

TRUCK WEST

Western Canada's Trucking Newspaper Since 1989

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Ken Wiebe, right, was named Grand Champion at the National Truck Driving Championships in Regina.



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Crowning the champions

Regina hosts National Truck Driving Championships but Ontario takes team title

By Jim Bray

REGINA, Sask. – It appears that it wasn't just the mid-September sun that shone down on the 2015 National Professional Truck Driving Championships. According to the man who drove away with a fistful of marble, a higher power was also looking down on the event.

"With God, you have no enemies," Sebastian Tatar told *Truck West* scant minutes after being named Rookie of the Year at the event-closing gala banquet at the Delta Regina Hotel. "No one can stand against you."

As it turned out, one man could: Team Manitoba's Ken Wiebe beat Tatar (and everyone else) out for the overall Grand Champion award, which brings with it serious bragging rights. Wiebe won the B-Train event that kicked off the day's driving competition, carrying the event by enough points that he ended up winning the overall championship as well.

Wiebe is a bit of a renaissance man who is not

only a long-time truck driver but also a Harley-Davidson aficionado – as well as guitar player for two bands. A professional driver for 35 years, all of which have been collision-free, Wiebe has spent the last seven years of his storied career driving for the Winnipeg-based EBD Enterprises, hauling out of the Gerdan Steel Mill. He also won the B-Train category at the 2013, 2012, 2010 and 2008 National Professional Truck Driving Championships, so he brought an already-winning record to this year's extravaganza.

The Nationals, as the event is called colloquially, is the culmination of various provincial championships – and sometimes regional events that cull the field of entrants in advance of a provincial competition – and this year saw seven teams competing, representing the six provinces from Quebec to British Columbia as well as a "Team Atlantic" composite group made up of the best drivers from Canada's easternmost provinces. Entrants have won their

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MTA wins round in biodiesel battle

By Jim Bray

WINNIPEG, Man. – A government listens to the people? Since when?

Since 2015, apparently, if you live in Manitoba and represent the province's trucking industry. That's according to Terry Shaw, executive director of the Manitoba Trucking Association, who told *Truck West* recently that after the Manitoba government decided to up the biodiesel mandate above the national figure, his organization fought back and, at least so far, appears to have caused the politicians to back down.

"Currently in Manitoba," Shaw said, "the mandate for biodiesel is a 2% limit, which coincidentally is also the federal mandate."

The MTA's concern came when the province said it would raise the biodiesel mandate to 5% in an effort to mitigate greenhouse gases, which Shaw said would mean that "at point of sale we're getting 10 or 12% (biodiesel) during the summer months and 0% during the winter months and that obviously does nobody any good."

So the MTA made its case to the province's NDP government, with results that appear generally positive. "Manitoba to their credit had heard our concerns in regards to biodiesel," Shaw said, "and their suggestion was that for the next 3%, to achieve the 5% limit, they were going to go with something called biodiesel two, which is also known as renewable diesel or HDRD (hydrogenation-derived renewable diesel)."

The reason for changing from the currently-used biodiesel one, Shaw said, was that "biodiesel one has significantly different properties than diesel fuel, which is causing the problems with our engines."

On the other hand, Shaw said biodiesel two, the HDRD renewable diesel, is more chemically similar to diesel, so the prevailing thought is that it shouldn't cause the problems that the FAME-based biodiesel does. That doesn't tell the whole story, though.

"The concern we have with the HDRD biodiesel that it's only produced in one location in North America – Louisiana – and as we

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Editorial Comment

James Menzies



You've spent your entire working life building your own business; don't you owe it to yourself to maximize its value before selling it?

When people speak of fuel economy in terms of sustainability, they're usually referring to the environment and our obligation to reduce our impact on it. However, it can also be said that by improving the efficiency of your fleet, you're making your own business more sustainable as well. With slim margins, high fuel costs and given the hyper-competitive world in which you work, becoming more efficient is sometimes the only way to improve profitability. Every penny you don't spend goes directly to your bottom line.

However, since reducing fuel consumption also benefits the environment, the trucking industry has some non-traditional allies in its pursuit of greater efficiency. Are you taking advantage of it?

Over the past decade, several organizations have sprung up that are committed to helping fleets improve their efficiency for the sake of cleaner air. As these organizations have evolved and gained a better understanding of the realities facing fleet operators, they've developed some extremely useful tools and research that for the most part is absolutely free of charge.

By now, you've most likely heard of the EPA SmartWay program. But did you know that here in Canada, its fleet mem-

bers now have access to data analytics tools that essentially provide any-sized member company with a data department - at no cost? For several years now SmartWay has been providing its member fleets with benchmarking reports that compare their performance across several categories (ie. idle-time, mpg and asset utilization) to carriers of similar size and scope.

Most recently, the program has made available data analytics tools that allow member fleets to run their own queries and generate customized reports that drill down into areas of the most interest. The data analytics tool is available at the SmartWay portal where you go to access the SmartWay logo, etc. It's a great time-killer and can produce a ton of valuable information to help your fleet better understand where it has room to further improve its efficiency in relation to similar companies, even within the same region.

You may not have heard of the North American Council for Freight Efficiency (NACFE), but it has produced some incredible research that delves into topics such as idle reduction, low rolling resistance tires, trailer aerodynamics and powertrain optimization. So far it has published seven Confidence Reports on these topics, giving fleets insight into



how they can employ best practices to reduce their fuel consumption.

In addition to publishing Confidence Reports, NACFE also produces a number of tools to help fleets implement a fuel-saving program. These are all free of charge and can be found on www.TruckingEfficiency.org.

Visit their site for tons more useful information on becoming a more efficient fleet. When it comes to improving the efficiency of your fleet, free help is available. The information is excellent and you can't beat the price. **TW**

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Why you should stay the course

The view with Lou

Lou Smyrlis



Late in the summer we received the unsettling news that Canada is back in recession. For those of you who have worked so hard to climb back from the financial black hole created by the Great Recession, what does this mean to your company growth plans for the rest of the year and into 2016? Is it time already to hunker down yet again and watch expenses, delaying investments in new equipment, facilities, staff and services? I don't think that would be wise. Here is why:

Based on what I'm seeing in the North American economic data and listening to what the economic experts are saying, it's too early to be hitting the panic button. The Canadian Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index is a good indicator of future expectations of economic growth. Put simply, if purchasing managers are optimistic about future demand growth, it is reflected in growth in the index. For the first five months of 2015, the index was a mirror of the downward trend of the Canadian economy. But in June it showed its first sign of life climbing back into growth. July was the same (and the optimist in me will choose to ignore the fact July's growth was not as strong as June's). If we get one more month of growth in the index, it's hard to see how this could be a

long recession. GDP itself grew in June by a healthy amount, perhaps indicating the economy is ready to bounce back.

Take what Carlos Gomes, senior economist with Scotiabank, had to say: "If you look at domestic activity, it remains very resilient. Consumer spending is doing well. Auto sales are at record highs. Housing activity is buoyant.

Employment conditions have actually accelerated over the past year to about an average of 16,000 jobs created each month. That's a significant improvement from an average of about 10,000 during the previous two years. One part of the economy is doing well, however, there is significant weakness on both the business investment side and the export side."

Interestingly enough it is that lack of investment that can derail the Canadian economy for good. If at the first sniff of an economic downturn we essentially go on an investment strike - cancelling equipment renewal plans, laying off drivers, etc. - in anticipation that fu-

ture demand won't be there, we end up being directly involved in creating the very downturn we fear. I think a wiser approach would be to cautiously proceed with investment plans, keeping in mind that economies growing at less than 3% GDP are bound to run into several bumps in the road, some more pronounced than others. It's also important to remember that GDP figures, although they get a lot of attention in the media, are a look back to where we've been, not a look ahead to where we are going.

And finally, as I mentioned at the recent Altruck Customer Connect event when speaking on this subject, you didn't get to running your own company without trusting your gut. Listen to it now. We've been in recession for two quarters. Does it really feel like it did during the depths of the last one?

It will take some forward thinking indeed to take the leap of faith during the economic downturn and stay true to investment plans. But that's exactly the action that will keep us from a prolonged recession. **TW**

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Aero answers found blowing in the wind

Canadian study sheds new light on the science of truck aerodynamics

By Carroll McCormick

OTTAWA, Ont. – By now most of us should be minor experts in spotting rigs with fuel-saving aerodynamic enhancements, like side skirts, boat tails and tractor fairings. But a collaborative research study published this summer by Transport Canada and the National Research Council Canada (NRC) refines and expands the understanding of these enhancements and how much fuel they save.

It's free, it's not secret and it is loaded with results. Just Google: *Improving the Aerodynamic Efficiency of Heavy-Duty Vehicles: Wind Tunnel Test Results of Trailer-Based Drag-Reduction Technologies*. You will be led to a Transport Canada Web page with an executive summary, easy-to-read tables with 21 drag reduction techniques, their associated annual fuel savings and CO₂ reduction, and a link to the full, meaty study.

Using its 9.1x9.1x22.9-metre wind tunnel, the NRC tested 30% scale models of tractors, dry vans and flatbeds to learn more about what works and how well. Transport Canada, through its ecoTechnology for Vehicles program, commissioned the research to help guide it in the implementation and regulation of drag reduction technologies in Canada.

Some findings: For every foot the gap between tractor and trailer is reduced, drag drops by 2.6% (a 1% decrease in drag roughly equals a 0.5% decrease in fuel burn). A one-foot gap reduction can save 1,600 litres of fuel, plus or minus 400 litres, a year. (Annual figures refer to a typical long-haul operation).

"This is one of the first thorough studies of incremental gap width. This has not been quantified to this extent in the past. The results will help fleets choose which gap widths to use," says Brian McAuliffe, the study author and thrust lead for the Enhanced Aerodynamics Performance thrust of the Fleet Forward 2020 program of NRC.

Removing the landing gear, smoothing the trailer underbody and adding an underbody diffuser fairing appears to slightly increase drag.

The drag reduction of side skirts and boat tails in combination is greater than the sum of their individual drag reductions. Yet, combining side skirts with a trailer fairing (a rounded piece screwed on the front of the trailer), or combining a boat tail with a trailer fairing do not produce a "greater than sum" enhancement.

A box cargo configuration on a flatbed has 22% higher drag than a dry van.

Side skirts on a box cargo flatbed reduce drag by 8%. And split skirts for a dry van allow the rear half of the skirts to stay closer to the bogie. "If you have a big gap between the bogie and side skirt, you will have less of a fuel saving," McAuliffe says.

A sleeper cab with two, 28-ft. trailers, which the NRC used to explore fuel savings in long combination vehicles (LCVs), uses three litres per 100 kms more diesel than pulling a single 53-ft. trailer. (A truck getting 4.5 mpg burns 52.2 litres/100 kms).

An LCV outfitted with a forward trailer fairing, side skirts on both trailers and a long, four-panel boat tail achieves a fuel saving of 6.3 litres/100 kms, or 7,900 litres, plus or minus 2,200 litres, a year.

The NRC investigated the aerodynamic drag of a lot of devices and configurations. They include day cabs, sleeper cabs, high and low roof fairings with high and low trailer heights, tractor-trailer gaps, gap devices, various side skirts, side skirts over tandems and tridems, side skirts and flatbeds, various boat tails, rounded corners on a dry van, LCVs, and combinations of drag-reducing technologies. The NRC went

to great lengths to ensure that its tests are 'real world' survivable.

"In the current study the measurements would be extremely close to those you would measure in real life," McAuliffe says.

For example, the NRC determined that its realistically detailed 30% scale models are just right for testing. Larger and smaller models in other tests have produced some unreliable results. A "rolling road" on the wind tunnel floor, combined with spinning wheels, creates realistic ground effects. Using North American wind data, the NRC factored a continental 11 km/h average wind speed in its tests. It also added turbulence to simulate gusty conditions.

Anticipating the "what about crosswinds?" criticism, the NRC ran each test

with the models turned at various yaw angles to the wind, and built an average crosswind into its results. In fact, what the study revealed about the performance of configurations and technologies at different yaw angles brings carriers closer to being able to select the aerodynamic devices best suited for a specific route, with its own particular wind conditions.

"We also want to understand drag for a particular duty cycle. Our thought is that some fleets might only be able to afford one technology. Which one is best for a specific application? In the future a fleet will be able to get help from the NRC in choosing what works best for them," McAuliffe says.

In order to have the freedom to publish both positive and negative findings, the NRC did not test any commercially

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built aerodynamic products. It built its own. Its add-on designs are therefore not optimized, but as McAuliffe points out about the results, "A positive change indicates that there will be a positive change in real life."

Because the add-ons are not optimized, they could be tweaked to perform even better. For example, says McAuliffe, "Our boat tail didn't work nearly as well as commercial models. I'm doing a project this fall to optimize our boat tail design."

While the 95-page study looks intimidating at a glance, and speaks to aerodynamicists, it is mostly quite easy to understand, if not digestible in one sitting. Fuel savings are reported in litres and dollars, at \$1.34/litre, assuming an average 156,000 kms driven per year, and a driving speed of 100 km/h for 125,000 of those kilometres. There are also many excellent photos to help keep readers between the ditches.



The National Research Council conducted testing at a wind tunnel in Ottawa to determine the affects of various aerodynamic solutions.

Once introductions are made and the research methodology explained in sections one and two, each of the next five sections looks at different parts of

the rig. At the end of each section is a handy summary of the findings.

Section three covers drag characteristics of tractor-trailer combi-

nations. It discusses the drag of day and sleeper cabs, dry vans of different lengths, flatbeds and an LCV. Sample finding: A sleeper cab pulling a 53-ft. dry van will cost \$2,600 less a year, plus or minus \$700, in fuel than using a day cab.

Section four is packed with a discussion of drag reduction methods for four areas of dry vans: tractor-trailer gap, trailer underbody (which includes side skirts), trailer base (the rear end, where the boat tails go), trailer upper body and combinations and interactions. Sample finding: side skirts extended over the trailer wheels provide additional drag reduction.

Section five discusses flatbeds and the effect of box-cargo, tube-cargo, and side skirts on drag. Sample finding: Side skirts work for flatbeds and decrease drag the most when carrying box-cargo.

Section six discusses drag reduction for LCVs. Here, trailer fairings, side skirts, gap width and full aerodynamic packages are discussed. Sample finding: Reducing the trailer-trailer gap width from five feet to three feet improves fuel mileage by 1.5 litres/100kms, for an annual saving of \$1,900, plus or minus \$500.

Section seven looks at the aerodynamic matching of tractor and trailer height. The NRC matched day cabs and sleeper cabs, fitted with different roof fairings and deflectors, with tall and low dry vans, and flatbeds carrying tube-cargo. The fuel savings and waste associated with good and poor height matching are impressive. Sample finding: The aerodynamic performance of a simple deflector decreases in cross winds.

Regulatory changes to trailers are coming to Canada, McAuliffe says. "(NRC) is trying to inform regulators that want to reduce GHG and inform operators and manufacturers of what works and what doesn't work - future designs, and fleets, about technologies that might save money and give ROI." **TW**

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B.C. truck inspector wins award

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - Two Canadian truck inspectors excelled at this year's Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance's (CVSA) North American Inspectors Championship.

Every year, the CVSA recognizes the best inspectors by inviting member jurisdictions throughout the continent to participate in the championships, the only event dedicated to recognizing and awarding commercial vehicle inspector excellence. This year the event took place Aug. 10-14 in St. Louis, Mo.

Steve McPherson, an Ontario Ministry of Transportation truck inspector, came out on top of the competition placing first in the North American Standard Level 1 Inspection.

The Highest Points award for Canada was given to Darren Kennedy of the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

The championships saw a total of 51 participants this year. **TW**



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Education over experience

Ever heard of Pete Seeger? You probably know a few of his songs. "This Land Is Your Land." "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" "We Shall Overcome."

Just the other day, I was humming "If I Had a Hammer" after my laptop started acting up.

Seeger was an American folk singer and songwriter who grew up during the Great Depression and whose life was shaped by injustice and hard times.

One my favourite Seeger quotes is about the difference between education and experience.

"Education," he said, "is what happens when you read the fine print. Experience is what you get when you don't."

With fleet tax compliance today, there's not enough education going on and people are having a bad experience as a result.

Let's look at one area in particular: using GPS and electronic data for IFTA, IRP, and other distance-based taxes.

The industry's experience with GPS reminds me of where I was at with

Permits & Licensing
Sandy Johnson



computers 30 years ago.

