble believing that. While most drivers took pride in their work, he remembered once seeing a driver urinate inside his trailer because he didn't have time to get to a bathroom before his turn to get loaded. That incident aside, he'd seen the inside of some trailers that might as well have been used as a latrine. The animals, on the other hand, probably had it good. "So this isn't just one long-haul, it's two."

"Exactly. The company will set up the load west. They just asked me to provide them with a driver."

"So why am I so lucky?"

"I like you, Dalton."

"But you don't even know my name." Bud ignored Mark's comment for the moment, then said. "I look at it this way, Mark. When someone calls with a load or asks me for a driver, they do it because I deliver...just like my drivers do. So, say something does go wrong with this load and the driver I sent these guys is a wet noodle and can't handle a problem or cracks at the first sign of adversity."

"It's not good for you?" Mark guessed.

"No, it's not good. It's terrible. I need to send someone who can handle the job and not make me look bad."

Mark took a deep breath, his chest swelling with pride. "I'm wondering how you were able to make this all about you...but I'm still touched."

"Don't flatter yourself, Dalton. The three guys ahead of you on the list all turned me down."

Mark shook his head. "You're a jerk!"

"Maybe, but I'm the jerk who gives you good loads. Now don't let me down." **TW**

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



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# Do your homework

In these days of low interest rates, it may be an excellent time to pull the trigger on a new truck. In the all-important world of cash flow, these rates can make such a major capital investment an affordable reality. If you are thinking of making the move, and if you're financing the purchase, do yourself a favour and shop around for a finance program that fits your needs.

While a welcome sign of the times for many, low interest rates are causing havoc for the retirees of the world. Since the days of the defined benefit retirement plans are few and far between, many people have moved their self-directed investment portfolios to the greener pastures of the stock market.

More specifically, stocks that pay dividends are all the rage at the moment. Some of the larger blue chips will pay you handsomely to hold their shares. It's not unusual for oil producers pay north of 5% - a healthy return, for sure. But buyer beware; do your homework before you jump in. If a company is paying out dividends that are higher than its cash flow per share, chances are that big fat juicy dividend won't be sustainable. Eventually it will catch up to them and that will be reflected in the share price.

There are some great financial advi-

## Publisher's Comment

Rob Wilkins



sors out there that can customize an investment plan that's right for you.

Again, do your homework. You need to be comfortable with that person. Do they understand your risk tolerance? Do their investment recommendations meet your goals? More importantly, can you sleep at night?

If you do decide to sign on with a financial advisor, take a proactive role in researching their recommendations. There have been some horror stories of people seeing their portfolios decimated by poor decisions, usually through investing in risky, unproven equities.

There's a great Web site that will help the average Joe or Joanne find out what the experts say about most TSX- or NYSE-listed stocks. Go to [www.stockchase.com](http://www.stockchase.com) and you'll see their opinions and top recommendations.

Oh, and if you haven't read *The Wealthy Barber*, go buy a copy or two. That may be the best investment advice you'll ever get. **TW**

*Rob Wilkins is the publisher of Truck West and can be reached at 416-510-5123.*

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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](mailto:jim@transportationmedia.ca). We can't run everything, of course, but we'll try to get in as much as space permits...



Alberta Transport Minister Ric McIver poses for pictures in a Trimac truck, as part of his recent ride-along with professional driver Dennis Hokanson. The Minister was impressed with his view from the driver's seat.

The NHL is back and life has meaning again. And the Flames and Oilers are still in the playoff hunt (okay, maybe not the Flames), even though it's well past new year's! Talk about a time to celebrate!

Well, if you're a hockey fan...

I've often wondered why, in the interest of fairness – which seems to be the major buzzword these days (in that things should be “fair,” though not necessarily “right”) – they don't just give each player other than the goalies his own little black disc to chase around the rink. Wouldn't that be more equitable to the players who don't score as many goals as others? And why not assign points based on need rather than ability? That way the weaker teams have a fairer chance of copping the Cup!

As we weigh such weighty issues, life in the trucking industry goes on as hard-working folk keep our society going despite, according to the powers that be, them being a bunch of unskilled, knuckle-dragging yahoos.

We all know the truth about that – so let's give a quick tip of the toque to some in the trucking biz who are doing important things.

## Ric in a rig

First up is a confluence of politics and the private sector, as the Alberta Motor Transport Association and Trimac hosted Alberta's new Transportation Minister, former Calgary Alderdude Ric McIver, on a ride-along designed to give him some real world insight into the world of a trucker.

The Jan. 28 event began at Trimac's Southeast Calgary Learning Centre as trainer extraordinaire Ken Arthur outlined that company's procedures before the Minister clambered up into the cab of a Trimac five-axle B-Train, to be chauffeured around the City by

the Bow with one of the AMTA's Road Knights, Trimac's own Dennis Hokanson, at the wheel.

The quick trip took the Minister through Calgary at rush hour, after which McIver told me “It was fun – all of sudden I'm six years old again. It was pretty interesting and it's obvious that nothing happens by accident in the industry – there's lots of safety precautions, lots of pretty sophisticated equipment, lots of training that goes into what happens.”