I got my first taste of technology and trucking in the mid-1980s when a friend showed me what a PC could do. It was a revelation – a miracle compared to the calculator and paper spreadsheet I was using to complete fuel tax returns.

I learned about computers through trial and error. Sometimes I had great results. But my experience wasn't always what I hoped it would be.

For instance, I loved that I could do complex calculations quickly and with fewer mistakes, but then I had to figure out how to manage the massive volume of data I was creating.

I made trip summaries and other statements that were helpful to me, but they were meaningless to my friends at the provincial tax and licensing office who still wanted to see paper logs, trips sheets, and fuel receipts.

By then I had plenty of experience.

What I really needed was an education.

Unfortunately, there was no "fine print" about electronic records and fleet tax compliance back then. Luckily, I met others in my line of work who were doing similar things. We shared what we knew and learned from each other.

Like me and my first computer, the gee-whizzy factor of GPS and transportation management systems – "You mean I can see where my trucks are every two minutes?" – is wearing off fast.

Everyone I know in fleet tax compliance has experience with GPS and tracking software. Now they want expertise to make their investment pay off.

Case in point, consider a recent e-mail I got from a company looking for clarification on GPS data and IFTA reporting:

We are using a GPS tracking system that calculates distances driven, and our hand-calculated distances (based on odometer readings) are always greater than the GPS distances. They're not off by much, usually less than 200 km per 10,000 kms driven. What are the accepted differences in odometer readings vs GPS distance by IFTA?

Great question.

Distance calculated using GPS is typically 2 to 2.5% less than distance based on odometer and hubodometer readings. Why? There are several possibilities, including worn-out drive tires throwing off the odometer, or GPS pings that are too infrequent.

What should you do when your electronic and manual calculations disagree?

IFTA accepts both GPS and odometer/hubodometer readings as "acceptable distance accounting systems."

Producing raw GPS data, trip records with odometer readings, and an explanation why there's a discrepancy will help but the auditor has final say. In the end, his or her job is to determine whether your accounting system produces accurate and reliable results, and to make sure you have records to support your claims.

It doesn't matter whether you generate your data electronically or by hand as long as you're consistent.

When it comes to electronic data and fleet tax compliance, a lot of fleets aren't getting the education they need. They think "having GPS" is enough. They're putting hardware and software in place without regard for what the fine print says about fleet tax compliance. In some cases, the fine print has yet to be finalized.

As we approach the end of the calendar year, it's a good time to learn the rules and procedures surrounding electronic records and fleet tax compliance. Find an expert to help you with training. The education you receive will make your overall experience better. **TW**

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

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A new spin on the 6x2

Volvo raises not only the axle, but also the bar, with its Adaptive Loading 6x2

By James Menzies

HEYBURN, Idaho – Just as 6x2 tractor configurations were beginning to see renewed interest and more widespread adoption, Volvo has advanced the concept with a new 6x2 with liftable forward axle that provides even greater fuel savings and much better handling in adverse weather.

Volvo Trucks recently demonstrated its new 6x2 with Adaptive Loading on a run between Brigham City, Utah and Heyburn, Idaho.

While Volvo's previously available 6x2 tag axles maintained contact with the ground at all times, its Adaptive Loading system raises the dead axle when lightly loaded to operate in a 4x2 configuration.

Doing so reduces rolling resistance for improved fuel economy but also provides a smoother, safer ride thanks to the system's ability to adjust load distribution based on the weight of the load. When the truck is lightly loaded, the forward axle raises four inches to operate in 4x2 mode. I drove a Volvo VNM day cab with a gross weight of 34,820 lbs, axle up, and the handling was excellent. With the axle raised, you get the benefit of a longer wheelbase and the system automatically shifts the optimal weight to the steer axle for improved steering.

The driven axle maintains a better footprint with the road surface because it's not sharing the load with the tag axle as it would in a traditional 6x2, or with another drive axle as would be the case with a 6x4.

Customers who have experience with Volvo's 6x2 with Adaptive Loading told visiting journalists that the handling improvements are more pronounced in adverse weather, and cite safety as one of the primary advantages of the system. Shane Law of Blackfoot, Idaho-based Alpine Logistics Group, re-

called pulling an empty trailer in heavy rain when he considered stopping. But when he raised the forward axle, more weight was transferred to the steer axle, the wheelbase was effectively extended, and "It was just like dry roads," he said.

"We won't go back to 6x4s," added Gene Brice, owner of Idaho Milk Transport, citing the same safety benefits. "The safety advantage is too much."

Chris Stadler, product marketing manager, regional haul applications with Volvo, said the system always provides optimum traction, because it dynamically shifts the weight of the load to the appropriate end points. It does this within the framework of the regulations, so it won't overload the steer axle, which is rated at 12,500 to 14,600 lbs.

The system is entirely automated and doesn't allow the driver to raise the liftable axle when the truck is heavily loaded, which Volvo says satisfies regulatory requirements aimed at preventing abuse or misuse that could cause infrastructure damage.

The liftable axle, provided by Link Manufacturing, is rated at 20,000 lbs. The Adaptive Loading spec' also features: Volvo's D11 or D13 engine (rated at 405 hp/1,550 lb.-ft. or 425 hp/1,750 lb.-ft., respectively); the I-Shift automated manual transmission with premium shifter; as well as Volvo's VEST stability system and Hill Start Assist.

It's approved for GCWs of up to 90,000 lbs.

In addition to providing improved drivability and greater safety, Volvo's Adaptive Loading system also provides the efficiency benefits inherent in a 6x2 axle configuration. The non-driven axle reduces vehicle weight by about 300 lbs. This can be converted into payload or will translate into a fuel economy improvement.

Bulk haulers that take advantage of the increased payload still see fuel economy savings, due to the reduced



Volvo's 6x2 with Adaptive Loading raises the forward axle when lightly loaded or empty to reduce rolling resistance and improve handling.

friction and parasitic losses that result from eliminating a set of gears and also improved rolling resistance which occurs due to the optimized weight distribution. In some bulk applications, the 300-lb weight savings can generate the revenue of one additional load per year, Volvo claims.

Volvo says its customers using Adaptive Loading are seeing fuel economy gains of 3-5% compared to a 6x4. Those already using traditional 6x2s with non-liftable tag axles are seeing some modest fuel economy improvements over those systems as well. More than 100 such trucks have been produced, even though Adaptive Loading doesn't officially go into production until next year. Two Canadian fleets are among those using the system today.

Of course, some provinces – namely Ontario, Quebec and B.C. – take a dim view of 6x2 systems with load-shifting capabilities, so consult your local regulations before placing an order. Note, the liftable axle makes it more difficult to fly below enforcement's radar, if you're inclined to do so. Volvo officials said they continue to work with provincial regulators to explain the benefits of 6x2s and to educate them on the safeguards against misuse that have been

built into the systems.

Some customers are citing a savings of 0.8 cents per mile in fuel, which translates to about \$2,000 per year, Stadler said.

For Ploger Transportation based in Bellevue, Ohio, the total savings amount to a whopping \$11,000 annually per vehicle, according to Joel Morrow, whose general freight operation is among the most mainstream of those we chatted with in Idaho.

"Our focus is efficiency," he said. "We are a small carrier, we have no economies of scale working for us. The only thing we have is efficiency and without it, we're dead in the water. Fuel mileage is a matter of pride with us and we like to think we're one of the best companies out there in terms of fuel mileage."

Morrow read about the widespread use of 6x2s with liftable axles in Europe and approached every North American OEM in pursuit of a partner that would work with his company to bring the technology here.

"None of them were even willing to look at it," he said. "Volvo is the only one that said 'Okay, let's go, let's do this.'"

Ploger's trucks are loaded about 90% of the time – normally to about 60,000 lbs GVW – and often operate in bad weather.

Morrow said fuel economy has improved, he's able to get 265,000 miles on a set of steer tires and the trucks have helped with driver retention. The trucks have achieved 30-day moving averages of greater than 10 mpg, Morrow said. Productivity has improved as well, he added, since the system simplifies the coupling and decoupling process. The suspension can be raised two inches, which can help free landing gear feet that are stuck in ice or soft surfaces and makes it easier to crank up the legs. The load-shifting capability also means trucks can produce greater traction on slippery surfaces than traditional 6x4s.

"We've increased productivity 20% across the board," Morrow said.

"That was the most surprising thing. Most of that occurred during the winter months – guys weren't getting stuck and they could get in and out of places."

Fleets that haul diminishing loads or that frequently run empty are likely to see the greatest benefits, since they'll spend more time operating with the liftable axle raised. These fleets can combine Adaptive Loading with Adaptive Gearing for further efficiency gains. Adaptive Gearing locks out 12th gear and operates in direct drive when load-

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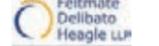
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ed but allows for the use of 12th gear in overdrive when light or empty. Customers using Adaptive Gearing can also program in different maximum speeds based on the gross combination weight of the vehicle.

Volvo recommends an optimized tire package on its Adaptive Loading spec' that will normally place a steer or trailer tire on the liftable axle. Alpine's Law said he's convinced he won't have to replace the tires on his liftable axle until he's ready to sell the truck, which runs empty 65% of the time.

Volvo's Stadler said it's not unusual for fleets to save one set of tires per year, and the benefits extend to other positions beyond the liftable axle. The steer and drive tires last longer too, Stadler pointed out, because they maintain a better footprint with the pavement and see less scuffing and irregular wear. There are other maintenance savings to be considered as well, such as longer brake life on the liftable axle. Volvo's standard spec' features disc brakes on the steer axle and drums at the other positions.

Load-shifting is carried out by Volvo's proprietary control module and is entirely automated with no driver input required. The driver can, however, adjust the traction control mode based on driving conditions. Inside the cab a rocker switch allows for the selection of three traction control modes: Optimized Traction provides optimum weight distribution based on the weight of the load, biasedly balancing the weight of the axles; Enhanced Traction mode will place more weight on the driven axle, ideal for when extra traction is required (ie. when launching, climbing a grade or in slippery conditions); and Basic Traction mode distributes the weight equally across the tandem axles (ideal for loading/unloading or long-term parking).

Volvo plans to continue offering its current 6x2 with non-lifting tag axle, but fleets we spoke to said it will likely "discontinue itself" over time, as the benefits of the liftable axle are superior. Ploger's Morrow said a traditional 6x2 is "acceptable, not exceptional" because you "don't get the wheelbase advantage."

Clay Handy of Handy Truck Line based in Paul, Idaho, said the only challenge currently with Volvo's 6x2 with Adaptive Loading is getting enough of them into the fleet, since it's not yet in full production. Those are some pretty strong endorsements from some pretty no-nonsense fleets that meticulously track their costs.

Driving a loaded Volvo VNL with sleeper cab back to Brigham City, Utah was an unremarkable experience; it drove like any other I-Shift-equipped VN, which is to say, extremely comfortably. The truck felt well balanced and it steered and braked nicely. But it's with a light load or no load - and counterintuitively, in bad weather - that the Adaptive Loading system really shines, according to its everyday users.

Six-by-twos, once seen as a niche specification that can deliver modest fuel economy gains, now provide the added benefits of superior handling and improved safety.

Notwithstanding archaic regulations in some Canadian provinces that prohibit the use of 6x2s based on outdated perceptions, Volvo has raised not only the axle, but also the bar, when it comes to 6x2 technologies. **TW**



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Manitoba trucking industry wins a biodiesel reprieve

Continued from page 1

understand it 100% of the sales of that product are already earmarked for US distribution and as such, the HDRD that we would be getting in Manitoba would be coming from Singapore or the Netherlands, so there's some real supply chain considerations."

The MTA also questioned the environmental benefits of "kind of clear-cutting palm forests in Singapore to turn it into biodiesel so you can ship it halfway across the globe and mix it into fuel tanks here in Manitoba."

Shaw also noted that, because biodiesel two is a supposedly a "better product," it's also about 40 cents a litre more expensive than regular diesel, "so even at a 3% injection, 3% of 800 million litres is like a \$13 million a year touch to our industry."

That argument was "Point A" of the MTA's two-pronged response to the threatened increase in the biodies-

'We recognize the impact we have on the environment,'

Terry Shaw, MTA

el mandate. Point B was that, "We for many years have been working with the government on regulation

and other tools that will help us reduce our greenhouse gas footprint," Shaw said. "We recognize the impact we have on the environment. We use the equipment we do because it is the best equipment available to meet the needs of our industry and our national economy right now, and we shouldn't be penalized for that."

Shaw stressed that today's fossil fuel-consuming vehicles are the most efficient and effective ones the trucking industry can use, though he also admitted that they do have some associated impact

in regards to greenhouse gases. His suggestion? "Instead of penalizing us by forcing us under the banner of greenhouse gases to use products or equipment that doesn't meet our needs, (the province should) work with us on tools that we have readily available, so we can implement those quickly, in greater numbers. And by that I mean changing regulation."

Shaw was quick to note that the Manitoba government has already listened to the industry, changing the rules around the use of the wide-base tires that can increase fuel economy significantly, but he added that's its only one step toward a greener trucking industry in the province.

"What we also did was to tell them that there's a whole host of other products - APUs, aerodynamics, boat tails, fairings, tire inflation systems, all that good stuff - that industry wants to use, but maybe doesn't have the information it needs in order to make an informed decision and maybe doesn't have the capital to purchase."

To help make its case, Shaw said, the MTA partnered with Manitoba's Buller Centre for Business to come up with an alternative to biodiesel: what they ended up calling the GrEEener Trucking Fuel Efficiency Initiative.

"For many years we've been active participants in something called the Tomorrow Now discussions," Shaw said. "It's basically the province of Manitoba's green discussions, recognizing the impact we have and, more importantly, recognizing the opportunity our industry has."

He said the MTA connected with the Buller Centre at those meetings and since then has "partnered on a host of papers and other projects that we have gone to the government on together and showed them there is an independent third party who's also in agreement with us."

That "unbiased agreement" seems to have helped sway the bureaucrats, though Shaw noted it's a shame that, while his organization has been advocating for many years, "until we kind of got that independent third party involved we hadn't really received much attention. We haven't changed our messaging at all but I guess maybe there might have been a perception that if the trucking guys are asking for it, then it can't be good."

Shaw said the partnership with the Buller Centre has produced "a lot of real significant wins for the province - our industry specifically, but for the province too in regards to some of these environmental initiatives. And because of the work the MTA did in communicating the concerns (about upping the mandate) and more importantly in communicating the better alternative, to their credit the Manitoba government listened."

Politicians, of course, are known for paying lip service and then going off and doing what they want anyway, but Shaw doesn't think that's going to be the case here.

"I genuinely believe they're very interested, absolutely," he said, adding that "they heard our presenta-

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tion on the GrEEener trucking fuel efficiency initiative and they said it passed the smell test. So let's hammer out the details on how we can proceed."

He said those discussions are ongoing and that, so far, it's been very positive.

"I'm very confident, based on the reception we received from the province, that (it) will be a go," he said. Shaw also admitted, however, that they haven't received any formal word from the province - which is still reviewing the GrEEener initiative - but said "informally, they said it makes some sense...and we expect to be proceeding at some point in the future, in partnership with the province, on working towards (the GrEEener trucking fuel efficiency initiative) here in Manitoba."

Shaw would like to see the current federal mandate for biodiesel removed as well, saying it's definitely hurting the industry. He doesn't appear to be wearing rose-coloured glasses about it actually happening, though.

"As much as we would love to see it removed, I don't think that's a practical reality, so we're focusing on (convincing the province to not) raise the biodiesel mandate and hoping they will partner with us on our alternative program."

He noted the MTA is actually supportive of alternative fuels, saying "We've got members who are dabbling with natural gas and other considerations, but the problem we have with biodiesel is that in its current form it doesn't meet our needs."

The MTA's official stance on biodiesel is that it has to cost the same as, or less than, diesel, provide energy equal to or greater than that of diesel, produce tangible environmental benefits compared to diesel, meet Canadian standards, be acceptable to the engine OEMs and not impact the equipment negatively. "Biodiesel one doesn't tick any of those boxes," Shaw said.

On the other hand, while he believes biodiesel won't hurt the engines and could produce tangible environmental benefits, the fact that it costs a lot more than diesel is a deal-breaker.

"We're not talking a couple of pennies different, he said. "We're talking 40% difference or more and, while it's got greater energy than biodiesel one, there's still about 6% less energy content than traditional diesel. So (when you add all that up), we're looking at \$13- or \$14-million in additional cost to industry, at a time when the alternative - the GrEEener trucking fuel efficiency initiative - is going to only cost industry a couple of million dollars annually and helps us reduce our fuel consumption, which means reduced fuel costs."

Shaw said the GrEEener initiative will be better both environmentally and economically as well as costing less to implement, calling it "a real win-win-win situation."

He said that's the main reason why, when the MTA eventually got the province to the table, "they kind of recognized that and said they have to give it some really serious consideration."

The message from Manitoba right now, then, is "Stay tuned." **TW**

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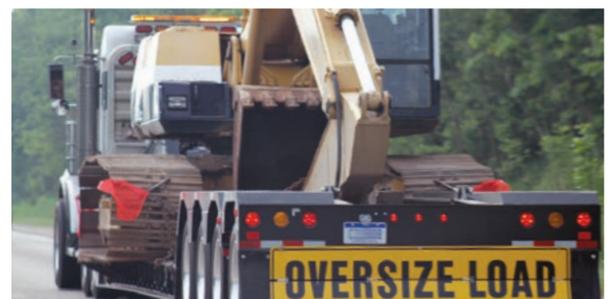
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Opinion: We'll take truck drivers over driverless trucks

News articles earlier this year about driverless trucks operating in Nevada and the Alberta oil sands under restricted conditions set off speculation about whether we'll need truck drivers within a few decades – and whether autonomous vehicles are an answer to the driver shortage.

National Trucking Week, celebrated recently, was a good time to consider the truck driving occupation and what we can do to encourage the best candidates

Guest Column

Louise Yako



to enter a demanding and essential career that requires judgment, planning, know-how and a host of other skills. Unlike autonomous vehicles, drivers may be called upon to react quickly to unexpected incidents on the road, bringing all their varied experience about their equipment, the load they're hauling, and

road conditions into play. The question is, is the trucking industry appealing to enough quality candidates to meet our needs today – and in the future?

Planners of large-scale projects in Northern BC are realizing the pool of available drivers is diminishing at a time when they need it to grow. A report developed by a liquefied natural gas (LNG) provincial working group identifies "truck driver" is the seventh most in-demand occupation to complete these projects.

Today, there are about 300,000 truck drivers in Canada – that's 1% of the pop-

ulation and 1.5% of the labour force. In BC, most truck drivers are male (96%), and nearly half (47%) are between the ages of 45 and 64. With less interest in the career from young men, the traditional labour pool for trucking, governments are funding programs to train women and Aboriginal candidates for the occupation. The type of training truck drivers receive varies, as there is no training standard for the occupation. Traditionally, driver candidates often started work on farms and honed their technical and mechanical skills on heavy machinery.

The in-house training culture that existed during supply and price management of the industry diminished as trucking became deregulated in the 1990s. High school graduation, and sometimes not even that, became the prerequisite to become a truck driver, along with a Class 1 licence. Part of the problem is that truck driving was – and still is, inaccurately – considered an "unskilled" trade because no certification requirement exists. Expert veteran drivers, trainees who've invested time and money in reputable, quality training programs, and trucking employers are justified in scoffing at that label.

In fact, a new National Occupational Standard (NOS) for the Commercial Vehicle Operator (Truck Driver) published by Trucking HR Canada in May 2015 puts paid to the description. The list of skills and competencies required runs to 68 pages and includes workplace/interpersonal ("soft") skills; non-driving job functions and equipment operation; and driving-specific competencies. And these are the core occupational competencies only, not including additional skills and knowledge needed to, for example, operate specialized equipment like the oversize/overweight vehicles that haul heavy cargo, including equipment used at industrial sites. The NOS is a foundational document, developed with the participation of drivers, fleets, industry experts and trucking associations across Canada; trucking companies and driver training schools would benefit from making it their guidebook.

To seat their trucks with the type of drivers who've mastered its competencies, companies must accept that some level of participation in training is required, whether that means through in-house programs to "finish" recent graduates from truck driver training programs or providing mentors to new recruits. Many larger companies are already doing this. The rewards range from better-qualified, safer drivers operating their trucks to improved retention – and a stronger reputation with clients for professionalism, safety and reliability.

Ideally, recognition of the importance of the truck driving profession, better training, and a commitment by companies to investing in entry-level drivers would influence more young people to consider a driving career. During National Trucking Week – every week – we salute those who already have. **TW**

Louise Yako is president and CEO of the B.C. Trucking Association. BCTA is a member-based, non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization, is the recognised voice of the provincial motor carrier industry, representing over 1,000 truck and motor coach fleets and over 250 suppliers to the industry. BCTA members operate over 13,000 vehicles, employ 26,000 people, and generate over \$2 billion in revenue annually in the province.

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'White noise' backup alarm adopted by municipal fleet

COCHRANE, Alta. - Responding to noise complaints from local residents, the town of Cochrane, Alta. has equipped its trucks with 'white noise' backup alarms.

The bbs-tek alarms, from Brigade Electronics, replace the traditional loud 'beeping' noise associated with backup alarms with a more localized audible warning only heard by those in the immediate vicinity of the backing vehicle, according to the manufacturer.

Cochrane residents Bryan Skrypnek and Kevin Shier discovered the technology when dealing with the annoyance of backup alarms in their neighbourhood, where a municipal fleet was based.

Having discovered the technology existed, they brought it to the attention of the town and eventually became a distributor.

"We found that many companies were cautious of replacing their current reversing alarm with Brigade's

white sound alarm, without fully understanding whether it would impact their insurance or vehicle warranties," said Shier. "We were able to go away and answer all of their questions positively, finding that replacing the alarms wouldn't cause any negative impact."

The system was tested with a number of private fleets before it was adopted by the town of Cochrane, which has made it standard on all its heavy trucks, including fire trucks.

"I didn't expect such a positive result in such a short time frame," Shier said. "I'm simply doing this to get the technology out there." **TW**

Vancouver port sees spike in cargo volumes

VANCOUVER, B.C. - Port Metro Vancouver says it has seen cargo volumes increase 1.5% so far this year compared to the first half of 2014.

The port has processed 70.3 million metric tonnes of total cargo during the first half of 2015.

"We are seeing continued growth of trade through Port Metro Vancouver as Canadian demand for foreign products and international demand for Canadian resources continue to increase," said Robin Silvester, president and chief executive officer, Port Metro Vancouver.

"Our status as North America's most diversified port is significant as overall cargo grew in the first half of 2015 despite some softening markets and global economic uncertainty."

The port saw increases in wheat, sulphur, potash, lumber and consumer goods in the first half of this year, offsetting declines in coal and petroleum products.

Container trade showed substantial growth, with an 8% jump in the number of twenty-foot-equivalent units (TEUs).

This jump exceeded expectations and could be partly attributable to the impact of US cargo diverted to Vancouver as the result of labour strife.

Auto volumes rebounded and were up 7%.

"The port continues to grow in response to increasing consumer and international demand," said Silvester. "It remains critical that we continue working with government and other stakeholders to build related infrastructure and maintain the supply of available land to support trade and goods movement." **TW**

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Grand Champion Wiebe no stranger to the podium

Continued from page 1

categories at their respective provincial event and must also qualify for the Nationals by not having had a preventable motor vehicle collision in the previous 12 months, having performed the regular duties of a full-time professional truck driver for at least 11 months, worked for no more than two employers during the preceding 12 months and had no licence suspensions during that period. They also can't have had any driving-related criminal offence convictions registered against them over the past five years.

In short, the contest pits head to head the best and safest drivers from coast to coast. None of this seemed to pose problems for the 34 drivers on hand, many of whom have been driving with excellent records for decades.

The competition kicked off on Thursday, Sept. 10 with a welcome reception presented by the event host, the Saskatchewan Trucking Association. Friday saw the crowd treated to a well-received tour of the RCMP's famed Heritage Centre, followed by an evening dinner event.

The competition itself was held on Saturday at the site of Regina's annual "Queen City Ex" in the shadow of both the current and the still under construction new Mosaic Stadium. The activity got hot and heavy right off the bat on Saturday morning – especially hot later in the day when the quality of contestants was coupled with the virtually cloudless, 29 degree sunshine beating down from on high.

But before the drivers could take to the field of hostilities at Evraz Place, they had to complete a 50-question written exam designed to test their mettle when it comes to trucking safety and knowledge. The timed quiz was followed by a pre-trip inspection of a truck/tractor trailer in which the contestants had to identify five defects designed to test their recognition skills (they had to identify them all within eight minutes).

From there, they hit the main event: the driving course, which featured a series of eight obstacles such as a serpentine section that's basically analogous to slaloming large cones (in reverse and forward), as well as a tight, simulated dock into which they have to back their vehicles as if around a corner. Each element had a point allotment, with deductions made from the total for each mistake, whether it be a scrape or a missed item.

Besides naming the top three drivers in each truck category, awards are also given to the best team overall, the Rookie of the Year (rookie referring to the contestant being a "Nationals virgin," not necessarily a new driver) and the Grand Champion.

Here's a breakdown of the winners:

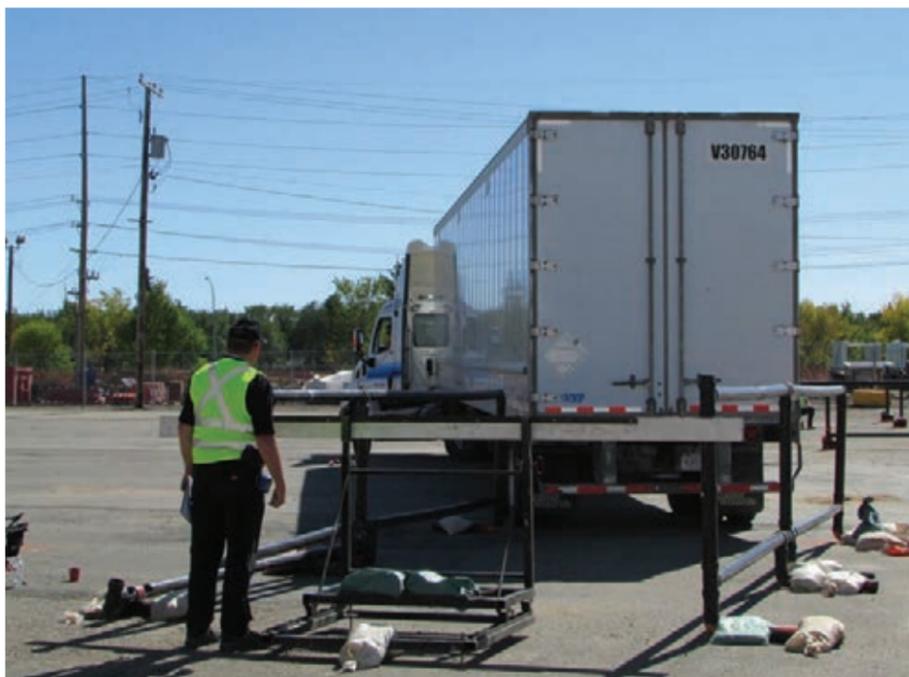
Grand Champion: Ken Wiebe, EBD Enterprises, Manitoba

Team: Ontario (Mike Hamilton, Joe Kuntz, Sebastian Tatar, Shawn Matheson, Wayne Burnett)

B-Trains:

1st: Ken Wiebe, EBD Enterprises, Manitoba

2nd: Keith Atherton, SLH Transport, Saskatchewan



A competitor backs into a tight spot during the National Professional Truck Driving Championships in Regina in early September.

3rd: Jean-Marc Laurin, Transport W.J. Deans, Quebec

Straight Truck:

1st: Mike Hamilton, City of Brampton, Ontario

2nd: Keith Franklin, Canadian Freightways, Alberta

3rd: Danny Maltais, Simard Transport, Quebec

Single Single:

1st: Marc Leger, Marc Leger Transport, Quebec

2nd: Brian Hrabarchuk, Canadian Freightways, Manitoba

3rd: Joe Kuntz, Home Hardware Stores, Ontario

Single Tandem:

1st: Sebastian Tatar, Con-way Freight, Ontario

2nd: Steve MacPhee, Day & Ross Transportation, Atlantic

3rd: Greg Muzychka, Canadian Freightways, Manitoba

Tandem Tandem:

1: Rod Harrison, Canadian Freightways, Alberta

2: Shawn Matheson, Home Hardware Stores, Ontario

3: David Leroux, Compagnie Martin Brower, Quebec

Rookie of the Year: Sebastian Tatar, Con-way Freight, Ontario

While rookie of the year Tatar may not have scored high enough above the average in his category to turn his triple win into a quadruple one, he still takes away some serious bragging rights of his own. He not only came first in his category of Single Tandem, he also won as a member of the championship-winning Team Ontario and his performance was good enough to make him the eventual Rookie of the Year. In all, it was a heckuva performance by the Con-way Freight driver, and he took it with humility.

"Today was my day," he said. "Tomorrow might be somebody else's. Yesterday would have been somebody else's. We've got a lot of good drivers here."

Tatar said he prepared for the com-

petition by doing the things he does regularly in his daily duties, but with a twist.

"I did something totally uncalled for," he admitted, noting that when you get to the Nationals, there's no practice, no warming up, no qualifying opportunities to be had. "I've heard of other drivers going out and setting up a dummy track and just practicing, but I prepared in the live world, so if I had to go to a customer and had to back up into a dock, instead of having a whole parking lot (in which to do it), because backing up straight is the first option, I took the tightest possible spot to back up."

Doing his due diligence out in the real world meant he ran the risk of something untoward happening, however.

"The only problem is that if some-

thing happens you're not running over a pylon, you're taking the corner of a building out, so it makes it a little more stressful. But it gives you the actual edge where you know you can do it, so let's give it all we've got."

Tatar's biggest challenge came from "backing up into the alley dock, because you have the wall in front of you and you cannot touch it. So unlike other places where you can touch certain things (and only be deducted some points), if you touch the wall you're done. But each obstacle has its own challenge, because you need different experience to get through them."

His message to others can be applied to the trucking industry, but it could also be handy pretty well anywhere. "Never give up," he said. "I mean, whatever you get standing in your way, anything is possible. Dreams do come alive."

He also acknowledged the importance of the higher power in his life. "God is my witness and I brought him along with me and it was all I needed. He told me to just grab that steering wheel and (he'd) steer it for me and that's just what I did."

And he very nearly won it all...

With the 2015 National Truck Driving Championships in the record book, attention now turns to next year's spectacular. And though the venue and date for next year's Nationals hasn't been set in stone yet, Team Ontario rep and president of the Ontario Truck Driving Championships, Ewen Steele – noting that the event will coincide with "70 years of trucking championships in Ontario" – said they're looking seriously toward the Brantford area. Regardless of the final venue, "We're looking forward to the Nation coming to Ontario next year," he said. "We apologize if we may keep some of the hardware for ourselves, though." **TW**

Meet the category winners:

Ken Wiebe – Winnipeg, Man. – B-Train, Grand Champion: Wiebe has been a collision-free professional driver for 35 years. One of his most unusual experiences came when he pushed two vehicles out of a flooded street, after which one of the grateful drivers wrote a thank you letter that was published in the local newspaper. He and his wife, Madelyn, have four children.

Sebastian Tatar – Port Hope, Ont. – Single Tandem, Rookie of the Year: Tatar has been driving collision free for 14 years. He enjoys playing soccer, working on cars and spending time with his wife and young son. He's proud to have extinguished a fire and provided comfort to a family of four whose SUV flipped on the highway.

Mike Hamilton – Bolton, Ont. – Straight Truck: Hamilton has driven professionally for 19 years, the last 10 of which were collision free. A runner up at the 2013 provincial championship, Hamilton has also won three regional championships. To Mike, the best part of being a truck driver is the responsibility for operating large vehicles on the road.

Marc Leger – Quebec – Single Single: Leger is no stranger to the Nationals. He was the 2012 Rookie of the year and took first place in his division in a Moncton, New Brunswick driving championship. Leger has two children: nine-year-old Raphael and eight-year-old Mikael.

Rod Harrison – Edmonton, Alta. – Tandem Tandem: A professional driver for 38 years, 26 of which have been collision free, Harrison has competed in provincial and national championships for 23 years, winning Grand Champion in each provincial competition in which he has participated. He has also placed first, second and third at the Nationals. Harrison and his wife, Deb, have three children and four grandchildren. **TW**

Trucking's crisis in leadership

The accepted wisdom within the driver pool regarding the driver shortage is that there is no driver shortage. Large numbers of people who obtain their commercial driver's licence discover it's simply not their cup of tea after spending a few months on the road.