His takeaway from the experience was that “What's important is that we as a government need to stay in touch with the industry so that as problems come up we can work through them. Whether they're technical solutions, regulatory solutions or human being solutions, I think it's about partnership if we're going to make things work.”

I imagine many Alberta truckers and owners hope there are some deeds coming from the Redford cabinet minister as well as those words – and ones that make sense for the industry.

Hey, it could happen! Are you holding your breath?

## Helping make gas more natural

Al Rosseker, executive director of the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, reports that his group is partnering with provincial Crown corporation SaskEnergy to give carriers, suppliers, and other interested stakeholders a kind of “Natural Gas 101” session on March 6, outlining the basics of natural gas as a potential fuel for large trucks, whether it be compressed natural gas (CNG) for short-haul and P&D fleets or liquefied natural gas (LNG) for long-haul carriers.

“As you know, some national fleets like Schneider and Swift in the US and Groupe Robert in Quebec and Bison

in the West, are running pilot projects with natural gas,” Al Rosseker told me in an e-mail, adding that he hopes they'll have some input from such companies. The session will give “a broad overview of what's going on both nationally and regionally,” he said, and promises to bring in engine manufacturers and other suppliers to talk about costing, conversions, infrastructure needs, etc. Sounds like a lot of meat at this meet.

Registration includes breakfast, sessions, lunch and a reception. Oh, and a block of rooms has been reserved at the Hilton Garden Inn, Saskatoon, for those who need to travel to the event. There are only 100 or so seats for the gathering and you can register at the Association's Web site at [www.sasktrucking.com](http://www.sasktrucking.com).

Deadline for registrations is Feb. 22, so don't procrastinate!

## CN is believin'

CN has just sunk a bundle into a new intermodal terminal in “the heart of the new west.” The new \$200-million “state-of-the-art intermodal terminal for containerized goods” opened at the Calgary Logistics Park on what would be called McKnight Boulevard if it were closer to the city proper. It's about 10 clicks from Calgary International Airport and offers nearby access to Stoney Trail (Calgary's ring road) and the Trans-Canada highway.

The company says the new digs have nearly a third more capacity than the southeast Calgary Sarcee Yard it replaces, as well as being roomy enough to offer the potential for future expansion. Four automated in-gates and three automated out-gates are hoped to keep truck turnaround times below 45 minutes.

There's also a container yard and specialized equipment for temperature-controlled products CN says lets the company expand its existing reefer volumes – and I don't remember a referendum being needed to get the land designated for such commerce.

## Timely advice, perhaps – depending on the weather

We really only have two seasons here in Calgary – winter and Stampede – but your mileage may differ (so to speak), and for that reason it's never too cold and icy – or hot and muggy – to think about how you're going to handle the next temper tantrum unleashed by Person Nature.

To that end, at least as far as winter driving is concerned, the SafetyDriven Team at the Trucking Safety Council of B.C. is disseminating a short list that you might find handy, a set of tips for operating in and around winter maintenance equipment.

The advice come from the bureaucrats at the province's Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and were apparently prompted by a trio of serious crashes within a 24-hour peri-

od that involved heavy-duty commercial vehicles and winter maintenance equipment in the Robson area of B.C.'s lovely west Kootenay region (just a hop and a skip outside Castlegar).

Reproduced here for your (and their) convenience, is their quick list of common sense stuff to do and not to do:

- Do be aware that plows are required to operate at speeds of 60 km/h or lower.

- Do slow down and pull over for oncoming plows – they are required to plow the centerline (good luck finding a lot of places to pull over near Robson, though, if I remember the area correctly from my decade there during the 1970s and 80s).

- Do be aware that flashing yellow lights are used to alert highway travellers of the presence of highway maintenance equipment.

- Do follow plows until it's safe to pass.

And the list of “verboten” stuff:

- Don't pass snow plows on right hand side.

- Don't attempt to pass when plow is sanding on corners or hills.

- Don't pass when visibility is restricted.

Or, in the parlance of most professional drivers who take their gigs seriously: duh!

## Spare change?

Speaking of logistics – we were, weren't we? – Supply Chain and Logistics Association Canada (SCL, which has branches in various locations across the country) is partnering with the Trucks for Change Network, a nonprofit organization “helping trucking and logistics companies to support charities with donated and preferred-cost services across Canada.”

Since 2011, the Network has used real-time freight-matching and donation management technology to help members coordinate available space on their trucks to “really deliver” for charitable organizations such as Food Banks Canada and Habitat For Humanity Canada (oh, the Humanity)!

“We look forward to our partnership, and our members will look forward to working with them to make a positive difference, said SCL's chief piece of furniture (I believe he's referred to as a “chair”) Al Norrie.

As for his end of the deal, Trucks For Change Network president and founder, Pete Dalmazzi, opined that “SCL is a leading voice for supply chain professionals across Canada, and its endorsement is an important step for us.” One of the most recent carriers to join Trucks for Change is Yanke Group, based out of Saskatoon. **TW**

*That's it for this month. As always, if you have – or know of – an item you think your peers would like to know about, please fire off an email to me at [jim@transportationmedia.ca](mailto:jim@transportationmedia.ca). Space, good taste and legality help govern what we print, but we do try to push the envelope. Okay, maybe the good taste part's questionable.*



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