But is it trucking, or the culture of the trucking industry, that is turning people off? I ask this question because it is not only the newly minted driver that is being turned off; it is also the seasoned drivers that are experiencing a high level of dissatisfaction at present. That dissatisfaction is expressed across a broad range of issues drivers face every day. We don't have a driver crisis in the trucking industry, we have a leadership crisis.

I'm defining leadership here as the movers and shakers that steer the Top 50 Canadian trucking companies. These are the people that influence and guide policy in our industry. With each passing year these large companies continue to grow, primarily through mergers and acquisitions.

The trucking landscape is becoming more homogeneous. These large compa-



Over the Road

Al Goodhall

nies often share resources and follow the same fiscal policies and "best practices." Return on investment is the driving factor for the majority of these companies. So even if you are not employed by one of these companies as a driver, they have an influence over you and that influence continues to grow.

Drivers are dependent on the guidance and the vision of this crop of leaders. There are three broad areas in which drivers' needs are not being met: trucker lifestyle (culture), trucker health, and trucker training.

The trucking lifestyle, the culture of trucking, is a delicate thing. It takes a special type of person to do this job day in and day out over the course of a lifetime. It requires a degree of passion. You don't do long-haul trucking just for the money. That never works out. It's very difficult to list the qualities that make up a trucker, but along with passion goes independence.

That independence is key to the trucking lifestyle. That independence is being eroded by the methods our leaders are employing as they adopt new technologies. The preferred method seems to be one of control and restriction which is a method loathed by drivers. Adopting new methods and technologies is a must, but they have to complement and strengthen the characteristics of a professional driver - not create undue stress and limit the driver's performance.

Trucker health is an issue that is getting much more attention today than it has in the past.

But a driver's health goes far beyond simple physical well-being. A driver's mental health and emotional health is key to a happy, safe and highly motivated driver. For far too long, leaders in the trucking industry have been dragging their feet on some of the simple issues related to health and safety. These include safe havens for truck parking and well-equipped rest areas for drivers, especially in remote areas through which we travel frequently.

Adequate rest is *the* hot button issue for an aging demographic that makes up the majority of the driver pool.

How drivers are compensated falls into the health category. Income is not keeping pace with the cost of living; in fact we are moving backwards.

Drivers are "at work" for most of their lives. The ability to step away from work on a regular basis to deal with burn-out and fatigue is a must. Drivers cannot do that unless they are compensated adequately.

Driver training is not an entry-level issue; it is a cradle-to-grave issue. The driving culture and a driver's health are dependent on the quality and consistency of driver education. Ongoing training for drivers does not exist within our industry. This is our leaders' biggest fail. How can you possibly attract new blood to an industry that does not even have a system of recognition for driver qualifications across different platforms?

On this file everyone seems to operate on a different page. Stories abound within the driver rank and file of new drivers that are hired on with minimal training at the same rate of pay as seasoned veterans with proven safety records.

How can you possibly develop and maintain a culture of workplace safety across the industry without a system of universally accepted workplace training in place? Perform a few queries on the Internet and you will find truck driving is consistently among the top 10 most dangerous jobs. Thought that was firefighters and police? They don't even make the top 10 list.

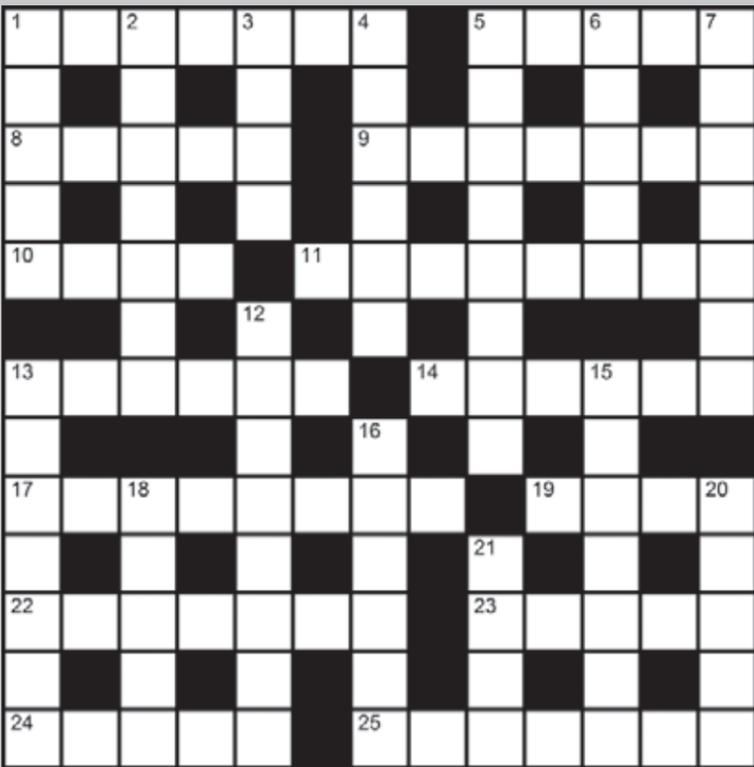
The crisis in leadership is the fact that professional drivers, the backbone of the Canadian trucking industry, continue to be reduced to nothing more than numbers on a spreadsheet. **TW**

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

THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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- 5 I-95's southern terminus
- 8 Final tax-return filing month
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- 10 Offramp
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- 13 "Smokey and the Bandit" trucker Snow
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Down

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- 16 Licence-plate factory, frequently
- 18 Ohio's "Rubber City"
- 20 "Put the pedal to the ____"
- 21 Truck-stop restaurant reading

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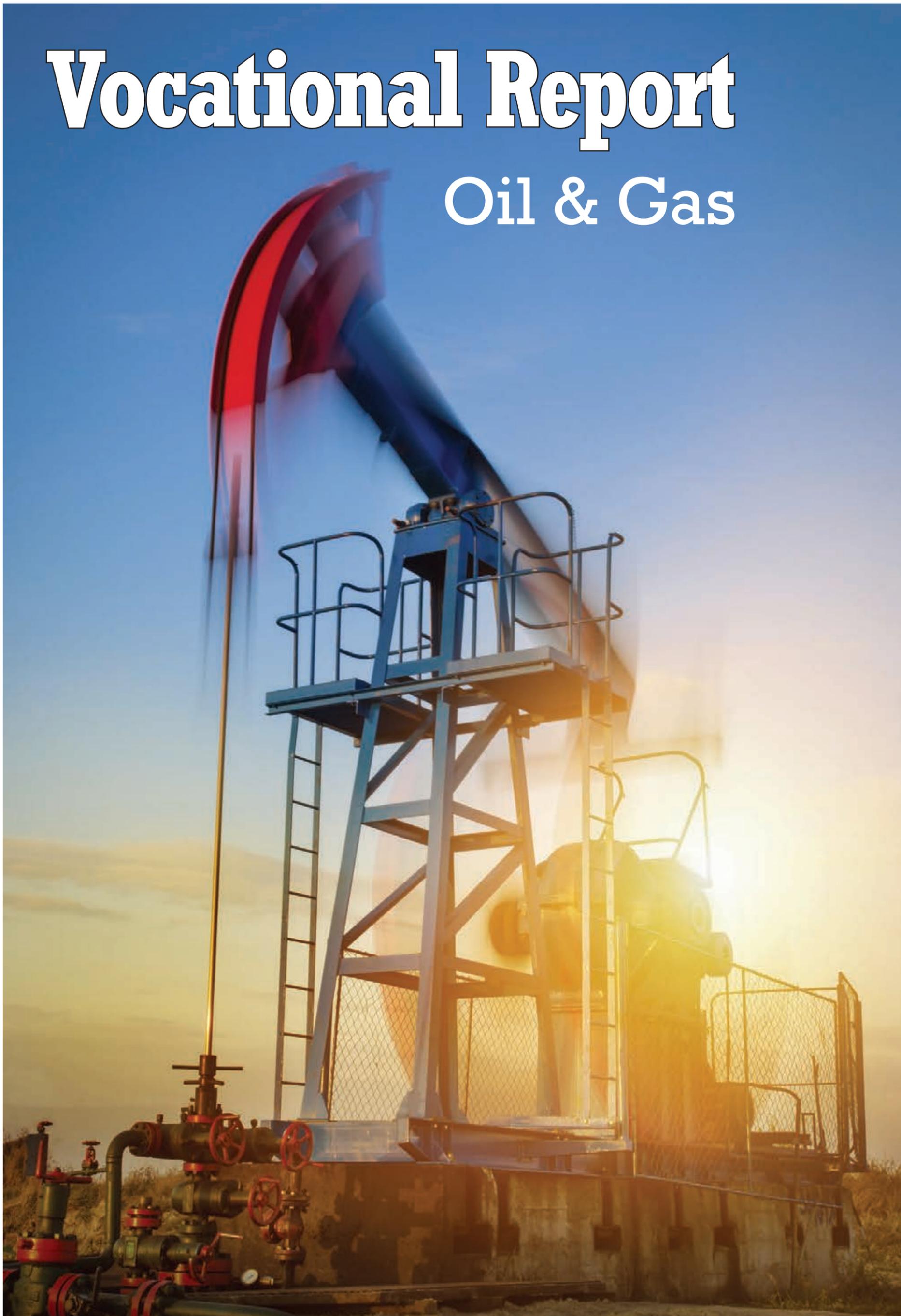
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Opinion: The Keystone XL pipeline is dead

By Roger McKnight

I took my car into the dealership the other day because, well, they told me to! I found myself almost completely entombed in their reception area, which is sort of like a financial holding cell provided for the customer before they present you with their regular maintenance bill at which time they tell you nothing is irregular.

In the tedium that is called anticipation, I found myself staring at the flatscreen TV on the wall playing an old re-run of *Let's Make a Deal*. From what I could see, there weren't any deals. I did however notice some ominous similarities between this show and the song and dance we are witnessing in today's energy fiasco.

A key element in today's "Deal" is to get noticed in order to take part in the game at all. So the guy who dresses up as a hot dog is likely to get picked over someone dressed as a fire hydrant.

The upcoming UN-sponsored Climate Change December sing-along in Paris, is taking on all of the characteristics of *Let's Make a Deal*, with

the political contestants competing on the grounds of whose climate promises are bigger than everyone else's. President Obama galloped onto the stage with his Clean Power Plan, which essentially says that coal-fired generation will be severely cut back and preference given to alternative energy sources – namely wind and solar.

Just so long as it's sunny and windy, I guess. Counter to White House claims, this "plan" will increase the cost of electricity, which affects the economic health of the entire country, puts hundreds and thousands of jobs in jeopardy, and all for the sake of reducing American emissions by a mere fraction. And all while China brings one coal-fired power plant on line every 10 days.

Will the president use his power of Executive Order to ban the export of US coal to China as well as India, the numbers two and three highest polluters on the global list after Number 1 – the US of A? I don't think so, but call my bluff because mining coal means a lot of voting jobs with an election year looming.

The president can't shut down coal exports, but he is adept at erasing the Oil Sands from his 'I must take care of this someday,' list.

Alberta's new NDP administration has made gallant efforts to placate the Carbon Killer King with increased costs charged to large Greenhouse Gas, GHG emitters, institution of new carbon capture technology, as well as carbon tax programs.

But these actions have fallen on deaf ears and have been received by President Obama with nothing more than an, 'Oh, there's a fly on my shoulder,' brush off.

And of course the Keystone XL pipeline will not escape President Obama's indifference to America's largest trading partner either.

After seven years of what I see as insulting procrastination, under the current administration, the XL pipeline is dead. TransCanada spent \$2.4 billion on a pipe to nowhere.

The only option is to challenge the US under NAFTA, which clearly states that both countries shall have unfettered access to each others' energy markets – but I guess we got 'fettered.'

The presidential veto on the XL will be announced soon after Congress goes for its summer break, and curiously soon after the recent announcement of our federal election. There goes another slap in Mr. Harper's face.

It would be interesting to see how Thomas Mulcair and Justin Trudeau would, or dare I say, will handle the quixotic president, a challenge that President Obama would no doubt treat merely as a game.

It will be hard to win a game of *Let's Make a Deal* with the president when he holds all the cards and is palming the ace. **TW**

Roger McKnight is the chief petroleum analyst with En-Pro International Inc. He has more than 25 years experience in the oil industry, and has held senior marketing management positions responsible for national and international accounts. He is the originator of the cardlock concept of marketing on-road diesel that is now the predominant purchase method of diesel in Canada. You can read his blog on Trucknews.com.

Alberta's oilpatch facing a rough, wild ride

No one knows for sure when stability will return, but one industry group thinks current low oil prices are temporary

By Jim Bray

EDMONTON, Alta. – The fact that global oil prices are down should surprise no one who's been paying attention to the news over the past year or so. But how does that affect Alberta, a province that traditionally has lived and died by the price of oil?

Not surprisingly, it depends upon who you ask.

Truck West reached out to the Alberta government, a couple of trucking companies who operate in and around the province's oil patch, and the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers for their takes on the subject.

Their responses ranged from looking ahead long-term toward a positive future, to trying to cope with the present, to beating the dead corpse of a long-time government whose buttocks was handed to it in last May's provincial election.

It appears, however, that no matter how you slice it, as of right now things are quiet in Alberta's oil patch.

According to the general manager of one oilfield services trucking company, who didn't want to be named in this piece, the oil business is "very slow. There's not a lot of oil to haul these days."

The GM, whose business is headquartered in the Alberta/Saskatchewan border-straddling city of Lloydminster, said that in order to cope with the drop in oil, the company is now doing more agriculture, grain and cattle hauling. And while there's been widespread speculation that

Alberta's new NDP government might frighten off businesses with its fiscal policies, this particular manager doesn't think that's the case, at least not yet.

"I don't think the NDP's helping," he said, laying most of the blame for the current state of affairs on the low price of oil. And, to him, that means it doesn't matter if the oil is in Alberta or Saskatchewan.

"We work for about 16 companies," he said, "most of which have head offices in Calgary so even if they have properties in Saskatchewan then chances are good they're feeling the pinch in one way or another."

Allen Fandrick, who owns Allen's Transport of Leduc, Alta., just south of the provincial capital, told *Truck West* in a recent interview that the biggest challenge his company faces today – besides the usual issue of finding drivers – is the price of the black gold. But not necessarily because of the price itself. "The oil companies are hammering more and more for discounts and rate reductions," he said, "and so keeping rates up is a big challenge."

Alberta's new NDP Energy Minister, Marg McCuaig-Boyd, responded to *Truck West's* queries via an e-mail statement that, unfortunately, didn't really say much about the current state of the oil patch. Rather, she took the political route, responding that "As Minister of Energy, I want to ensure the long-term stability of the energy industry, and the thousands of good jobs it provides to Albertans. Everything we do in the Ministry is

centered on the following pillars: prosperity for Albertans, stability for the industry, and certainty for investors."

McCuaig-Boyd went on to write: "We are committed to working with the oil and gas industry to expand safe market access and improve our environmental record to build support for Alberta products in markets that are not available to us right now. We will move forward in a balanced way that ensures sustainable growth for our energy industry and for Albertan families."

She blamed the current challenges squarely on "bad decisions made by previous PC governments. They

ing the public services that Albertans rely on."

So far, the provincial government's plans to rebuild the economy include raising corporate taxes by 20% (from 10 to 12%) and holding a royalty review despite calls from industry and the political opposition to put those plans on hold for now.

According to an Aug. 21 *Calgary Herald* piece by Darcy Henton, premier Rachel Notley rejected the calls to hold off at a ceremony marking the anniversary of Treaty 6 with the First Nations, held at Edmonton City Hall.

"We're still going forward with those," the *Herald* quotes Notley as telling reporters after the ceremony.

"Alberta still has by far the most competitive tax regime in the country, and so when times get tough those who are profitable should be paying just a little bit more."

Despite politics and current global economics, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers thinks all will be well, eventually.

"The sharp drop in world oil prices over the past year is slowing the growth of Canadian oil production over the next two decades," the organization said in a June release trumpeting its 2015 Crude Oil Forecast, Markets and Transportation report. CAPP estimates overall Canadian oil production will increase 43% by 2030, from 3.7 million barrels per day last year to 5.3 million barrels. The report also noted that "increased transportation capacity, in all forms, is therefore needed to meet growing

'(Business) is very slow. There's not a lot of oil to haul these days.'

Alberta fleet manager

squandered opportunities when oil revenues were high, leaving the province unprepared for times like these."

Her only mention of the collapse in oil prices was that it "does provide the government with an opportunity to drive innovation and diversify the economy" and noted that "the fall budget will put the province on the road to financial stability in these tough times. While it will take time to reverse the damage that was done by previous PC governments, our government has taken steps to rebuild the economy while protect-

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Canada's oil and gas industry still has bright future: CAPP

Continued from page 19

domestic and international demand for Canadian oil." That should come as good news to the trucking companies currently struggling to stay afloat.

CAPP noted that, according to the Paris-based International Energy Agency, Canada has the world's third largest proven oil reserves, but only produces "3.7 million barrels of the 93 million barrels consumed every day around the world."

So there's plenty of room for growth in a world whose needs for petroleum products CAPP said is expected to increase 37% over the next 25 years.

"We have the energy the world needs - our challenge is getting it there," said Greg Stringham, CAPP's vice-president, oil sands and markets. "Over the next two decades, we believe all forms of transportation will still be needed to move Canadian oil to markets to the east, west and south."

If true, that's more good news for

trucking, eventually.

The primary driver of oil growth in Canada will remain the much-pilloried oil sands, CAPP said, with production reaching "four million barrels per day by 2030."

CAPP predicts that conventional oil production in Western Canada, including condensates, will reach 1.3 million barrels per day by that year as well.

For now, however, "oil producers in Canada continue to evaluate their growth plans," CAPP said, adding "this market uncertainty is reflected most in the oil sands growth range in this year's forecast, which indicates that "future projects are under review."

It appears that, if CAPP is right, there'll still be a good future for the oil and gas industry in the Canadian west (and the east as well), despite current low prices and ideological issues. And that will be good news for the trucking companies who work in the sector. If they can hang on that long. **TW**



Is the sun setting on Canada's oil and gas industry? Not according to CAPP, which thinks the long-term future remains bright.

Saskatchewan's doors are open to oil and gas producers

By Jim Bray

REGINA, Sask. - No one should be surprised that the current low price of petroleum products has cast a pall over the western Canadian economy, but even in the downturn it appears there's hope for the future. And it appears that Rider Nation, not Wild Rose Country, may be the province best situated for the eventual turnaround.

"The good news is that while the downturn has affected the numbers, Saskatchewan is better positioned to weather this than maybe other jurisdictions," said Ed Dancsok, assistant deputy minister in Saskatchewan's Petroleum and Natural Gas Division. "We have a more robust and diverse economy, so where oil and gas has maybe dropped off we're seeing increases in activity (elsewhere)."

He said there's actually more work for the service and supply sector right now because of mining - both potash and uranium - and "we've got robust agricultural activity going on, which is helping with things like trucking and all the services that they need."

He also noted that Saskatchewan is bucking the national trend in manufacturing, which he said is up 2% compared to a national drop of 1.4%. "We're seeing some areas of the economy that are picking up the slack where oil has maybe dropped. I don't think it's going to equal the overall activity but certainly it has picked up some of that slack."

Dancsok pointed out that the oil and gas downturn, which he acknowledged is a steep one, is being felt in all the western provinces that host the industry.

"Looking at the latest numbers, activity for rigs is at around 27% of fleet right now (across the west)," he said. "Last year it was around 53%, and when we look specifically at Saskatchewan, we're at about 24% whereas last year we were at 58%." He

said there are currently 31 rigs operating in the province out of a possible 127. The rest are mostly sitting idle; Dancsok said a few have been hauled out but "there's really nowhere else to go anyway."

The drop from just over 80 rigs operating last year to 30 this year has resulted in about a 40% drop in the number of wells drilled so far this year compared to last year, Dancsok said. On the other hand, that isn't a completely apples-to-apples comparison.

"Last year was a record year for oil wells" he noted, "so we're comparing this year to a record year and I don't know if that's entirely fair. But certainly, when you compare what we've done this year to the five-year average, we're still down 37%. That's certainly a drop."

Not an unprecedented one, though. "When we look at the last time prices dropped like this, in 2009, we're actually ahead of that year," Dancsok said. "We have just over 1,000 oil wells drilled in Saskatchewan so far this year, while back in 2009 at the same time there were only 639 wells drilled. That tells me the industry's a bit more resilient this year."

He attributed the change in part to "a lot of cost-cutting measures that took place earlier in the year from the service and supply sector," measures he said have helped the industry manage its margins better. "The economics per well would be better, too," he said, "and I think that's the result you're seeing. It certainly still is a drop and we are not targeted to get anywhere near last year's number."

Dancsok noted that Saskatchewan's natural gas industry never really recovered from the big slump in 2008-2009, and cited that old chestnut of supply and demand as part of the reason, including "the shale gas thing that's taking place in the United States and elsewhere in Canada. But Saskatchewan doesn't have a

shale gas resource and so since 2008 the gas has really dropped off." He said that so far this year, only one gas well has been drilled in the province.

Despite the current situation, Dancsok said he's bullish on oil making a comeback, even as alternative extraction methods and new reserves are being discovered around the world, seemingly on a regular basis. "The market will correct eventually," he said. "I've probably seen five or six of these cycles; this one seems to be a little longer lingering because of what's happening with OPEC and their efforts to try gaining more market share, but the market will correct and when it does I think Saskatchewan will be ready to continue its growth and look for more investment."

Dancsok said the best cure for low oil prices is low oil prices themselves. "Right now, we're in this stage of uncertainty as far as markets and demand is concerned, with China and other places not growing as fast as we had expected, but I think that demand someday will turn around and when it does, because of the lack of drilling going on right now, you might see the tables turn, where we have less supply than demand and that'll quickly change the price. It's simple economics: the price goes down and as that supply dwindles and the demand changes, the tables will turn."

As for whether the NDP government takeover in the province immediately to the west could spur a potential windfall of investment from companies leaving Alberta for what might seem greener pastures in Saskatchewan, Dancsok says there's been some action but it's probably still too early to say if it will become widespread.

"I wouldn't typify it as a stampede," he said, "but certainly there are companies looking at Saskatchewan and

seeing what opportunities there are here. And that's a good business decision to make, I think. If corporate taxes are changing in one jurisdiction then it's natural for a company to look and see if there's a better business case elsewhere."

He said, however, that no head offices have inquired about relocating yet. "There's a wait and see attitude so far. There's a royalty review proposed in Alberta and maybe it's more about seeing where that ends up before any big reactions take place."

Dancsok said Saskatchewan isn't planning any major policy of tax or regulatory changes to make the province a sweeter place to invest.

"The royalty rates are very competitive with Alberta already," he said, "so we're simply going to stay the course and keep them stable and predictable. That (stability) is probably more valuable than anything else. Industry simply wants certainty and they can certainly get that in Saskatchewan."

He noted that the province's tax system is reliable and said there are no plans to do the type of royalty review that has been done "three or four (times) since 2007" in Alberta. "Certainly what industry enjoys in Saskatchewan is an already competitive and friendly business environment, coupled with stable royalty rates and taxes that give them the confidence they need to make their investments."

The message to investors in the oil and gas industry is clear. "We're here, we're competitive, we have a friendly business climate, we have good regulations in place that are stable and workable and we're not in the game of changing things drastically," Dancsok said. "That provides the stable, certain climate that industry is looking for."

In other words, Saskatchewan is open for business. **TW**

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No turning back

TNT Tank & Trailer Repair isn't hunkering down, it's expanding its business despite stubbornly low oil prices

By Geoff Lee

LLOYDMINSTER, Alta. – Go big or go home.

TNT Tank & Trailer Repair LP is using the downturn in the energy sector to expand its footprint in Lloydminster and Grande Prairie and provide customers with new services.

The strategy focuses on expanding the existing service shop in Lloydminster into a one-stop centre for servicing TNT's new trailer rig-ups and customer-owned trailers.

"We've sold a high volume of trailers in the last three years, so the shop has been very busy putting out new trailers and new rig-ups," said Fred North, the majority owner in late August.

"By expanding the shop we'll be able to do both in the future once things pick up again."

A bigger shop will also help to offset a drop in sales of new tanks and trailers for a variety of industry uses by brand names such as Doepker, Tremcar, Heil and Agassiz.

Construction of the shop is expected to take place over the fall and turn it into an even bigger revenue generator for the company than it is today.

"We have a lot of established customers and we're building on it. We now do our own washing and steaming, which we never did before," said North. "We also do our own hose testing now. That's an added service and creates a one-stop shop when someone wants their trailer fixed."

TNT has plans to level a seven-acre lot north of the Lloydminster shop to park more trailers.

The company has also bought land in Grande Prairie, where it plans to build a permanent sales office and another one-stop service shop when the economy stabilizes.

The immediate expansion of the Lloydminster shop will position TNT for growth when the economy turns around.

"If it turns around in three months, we would pretty much have to push our service away to just keep up to the sales," said Scott Cable, a minority owner with input into the expansion. "So that's why we're expanding – so when it does turn around we can continue to do the service and do our new trailer rig-ups."

The expansion will add six service bays and two new wash bays for a total of 14 work bays and four wash bays.

The current shop has eight service bays and two wash bays that are 25 ft. by 100 ft.

All of the bays will be extended to 125 ft. in length during the expansion to service the 53-footers from Rosenau Transport.

"We do quite a bit of work for them. Right now, we can't back in two trailers end to end because our bays are too short," said Cable.

"We need to expand because we have a lot of service work. We can't keep up to the service now that we



Richard McKinley, a lead hand in the wash bay, cleans the mud off the back of this trailer at the TNT Tank & Trailer Repair service shop in Lloydminster.

have. We just started washing our own trailers. There's a big demand for that service. When it's busy, sometimes there's a two week wait to get a trailer steamed and washed out," he added.

Trailers such as 407 sour gas sealed units must be steam-washed internally before they can be serviced safely to remove potentially dangerous gases such as H₂S.

TNT started using a portable steamer, but the expansion will allow for the installation of a permanent boiler system.

The portable will likely go into the field to complete on-site steams and thaw frozen valves, etc. during the

shop to service and repair vac trucks, propane trailers and LNG carriers to diversify.

The expansion plans might take some people by surprise in this down cycle, but Cable said, "Anyone in town knows Fred and knows that he's aggressive that way. Now is the time to expand and we've never washed trailers before. The person that we have doing that is by far the best in the area for that type of work. He's training some people right now."

The expansion plans follow the recent takeover of TNT by Ventures North Financial Group, a privately held finance and leasing company located in Sherwood Park, Alta.

North is the majority owner of Ventures North, but at 69, he's ready to let the young owners such as Cable and a few other staffers take over the helm.

"They're going to be the future of this company. We just changed hands last fall," said North.

North has been in the oilfield business since 1968 and has worked as crude oil hauler, a lease operator, and an owner of many companies.

He bought Temor Oilfield Services in Lloydminster in 1990 and grew it from 32 lease/operators to 149 when he sold it to the Mullen Group in 2002.

He purchased TNT in 2003 and has grown the business exponentially to have customers "everywhere from here to Fort St. John," as he puts it.

He figures he has at least 50 trailer customers in Canada and the US.

As for the effect of the slowdown on sales and service North said, "It definitely slows everything down. It's the same effect as everybody's feeling in the business. We're definitely suffering along with everybody else."

North is resigned to the fact that he has a yard full of new and returned lease trailers that he can't sell.

"Well there's nothing you can do. Most of these trailers – they have to be ordered a year ahead of time, so we're definitely caught with a lot of stock and that's kind of normal," he said.

"The bigger you get the harder you get hit I guess, but it's actually gone really well for us. Quite a few of our rentals are down, of course, but we are still putting new rentals out and working with the customers to make it work for them."

To get trailers off the property TNT has a wide variety of monthly rentals and lease-to-own programs that are generating revenue and needed work for their customers too.

"Guys don't want to commit to buy or purchasing stuff, but they need something for a contract so a lease is definitely a good way to go for them," said North.

"We are working with the customers and making it easier for them. The more work they can get, the more work they bring to us."

North and his Ventures North Group of owners are bullish on the potential long-term growth market in the Grande Prairie area.

"We always had a lot of customers up in that area, so we're going to build a shop up there. There is a lot of demand for a good shop in the area which seems to be missing," said North.

The company purchased 20 acres across from Ritchie Bros on Hwy. 43 for a shop, with a construction start date on hold.

"We're backing off on it a little bit until things kind of level out. We have an office in town and a sales rep up there now," said North. "We're going to look at it probably next year. We'll kind of play it by ear and see what the business does. It's a very active area up there, and it serves kind of the whole north out of there and, of course, Fort St. John."

TNT is eyeing potential growth in LNG trailers used to haul liquid natural gas in northeastern B.C. and is also looking closely at the vac truck market.

"We'll probably get into that once things level out a bit," said North.

"There are a lot of customers out there that aren't getting served in the area right now, so there's definitely an opportunity."

Cable noted that during the boom years, North never had the time to expand and do the things that he and the younger partners are doing now.

"It probably should have been done a while ago because service never kept up and never grew with the sales. We believe that you service what you sell," said Cable.

"We have a lot of good people here and a lot of new clients. A lot of people kind of strayed away from us over the years with service just because they knew that how busy we were with the new trailers. There are a lot of people excited about us doing it because they know the people we have in our shop are second to none in this area."

The shop expansion will be constructed by Ryken Construction in Nisku that does most of the construction for Ventures North.

"It's very exciting. We couldn't do it without the staff we have now. Without them it would be pointless to expand," said Cable. **TW**

'Now is the time to expand.'

Scott Cable, TNT

winter. TNT is also setting up to provide some external trailer washes as well with that one stop concept in mind.

"Basically in this downturn, you have to do what you need to do to survive and that's what we're going to be doing," said Cable.

While many companies have cut staff, TNT has selectively hired some new employees.

"We've increased because our shop is busier now, but we decreased a couple in the office," said North, who added, "That's basically because we got a new computer system. We've been able to add some really good people we picked up that got laid off from other companies that left town and such. We have an increase in staff and better quality."

Plans are in the works to certify the



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Talking shop – and taxes

You love working on your truck but you've had it with dropping greasy tools onto a dirty driveway. Changing out filters and adjusting brakes would be a lot easier inside a dry, insulated, well-lit shop.

Lucky for you, your home is on a property big enough to let you extend the driveway and add a building.

So you research types of structures, talk to contractors about square footage and construction costs, and discuss permits with the building code office. You settle on a location that won't block the view from the kitchen window.

It's all fun, exciting stuff.

But there's one more call to make. You should talk to your accountant about how this idea of yours will affect your taxes.

Putting a business-related structure onto personal property isn't as easy as pouring a pad and adding walls and a roof. Here are four things to consider in order to put your garage on a solid financial footing.

Capital cost allowance

Like a truck or trailer, a shop is a business asset and must be expensed over time on your CCA schedule.

The problem is that CCA rates for buildings are low. If you spend \$30,000 on the structure, your CCA each year may be just \$1,500. You'll save maybe \$450 in tax.

Is it worth it? Let's head 10 years down the road when you're ready to retire or get out of trucking.

Conservatively, you can assume the building will still be worth its original value of \$30,000. On the CCA schedule, it will have depreciated to a value of \$15,000.

When you exit the business, you'll have to remove the building from your assets list at fair market value. It will become your personal property, "sold" to you for \$30,000.

What happens to the \$15,000 difference on the CCA schedule? You'll get a \$15,000 recapture lumped into your personal income all at once.

Ouch! You'd probably end up giving back all the tax savings of the previous 10 years.

Ask your accountant about CCA strategies, even if you already have a shop and have been depreciating it for years.

Shop expenses

You can claim the costs to operate your shop, including interest on loans, insurance, utilities, property taxes, maintenance, minor improvements, and anything else you can justify.

Of course, your shop will need tools, which may be considered "assets" you can expense – some over two years, some over a longer period. As silly as it sounds, buying your tools one at a time may get you a more direct write-off than buying a bunch at a time.

Tax Talk

Scott Taylor



Again, talk to your accountant about your specific situation.

GST/HST

Buildings are expensive and the amount of GST/HST you'll incur to build and run your shop is worth claiming.

Canada Revenue Agency has strict rules about claiming business expenses wherever personal property is involved. It's hard to get more than 50% business use on the entire parcel of land when you make your personal home there.

Make sure to establish the right percentage of business use.

What if you park your boat in your shop? Or let your neighbor work on his hotrod in there? Expect CRA to question how much your shop is really used for business.

Labour expenses

There's no advantage to paying yourself a "shop rate" for labour and then expensing it. You'll just create personal income for yourself that you'll have to report on your tax return.

However, if you have family members who can work on your truck, you can pay them a reasonable wage or salary, effectively splitting your income and potentially reducing your tax obligation. Your accountant can help you determine what a "reasonable" wage should be.

Building a shop is a great idea if you can do it. A well-equipped garage would mean you're no longer at

the mercy of someone else's schedule, skills, and labour rates.

But the tax implications are serious, and you can't bury your head under the hood and hope they'll resolve themselves. You may want to build on a separate lot where it's easier to show that the shop is used for business only. Your accountant can help you sort through

the details. **TW**

Scott Taylor is vice-president of TFS Group, a Waterloo, Ont. company that provides accounting, fuel tax reporting, and other business services for truck fleets and owner/operators. For information, visit www.tfsgroup.com or call 800-461-5970.



Meet Tamara Wilkie – Owner Operator of Edge Transportation Services Ltd., a member of Siemens Transportation Group Inc.

My first driving job was in Banff, driving horse carriage for a summer. I then worked in various positions in the service industry, mostly as a chef. I'm definitely not inclined to work in an office, as seeing the same things and people everyday is not for me. The trucking industry is something I have always loved. My grandpa, uncle and cousins drove truck, so it's in my blood. Thus far, I am the only woman truck driver in my family. I started with my Class 3 hauling water, and then moved to hauling logs in the bush. I needed my Class 1 to drive on the highway to the mill. Since I had been laid off from my part time cooking job, I qualified for a new government program for women wanting to enter the trades. That was 10.5 years ago. Life as I knew it changed and what a ride it's been.

I work for Edge Transportation Services Ltd., the deck division of Siemens Transportation Group Inc., based out of Saskatoon. I've worked years. For the first 4.5 years, I was a Company Driver for them, but 3 years ago, I bought my own truck using the Company's Lease to Own Program. I have a 2007 T800 Kenworth, a good, solid and dependable truck.

I have always done deck work, and plan to do so as long as I can. Van work is less physically demanding, however I feel it is less challenging. If I had to pull van I would, but only if that was my only option to remain a truck driver. The work is always different, and you never know one day from the next what you're hauling. It's always a challenge.

I've hauled everything you can fit on a flat deck trailer including over size loads. I even took the chance to be trained to run on our Heavy Haul fleet. This past winter I hauled loads in excess of 120,000 pounds. The longest load I have pulled was probably Steam Separator Panels hauled from Oklahoma to Northern Alberta for the oil fields. The panels were 90' long I used a Trombone trailer that stretched that length to haul it. The most challenging run was probably the earth movers we hauled from Manitoba to Maryland through narrow roads and construction. There were 4 of us hauling those loads together as well as pilot cars.

I have so many memorable trips and events from on the road. I will never forget lining up the pegs on a removable goose neck trailer first-try. Sometimes I call myself a commercial tourist because I get to see sights I never thought I would ever see outside of a magazine. Like Mount. Rushmore on a starry night or coming east on I80 down Donner and seeing the lights of Reno the first time. Absolutely breath taking!!! What has also stuck in my mind is the conversation I had with a dear sweet elderly lady when she told me her story of driving truck during World War II.

I'm usually away from home 10-15 days, and then home for 2-3 days running all over Canada and the USA. We have great relationships with our dispatchers, and they really work hard for us. When I tell my dispatcher I'm ready, they get me a load. When I get that itch to go, I can't stay home any longer because I miss the road.

My family has always supported my career choice. My husband works from home and our children are grown. My husband does travel with me at times and also enjoys the sights. When my children were younger, they would travel with me from time to time.

I would describe life on the road a few different ways. It is interesting, fun, quiet and exciting. It's also lonely and boring at times. I do miss birthdays and anniversaries, but always make sure I'm home for Christmas.

My truck is equipped with everything I need to eat well and healthy on the road. I am also on the "Cooking on the Truck" website where we have monthly competitions. I once won the cover photo award for my Fettuccini Alfredo with shrimp and mussels.

Edge is great for teamwork as everyone helps each other out and have solid values. It's why I stay, the good outweighs the bad. Someone always has your back, from the office to dispatch to the other drivers. Everyone gets along; it's like a little family under a big umbrella. You're not a number, and your dispatcher calls you by your name and you always get your pay cheque. If we ever run into problems on the road, the first question we get from the office is "are you in a safe spot?", and then they worry about the equipment. Even though I have my own truck, their concern is about me first.

My advice to other women interested in becoming a driver? The industry has changed within the last 10 years. Ten years ago, I would get comments such as "wow, you drive that", or "you should be at home." Now, it's more common and acceptable to be a woman driver. You still hear caustic comments on the CB radio, but I choose to turn it off unless I need it.

I'm not going to lie to you, a woman in this industry needs to be open-minded. You have to be tough, but still be a woman, and that's hard. Our bodies are built differently; how I throw straps is different than a man and I have to adjust how I lift. You need to be willing to get dirty, sweaty and gross. You need to know you probably won't get a shower everyday. Even though I am a woman and will adjust for the industry, I don't expect the industry to adjust for me.

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Apnea screening helps in the fatigue fight

The trucking industry spends plenty of time tracking the hours that drivers work. Every line recorded in a logbook is carefully scrutinized to ensure no one is sitting behind the wheel for too long. Many fleets have gone so far as to install electronic on-board recorders (EOBRs) to track the activities.

In the true fight against fatigue, however, the quality of off-duty time is just as important as the allowable hours of work. It's why there has been growing interest in exams to screen drivers for obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), to ensure that people who have the condition get enough rest.

It's surprising some of these drivers get any sleep at all. Breathing can be interrupted hundreds of times a night, for anywhere from 10 to 120 seconds. Sufferers wake up gasping for air and collapse. When it's time for a day to begin, they feel irritated or depressed. Short-term memory can suffer, too.

As someone with sleep apnea, I know the challenges first hand. I spent years feeling tired all the time, but was quick to dismiss comments about my snoring.

Only after my wife mentioned that I stopped breathing in the middle of the night did I go for testing.

And even when the issue was diagnosed I ignored it, largely because my benefits package didn't cover the costs for a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine to control breathing while I slept. The tipping point came when I was hired by a company with a better benefits package – and my wife threatened to banish me to the spare room if I didn't get help.

The machine made a difference within days. I felt 18 again, with tons of energy. The fleet that employed me updated its overall driver orientation programs to include information on sleep apnea and managing fatigue. At first, drivers quietly came forward to ask about details "for a friend." Then our employer began covering the cost of private tests at sleep clinics, with benefits paying for treatments.

Even though we never asked about results, respecting personal privacy, many drivers came forward to rave about the difference they experienced. Employees known to be perpetually grumpy suddenly began coming to work in a better state of mind. Our driver relations manager assembled related information and mailed it to home addresses, so family members would learn about the condition and treatments that could make a difference. That was a wake-up call for many households.

Not every fleet is large enough to support a comprehensive program like this, but everyone can tap into free online sources of information. A good place to start is www.nbins.com/sleepapnea. And the fleets that introduce voluntary programs today will be in a much better position to meet any mandatory screening requirements in the future.

Anyone who questions whether man-



Ask the Expert

Dave Nawton

datory tests are on the horizon needs to look no further than the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. It is currently led by renowned fatigue management expert Mark Rosekind.

The regulator has already released plenty of data to make the case for such screening, estimating that more than

28% of truck drivers could have sleep apnea. The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) studied 1,760 long-haul drivers and found 15% with some signs of sleep apnea, and 59% showing some sort of respiratory disturbance.

A look around any truck stop could show why the numbers are so high. The people at greatest risk are middle-aged, overweight men with a neck size above 17 inches, or women with a neck size above 15.5 inches. Every one of them could be screened with a simple questionnaire about sleeping habits, and potentially a home sleeping test or polysomnogram (PSG). The treatments for those who need help can vary. Some will need to be fitted with CPAP masks, which deliver a steady supply of air to keep airways open. In other cases, the driver may need to wear compression stockings, lose a bit of weight, or avoid alcohol and sleeping pills. But the end

result is better rest.

Schneider National discovered the difference screening can make. It identified 339 drivers with sleep apnea between 2004 and 2006, and credits the program for helping to reduce preventable crashes by 30%.

As part of a comprehensive fatigue management program, it can represent an important step toward ensuring that drivers are always alert and ready for duty. **TW**

This month's expert is Dave Nawton, risk services specialist. Dave has served the transportation industry for 20 years as a driver trainer, HR specialist, safety manager, and in loss control and risk management. 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. You can visit them at www.nbins.com.

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Benefits of low rolling resistance tires are real, study finds

By James Menzies

A new Confidence Report from the North American Council for Freight Efficiency (NACFE) has found there are significant fuel economy benefits available by running low rolling resistance (LRR) tires.

The report suggests the typical upfront purchase price of a tire is only about four cents per mile of use, however the tires can contribute to anywhere between 14 and 28 cents per mile in fuel costs.

"Clearly, the tire choice has a huge impact on a fleet's fuel expenditures and ultimately its bottom line," NACFE concluded.

Key findings of the report included:

- LRR tires, whether in dual or wide-base configuration, will save significant amounts of fuel compared to tires that are not designed for rolling resistance;

- Tire configuration should be assessed based on total cost of ownership, including fuel consumption;

- And more fleets are recognizing the benefits of LRR tires outweigh the challenges.

"Low rolling resistance tires, whether in dual or wide-base configurations, are proven to save fleets fuel and therefore have a good case for adoption," said Mike Roeth, operation lead, trucking efficiency with NACFE.

Discussing the report with trade press editors, Roeth reiterated it's clear there are significant benefits to choosing LRR tires.

'Tires have a much bigger effect on overall fuel efficiency than most people believe.'

Mike Roeth, NACFE

"Tires have a much bigger effect on overall fuel efficiency than most people believe," he said. "Traditionally fleets have looked at purchase price and wear; we're highly suggesting you include fuel savings in any calculations."

For the purposes of the study, LRR tires were defined as any dual or wide-base single tire that meets the criteria set out by the US EPA SmartWay program.

This has become a crowded list, Roeth acknowledged, and he suggested fleets keep in mind that not all SmartWay tires are equal.

"One of the things we have found is that the SmartWay list has kind of exploded over the last four to six months," Roeth said. "A lot of tires have been approved on the SmartWay list that are quite low in price and we wonder about their total cost of operation, meaning they could possibly wear a lot quicker and they could cost less and just not have the ruggedness against damage."

Some manufacturers, however, have put some advanced engineering into their LRR tires.

"They are using some pretty exten-

sive rubber chemical blends," he said of the better tires. "Some of these guys have up to three to five different materials being blended, with different sections of the tire made from different rubber compounds to help rolling resistance and wear and traction, so it's probably, you get what you pay for."

It's also worth considering there's a significant performance variance between LRR tires, with a new generation of high-performance tires emerging within the LRR category.

Roeth said the cost differential between LRR and non-LRR tires has generally narrowed. He also said the study found there appeared to be no ill effects on traction.

"The perception of traction issues and driver acceptance is worse than reality," Roeth said. "It's hard to mea-

sure these items but we continue to hear these tires are performing better on traction and drivers are accepting them."

Adoption of LRR tires has steadily increased, comprising more than 80% of duals operated by 14 large fleets surveyed. The use of wide-base single tires has trailed off somewhat among these fleets, Roeth noted, as the performance gap between singles and LRR duals has narrowed.

"We're not sure that's going to be widespread, but it's a point of note," he said.

The study also found LRR tires deliver their lowest rolling resistance shortly before removal, when the tread is at its shallowest. While it's important to pull the tires before they become unsafe to run, Roeth also suggested

fleets maximize their mileage before removal.

"The sweetest spot is right before you remove them; as the tire wears, the fuel efficiency improves," he said. "Use all the tire, it makes sense from a wear standpoint. Of course, pull the tire when it needs to be pulled for safety, but use it all because its better fuel efficiency is in the latter part of its life."

NACFE has developed tools and recommendations for fleets looking to improve fuel efficiency through the use of low rolling resistance tires. The full report and its associated tools can be downloaded from: www.TruckingEfficiency.org.

This is the sixth Trucking Efficiency Confidence Report NACFE has issued to date, and they are all available free of charge online. **TW**



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NACFE study suggests more fleets should be lightweighting equipment

By James Menzies

A new report from the North American Council for Freight Efficiency (NACFE) suggests carriers should consider lightweighting their trucks and trailers to avoid putting more trucks on the road, as shippers look to add more weight to their shipments.

The NACFE Confidence Report on lightweighting found that freight is becoming denser and shippers are loading more pallets per trailer. Meanwhile, Class 8 tractors have gained about 1,000 lbs in emissions-related equipment over the past decade.

Still, few fleets are willing to make the investment in lightweighting equipment, the exception being bulk haulers and in other applications

where the tractor-trailer is nearly always loaded to the maximum weight. For these carriers, NACFE found fleets value lightweight components and are willing to pay as much as US\$6-\$11 for every pound of weight saved.

However, reefer and dry van dedicated route carriers are only willing to pay about \$2-\$5 per pound and general dry van carriers are only willing to shell out from zilch to \$2 per pound saved. Most bulk carriers have already exhausted all available options to reduce weight, the report found, but the concept is greatly underutilized by the 98% of carriers that are rarely at their maximum GCW.

Still, the report made the case for lightweighting among even those fleets that run light, referred to in the study as Category 2 and 3 carriers.

“Trucking Efficiency finds that over the next five to 10 years, shippers will request that Category 2 and 3 trucks double the percent of time they gross out, to 20% of the time for Category 2 (trucks loaded to the maximum weight on the minority, perhaps 10%, of their trips) and 4% of the time for Category 3 (dry van units that are rarely loaded to their maximum weight),” the report found.

“In order to meet these trends head-on and accommodate the heavier, denser freight, Category 2 and 3 fleets will have two options: add more trucks to the road, or explore lightweighting so that at least some of their trucks will be able to carry more weight.”

A new truck costs about US\$120,000 and \$1.68 per mile to operate, mean-

ing a fleet can save about a million dollars over five years for every truck it can avoid deploying while carrying the same amount of freight, the report notes.

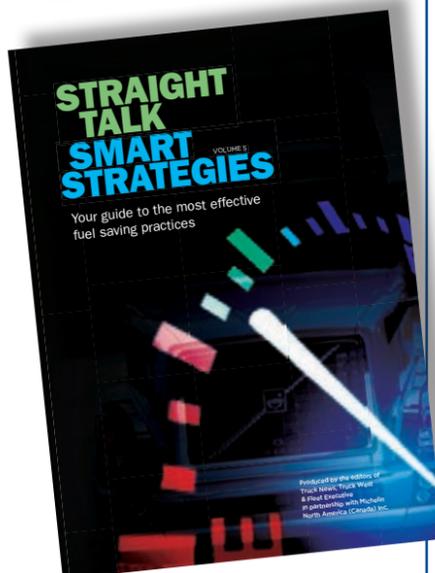
Challenges to lightweighting though, do exist, NACFE acknowledged. There’s the upfront costs associated with materials such as aluminum and carbon fiber. And fleets worry about the resale value of lightweight trucks. Some lightweighting options also require additional maintenance.

NACFE has produced a full report that addresses these concerns and makes recommendations on how to execute a lightweighting strategy. The full Confidence Report and its associated tools can be downloaded for free at www.TruckingEfficiency.org. **TW**



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Edmonton Kenworth opened a new full-service dealership in Leduc, Alta. recently. It features a large indoor showroom (pictured above) and 42 service bays.

Edmonton Kenworth opens new full-service facility in Leduc

LEDUC, Alta. – Edmonton Kenworth opened a new full-service dealership with 42 service bays in Leduc, Alta., the company announced recently.

The new location sits on 16 acres of land at 8202 42nd Street near the Edmonton International Airport. It features an 111,500-sq.-ft. main building with an indoor showroom. There is also a 37,000-sq.-ft. parts department providing customers access to more than \$5 million worth of parts inventory. A second 17,000 sq.-ft. building features four quick-lube service bays for preventative maintenance service, two drive-through wash bays and two alignment bays.

“The greater Leduc area is at the heart of the oil patch industry, so this location with its proximity to a major north-south route and close to the airport just seemed a natural choice. Plus, with the strong affinity that oil patch operators have for Kenworth trucks, we wanted to provide our customers a facility that can offer them a stellar level of support,” said Gary King, Edmonton Kenworth president.

“Over the past several months, we worked diligently on recruiting and training our employees at Edmonton Kenworth – Leduc. As a result, we were able to provide customers with a qualified and capable staff of 115 full-time employees to serve their needs when we recently opened our doors,” King added.

The Leduc location joins another new full-service facility Edmonton Kenworth built and opened in Fort McMurray last year. Edmonton Kenworth also operates full-service dealerships in North Edmonton, South Edmonton and Lloydminster, Alberta.

Mark Denny manages the Leduc location’s parts department and Ed Stadyk manages its service department. Parts and service are available from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday. The phone number is (780) 612-9855. **TW**

Continental opens retread plant in Saskatoon

SASKATOON, Sask. – Continental Tire and Quality Tire Service have opened the first commercial tire retread facility in Western Canada. The new location will operate as a ContiLifeCycle facility, the umbrella for Continental's retreading operations.

The new 17,400 sq.-ft. facility is located in Saskatoon and currently employs 15 people. It can produce up to 24,000 retreads per year. The plant is outfitted with new equipment and includes the latest technologies for manufacturing retreads exclusively for the province of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and will service more than 200 customers, according to Continental.

"Growing our ContiLifeCycle distribution across Canada is our most important objective," said Paul Williams, Continental's executive vice-president for commercial vehicle tires in the Americas. "Partnering with service focused distributors like Quality Tire Service in an effort to reduce overall driving costs to our fleet customers will be what drives mutual success of both dealers and fleets. We could not have chosen a better partner for the provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba and look forward to many more of these partnerships that also help to bring jobs and boost the Canadian economy into the future." **TW**

International to offer over-the-air reprogramming

LISLE, Ill. –International Truck has announced it plans to offer over-the-air (OTA) reprogramming of engine control modules for its N9, N10 and N13 engines. The company claims it is the first commercial vehicle manufacturer to offer this, and has completed its initial testing.

"Over-the-air reprogramming in International trucks will revolutionize the way our customers' trucks are serviced and maintained," said Bill Kozek, Navistar president, truck and parts. "This is another important example of how our connected vehicle leadership is paving the way for future advancements that will drive improvements in vehicle uptime and real-world, bottom-line results for our customers."

The company said in the initial launch phase, its OTA technology will be available on model year 2017 International trucks. The technology will enable the driver or fleet manager to use a mobile interface to initiate reprogramming over a Wi-Fi connection.

"OTA lays the groundwork for a pipeline of connected vehicle services such as partner engine and component calibration updates, body control module updates and future cellular capabilities," said Mike Cerilli, general manager, Navistar's Connected Vehicle Business. "These and future advancements will provide improved customer uptime, fuel efficiency and other benefits that will drive added value for customers." **TW**

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Kenworth expects strong demand for new trucks to continue

By James Menzies

KIRKLAND, Wash. – Kenworth is expecting another strong year for Class 8 truck sales in 2016, but there isn't a lot of room for the overall market to grow.

Preston Feight, Kenworth general manager and Paccar vice-president, said at a press event in August that 2015 is likely to be the second best year ever for Class 8 truck orders, behind only 2006 when an emissions-related pre-buy drove record demand.

"It's hard to imagine a five-year run like we've been having," he said.

Feight pointed to the following reasons why business conditions are strong: US GDP grew 2.3% in the second quarter; housing starts are up 10.3% year-over-year; auto sales are up 6.1% y-o-y; freight tonnage is up 3.7% y-o-y; fleet utilization is above 90%; and fleet profitability is up 5.5%.

One of the only major concerns currently, Feight said, is availability of drivers.

Kenworth itself has grown its Class 8 market share this year to 14.7% year-to-date, a modest increase from 14.1% over the same period last year. However, when you consider the slowdown in the oil and gas sector where Kenworth is strong, Feight said the overall improvement points to the company's growth in other segments.

Kenworth's medium-duty share is 7.9% year-to-date, down from last year, but Feight said the company has re-

ceived recent orders that will give it a bump in the second half of this year.

Feight attributed the company's Class 8 growth to the success of its two most recent offerings: the T680 on-highway tractor and the T880 vocational truck. Together, the two models account for more than 70% of Kenworth's build. The new ICON 900, a throwback truck that pays homage to the classic-styled W900, has been well received too, with 350 trucks sold since its launch in May.

Kenworth has also seen its glider kit business soar, according to Kevin Baney, chief engineer. It has seen sales double every year since the division was formed in 2013. The EPA plans to stamp out the glider market by 2018, but Baney said the company will continue selling them until then.

The company has also seen its Paccar MX engine gain ground. Introduced in 2010, it has seen growth every year and is now ordered in 40% of Kenworth's Class 8 trucks.

The T680 gets 10% better fuel economy today than it did in 2013 with more improvements to come, Feight said.

"We will continue to make year-over-year improvements to the fuel economy of the T680," he promised.

Kenworth has also added several new options to its product line. A new 76-inch mid-roof sleeper was introduced for the T680 and T880 this month and the T880 will get a 40-inch sleeper in the first quarter of 2016. The Paccar MX-11 engine is coming in early 2016.



The Kenworth T880 with new 76-inch mid-roof sleeper.

Meanwhile, Feight said the company's dealers have invested more than \$450 million into their facilities over the past few years, increasing service hours by 15% last year and another 15% this year.

Kenworth has also added new driver performance technologies to its trucks. Predictive Cruise Control uses GPS data to optimize vehicle speed, providing a fuel economy improvement of up to 2%, Baney said. For example, the cruise will reduce acceleration when cresting a hill to save fuel and the transmission will shift into neutral when travelling down a grade of 1-3%. Together, Predictive Cruise and Neutral Coast could boost fuel economy by 3%, said Baney.

An optional Driver Performance Assistant provides real-time coaching on acceleration, braking and shifting.

Also new is an ultracapacitor battery that will improve starting in extreme weather.

Kenworth's idle management system is getting a new auto start/stop function, which will start the truck's engine to recharge the batteries when their power is getting low. The system provides more than eight hours of air-conditioning and can save up to a gallon of diesel per hour of use compared to idling. An optional fuel-fired heater can be added to the system to provide warmth.

Baney also provided an update on

Kenworth's Truck Tech+ remote diagnostics system. He admitted Kenworth wasn't first to market with remote diagnostics, but it was able to study systems currently in the market and come up with something the company feels is simpler and more user-friendly. About 5,000 Kenworth trucks are equipped with Truck Tech+ today. The system remotely analyzes fault codes and then advises the operator on the most appropriate course of action.

Feight said more fuel economy improvements are coming to the T680, largely due to better powertrain integration. He said Kenworth is delighted with some of the enhancements Eaton has made to its automated transmissions and the two companies are "co-developing" new systems for further efficiencies.

To spread the message about Kenworth's expanding product line, the company is hitting the road with a 30-stop road tour that began in mid-August and will run through November, making several stops in Canada. The T680 with 76-inch mid-roof sleeper and T880 will be featured. (While in Washington, *Truck West* drove the T880 with 76-inch mid-roof sleeper. Look for the report next month or on Trucknews.com). The Kenworth Tour Trailer will be at each of the stops and inside, you'll find the soon-to-be-launched Paccar MX-11 engine. **TW**

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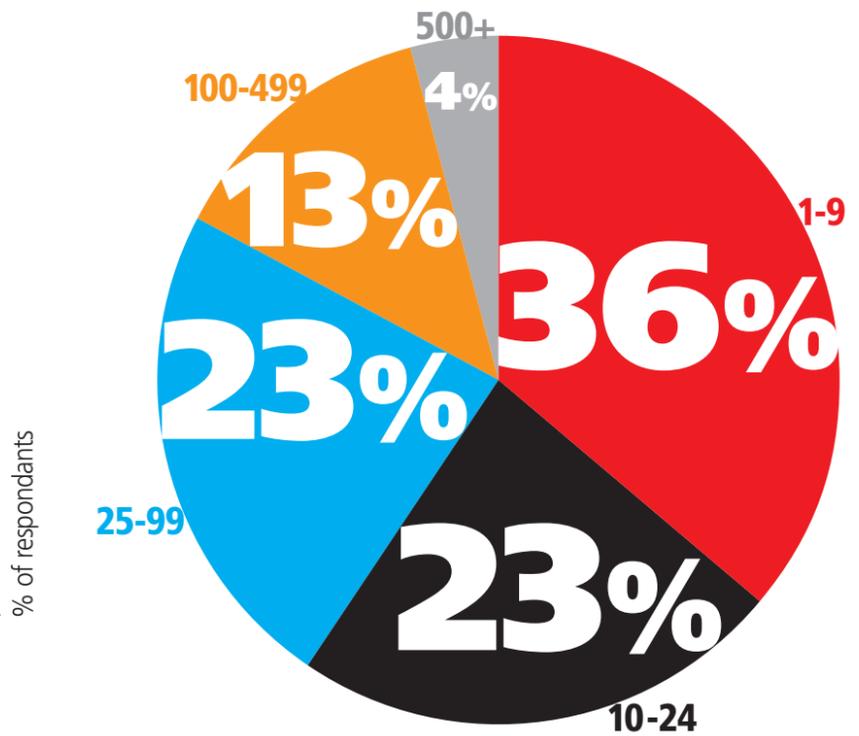
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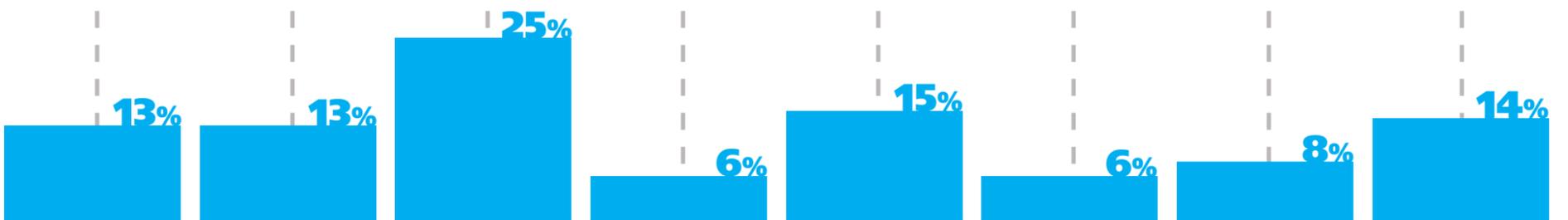
Number of HD vehicles in fleet



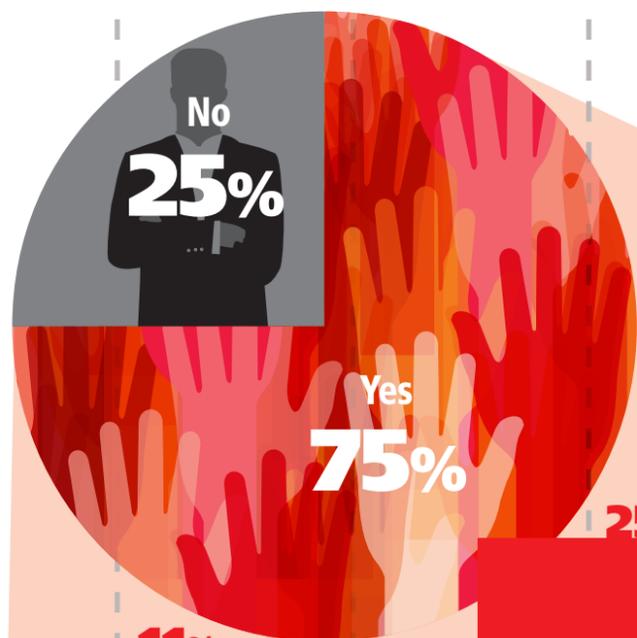
Fleet activities



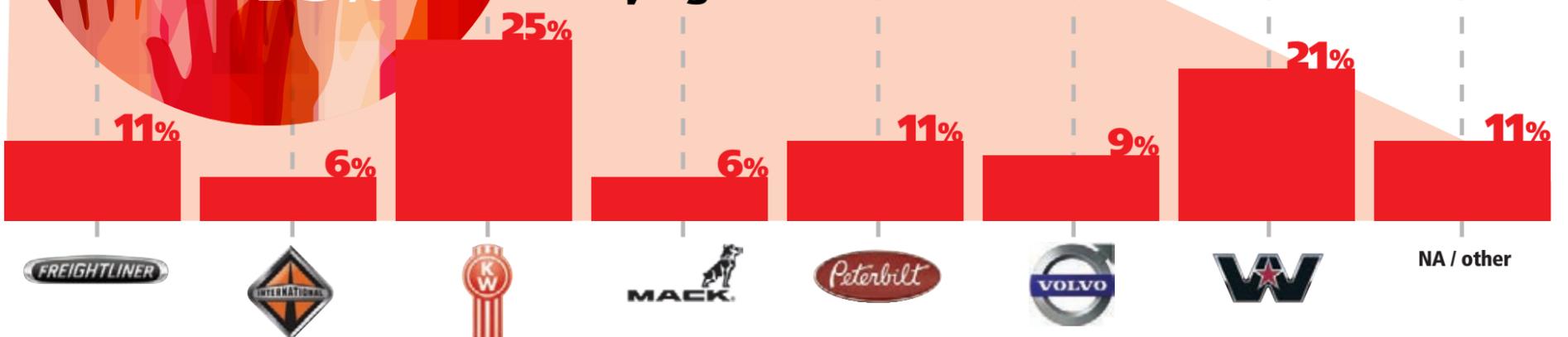
Main brands of HD trucks currently in fleet



Planning to purchase new HD trucks in 2016



Brand most likely to consider when buying new HD trucks



Western Canada motor carrier preferences for HD trucks are unique. Our annual Equipment Buying Trends Survey shows that Kenworth is the predominant brand in Western Canada fleets whereas Freightliner is the clear frontrunner for Canada overall. And our latest survey indicates the allegiance to Kenworth will continue into 2016 with one quarter of fleets surveyed indicating that is the HD truck brand they are most likely to consider when adding to their fleet. **TW**

By Edo van Belkom

After making a mid-week delivery in Brandon, Man., Mark headed west into Saskatchewan because his dispatcher Bud had told him his next load would be coming out of Regina and destined for Vancouver. What Bud hadn't told him was when the load would be ready, so after topping up his tanks at a truck stop in Moosimin, Mark pulled into the parking lot to give Bud a call.

Bud picked up after just a single ring and said, "Hey, Mark. How's it going?"

Mark was taken aback. "What? No, 'Who's Mark - Mark who?'"

"I don't wanna fool around too much because you're not going to like what I'm going to tell you."

"There's no load?"

"No, there's a load, but it won't be ready till Monday."

Mark laughed. "I get it. You're leaving me in the middle-of-nowhere for the weekend."

"It's not nowhere. You're on the Trans-Canada."

Mark took a long look out his windows. "Bud, there's nothing around but fields and highway."

"But you're Mark Dalton," Bud said. "You'll find something to do, no problem."

"Is that supposed to make me feel better?"

"Doesn't it?"

"No."

"I got another call," Bud said. "Call you Monday."

Mark hung up the phone wondering what he was going to do for the next three days. He could start heading to Regina and wait there for his next load, but there wouldn't be that much going on there either. He decided to stay where he was for the moment and just try and relax. The truck stop had a few amenities he could use like the laundry, a couple of showers, a store and a lounge. There was also a Tim Hortons next door and he thought that would be his first stop for a bite to eat.

After ordering, Mark headed for an empty table that had a current copy of Moosimin's newspaper, *The World Spectator*, on it. It was a decent local newspaper with all the usual articles you'd expect from a small town like Moosimin. Some trucking company was buying two new tractors and someone was stepping down from the library board after 20 years of service. A proud couple had announced that their daughter had graduated law school in Winnipeg and would be articling the next six months in Saskatoon. But on the very next page was an ad that caught Mark's attention.

This weekend, the Rocanville Fairgrounds would play host to the Saskatchewan Southwest Regional Rodeo championships. And...they would be accepting entrants up until the start of the competition on Saturday morning. Mark checked his watch for today's date. That rodeo was this weekend.

"Excuse me," he said to the man sitting at the table next to him. He had to be a local, most likely a farmer, judging by the sun-faded Co-Op ball cap on his head. "How far is Rocanville from here?"

The man smiled, "It's just north of here, less than a half-an-hour drive time."

"That's great," Mark said.

"Now what do you want to go up there for?"

Mark turned the newspaper around to show the man the ad.



Not his first rodeo

PART 1

"You aren't thinking of competing in that thing are you?" He looked him up and down. "City driver like you."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

The man shook his head. "No sense in trying," he said. "There's a driver round here name of Rob Goldrick." He touched his cap. "Drives for the Co-Op." Another shake of the head. "He's 10-time champion of the Southwest Regional. Won the whole darn province last year." Then a smile. "City driver like you wouldn't stand a chance."

Mark wasn't sure if the man was kidding with him or serious. He could understand that there was a certain amount of local pride that went along with these things and being from "somewhere else" Mark's entry into the rodeo could be looked as that of an outsider meddling where he didn't belong and quite frankly, wasn't wanted.

"Do you have to be from around here to enter?"

"No, not at all. But I imagine a city driver like you would probably have better things to do on the weekend than spend your money on an entry and waste a whole day out of your weekend."

Mark didn't know how to answer the man. He was used to small-town hospitality, not downright unfriendliness. Nevertheless he smiled at the man and said, "Thanks for the warning, but I think I'll enter just the same. It might be fun...and, you never know, maybe a dumb city driver like me might be able to learn something from these slick country plow-jockeys... I mean, truck drivers."

The man said nothing, but glared at Mark with a pair

of pitchfork eyes.

Outside, Mark walked purposefully back to Mother Load. "I'll show them what a city driver can do," he said under his breath.

Although the entry table didn't open until 8 a.m., Mark was there at 7:30 waiting for someone to take his money and enter him in the rodeo.

"Wow, you're an eager beaver," said the woman who eventually showed up at 15 minutes to the hour.

She smiled at him and said, "You're not from around here, are you?"

Mark was amazed. How obvious was it that he didn't belong here? How much did he stick out from the rest of the drivers? "Why do you say that? Do I look that out of place?"

"No, it's not that. It's just that we get about ten entries a year and we've got room for more than 20. You being worried there wouldn't be a spot for you, kinda sets you apart."

"Sorry."

"No need to be sorry. Just relax, take your time and enjoy your day."

"Thanks, I will."

"Now, what division are you entering in?"

"Division?"

"Is that your truck over there?" she asked, pointing at Mother Load.

"Tandem-Tandem."

"Oh, okay."

At 9 a.m., the drivers gathered in a room in the fairgrounds rec hall for a meeting. The two main organizers went over the schedule for the day, letting drivers know that coffee and sandwiches would be arriving later in the morning and there would be an informal dinner after the awards were presented.

Then, after going over the rules, some of the drivers in the room were introduced. First up was 10-time champion Rob Goldrick. He stood up and gave the sort of confident wave that suggested he knew everyone in the room and where he stood in relation to every other driver there. They also introduced a man who the emcee said needed no introduction, Cyril Mitiuk. Mark turned his head and saw a slight wisp of a man slowly get to his feet. He was dressed in a faded pair of coveralls and when he waved, his boney right hand seemed to tremble from the effort.

They introduced a couple of other drivers and then came Mark's turn. The emcee said his name and then added, "He's from The City." Where Mark was from, The City could mean all kinds of things, but in Saskatchewan, The City meant only one thing...Toronto.

Mark looked around and waved nervously. Everyone in the room was staring at him like he was not from The City, but from Outer Space. And that's when the thought hit him: maybe a weekend in Regina wouldn't have been that bad." TW

Mark Dalton returns next month in Part 2.

Illustration by Glenn McEvoy



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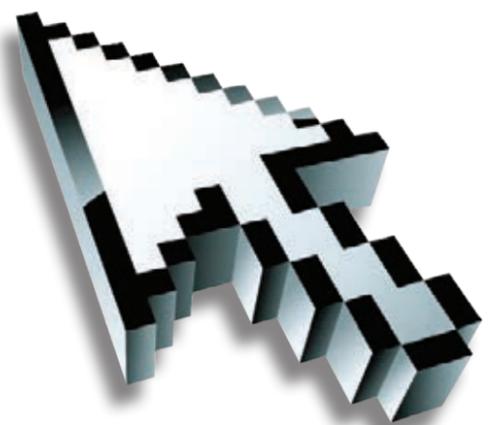
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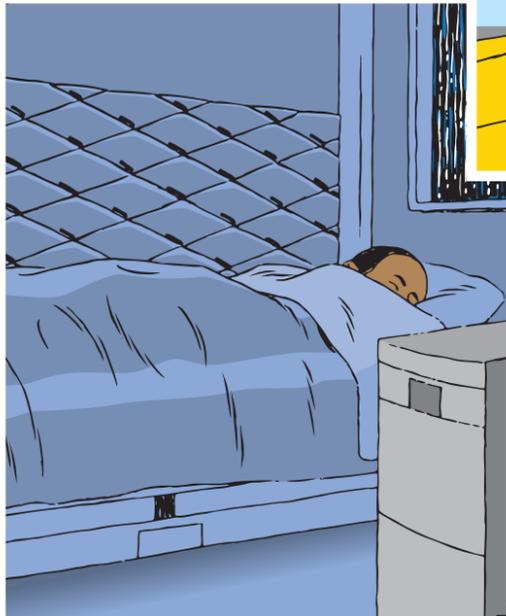
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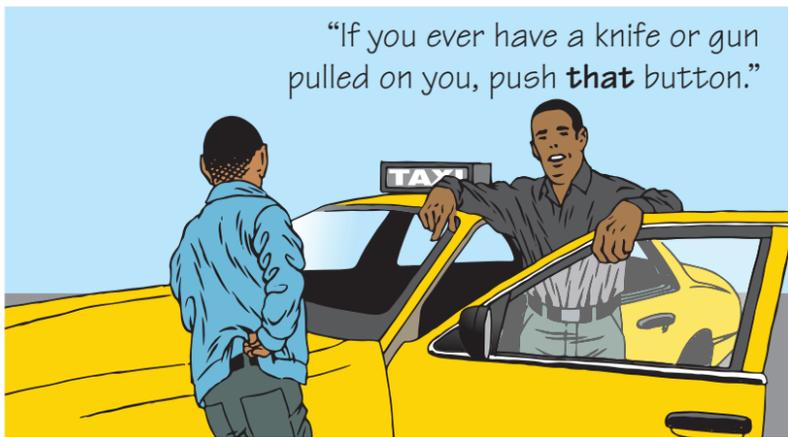
The Adventures of NEWLAND TRANSPORT

By Edo Van Belkom

Vic has been thinking about driving a cab seriously for the past few days, but he wants to give truck driving another chance. He's got good loads to Winnipeg and back and wants to be ready in the morning. He checks the forecast that night and makes sure that he has his driving hours in before the bad weather comes. That night, around seven in the evening the Northern Ontario skies are beginning to turn dark just as Vic parks his truck in a truckstop lot. Then, as the skies open up and it begins to pour, Vic turns in for the night.



Vic's brother-in-law stops by the truck yard in the taxi cab Vic would be driving for him and shows off the car.



"If you ever have a knife or gun pulled on you, push **that** button."

In the morning Vic goes on the CB radio and hears about a massive car pile-up about two hours down the road that was caused by the overnight storm. He opts for an alternate route suggested by a fellow trucker and is able to continue westward while other trucks are stuck behind the crash for hours.



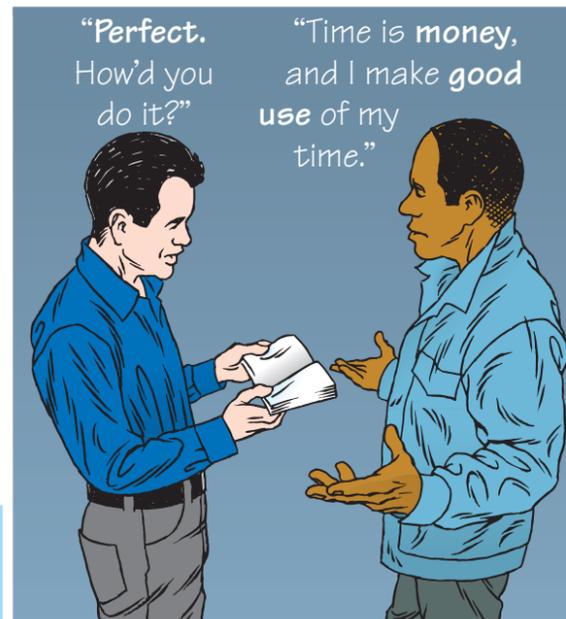
As he nears his destination in Winnipeg, Vic uses his cellphone to call ahead and find out if the receiving dock he's headed to is closed at all during the day. He learns that everything is shut down between 1 and 2 p.m. so he decides to use that hour to top up his fuel tanks and have his own lunch.



"I know Dalton said you were a **good** driver, but I didn't know you were **this** good."



When he reaches the yard an hour later, Bud is waiting for him. He has another load for Vic, but he wants to see his log book before he gives it to him.



"Perfect. How'd you do it?"

"Time is money, and I make **good** use of my time."

Bud is all smiles and gives Vic a load to Halifax with a return pick up in Montreal. He says, "I was going to give this to another guy but he's just a couple hours out of Winnipeg and this needs to be in Halifax in two days."

"I can do it," Vic says.

Just then, Vic's brother-in-law shows up. He's been waiting for Vic and wants to know, Yes or No, whether he's going to be driving a cab for him. "No," Vic says.

"I'll stick with driving truck. It's what I do **best**."



Illustration by Glenn McEvoy



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Ventures West Transport becomes 100% aboriginal-owned

YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T. – Ventures West Transport will soon be a completely aboriginal-owned trucking company.

The Tlicho Government upped its stake in the northern fleet to 90%, buying out founder Glenn Bauer.

Previously the Tlicho Government

owned 60% of the company, according to the CBC.

Lutsel K'e's Denesoline Corporation owns the other 10%.

Ventures West brings in about half the revenue generated by the Tlicho Government's investment corporation, Tlicho Investment Corp. **TW**

Bison promotes key executives

WINNIPEG, Man. – Bison Transport has announced the promotion of several of its executives.

Don Streuber has been named executive chairman and CEO while Rob Penner steps up as president and chief operating officer.

Damiano Coniglio has been named vice-president, finance, and CFO of Bison Diversified, Bison Transport's parent company.

"Bison is experiencing solid growth across our network. We methodically add people, equipment, facilities and subsidiaries to Bison Diversified Inc., as each component shows that they produce sustainable value," said Penner. "These leadership changes signify our long-term commitment to satisfying our customers and creating opportunity for our people."

Meanwhile, Norm Blagden has been named president of Searcy Trucking, a subsidiary of Bison Transport.

"Over the past two years, since our acquisition, Norm has been instrumental in successfully transitioning Searcy Trucking into the Bison family," announced Penner.

"Norm's leadership and experience has been invaluable to the business and the future is bright at Searcy. We look forward to continued success in the flatbed industry through Searcy's ongoing commitment to providing our customers with safe and reliable service." **TW**

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Dynamite Oilfield aims to outlast competitors in downturn

By Geoff Lee

LLOYDMINSTER, Alta. – Dynamite Oilfield Services, based in Alberta, is operating in survival mode hoping to be rescued by higher oil and gas prices and an end to the downturn.

The company finds itself in an unprofitable position for its core fluid hauling, picker and winch truck services provided from locations in Lacombe, Lloydminster and Drayton Valley. The oil and gas producers it serves in Western Canada continue to cut capital costs and trucking rates by as much as 50% in response to low commodity prices.

"This downturn is the worst I've ever seen. I've been in this business for 22 years and I've never seen it this bad," said Shawn Bexson, company president and general manager.

He noted when producers cut spending, the service side of the industry usually gets penalized the most.

"It doesn't matter if it's trucking or well servicing or maintenance, the service companies take the biggest hit," he stressed. Bexson founded the company in 2003 and has steered its growth through several oil and gas price cycles, adding new services and locations in Lloydminster and Drayton Valley with headquarters in Lacombe. The business ownership includes Bexson and his younger brother Kris who manages the Lloydminster office along with Devin Hoffer, operations manager in Lacombe.

Its fleet of trucks includes pickers from five to 45 tons, Texas bed rig ups, pilot trucks and a custom-made trailer designed to handle 750- to 2,000-barrel production tanks. It recently purchased a 40-wheeled unit for heavy hauling even in road ban conditions. Dynamite also offers oilfield rentals of mobile catwalks, wellsite shacks, rig matting and light towers and it builds portable roads with a PRC Mammoth mat. Given the current low commodity price environment, Bexson is not overly optimistic about the potential for a quick recovery for his business or the energy sector in general.

"It's a declining industry. We don't know where the bottom is," he said.

"I think it's going to be a couple of years before we see things even start to come around from what's going on in the

world – from what I can make sense of the literature being sent to us."

The current downturn hit home for Bexson last November when West Texas Intermediate oil fell below \$70 a barrel putting the company into a reactive mode to cut costs and find new business.

"We're just waiting to see where the dust settles. We are still currently reacting. We're still trying to figure out how to make money in this environment," he said. Bexson spoke from Lacombe about the impact of the slowdown on business during a conference call in Lloydminster in late August with WTI oil under \$45 a barrel.

"We're just in survival mode. We're just trying to survive – trying to outlast our competition," he said noting he will continue to diversify.

"We're trying. We're recruiting salesmen trying to market our business; trying to diversify our services and go forward," he said with a sense of frustration in his voice.

"Like I said, I haven't made money in six months and I'm trying to figure out how. We've cut back in every single area and we're still going to be cutting back in the months to come."

The key to staying competitive in the long run he said is talking with the competition and getting to know what's going on in the field.

"We've got to be at the table with all these jobs and be putting bids in – just getting things moving," he said.

Dynamite has cut its workforce and all remaining employees are working half time hours until business picks up. Steve Smith is the new sales coordinator in Lloydminster hired in June to market the company and get equipment moving.

"My role is to create new business and maintain what we have and just find other sources of income – maybe the portable roads and go the municipalities and see who we get onboard with," he said.

"Just like Shawn said – trying to get into the bid process at least and have the opportunity to throw our name and prices at them and see from there what we get out of that."

Smith had all but lined up meetings with half a dozen oil companies in Calgary to start another sales trip in late August or early September.



Sales coordinator, Steve Smith, left, and assistant manager Delbert Docken rolled out a Western Star winch tractor pulling a tank cradle at the new Lloydminster facility.

"If you can get an opportunity to meet face-to-face, it shows that they're interested. A phone call can only go so far. If you can have a little sit down with them – that's where you need to be," he said.

Whoever he speaks with Smith makes a point of stressing Dynamite's strength is its picker and hauling abilities.

"That's what we shine on and that's what our history is," he said.

The business has grown from a merger between Dynamite Oilfield Central Alberta, the original name of Shawn's company with Dynamite Oilfield & Picker Service in Lloydminster, which his brother owned. The consolidation combines light picker and hot shot services from Lloydminster with a fleet of heavy haul bed trucks, winch tractors and large cranes in Lacombe and fluid hauling in Drayton Valley.

"Anyone who wants to make it in this business is going to have to partner up and work with people to make it. You're not going to make it alone anymore," said Bexson about the merger.

"It was a decision made four years ago now. Do I regret doing it? No, I have an office in Lloydminster, Drayton Valley and Lacombe. The benefits of having satellite offices – we're spread out and we have a bigger footprint."

The Drayton Valley location opened two years ago where Dynamite has been hauling water and flow-back fluids from fracking to disposal sites in the region for several years. The oilfield service hotspots have been the Duvernay shale gas play and the Cardium light oil play in west central Alberta.

"The work is rapidly declining though," noted Bexson as the downturn slows exploration and drilling.

The company services the oilfield from Manitoba to British Columbia, but with oil around \$45 a barrel, Bexson says it's not active anywhere these days.

Local efficiency is on the mind of Delbert Docken, the assistant manager and dispatcher at the new Lloydminster office and shop that opened in the fall of 2014 on a five-acre site.

The new building is equipped with its own truck wash and has plenty of space for indoor truck storage and in-house maintenance for additional cost savings.

"We've got to get things out quick and be cost efficient for our customers so they call back," said Docken.

He's pleased that Dynamite has kept enough staff to run equipment while some companies haven't.

"If you don't have any staff, it's a little hard to keep the doors open," he said. "Dynamite is trying to be proactive and keep things going as much as they can and for as long as they can before they have to make more decisions and cuts."

Like all employees, Docken wears multiple hats in and out of the shop to save the company time and money.

"I go from being assistant manager, from being dispatcher, to jumping in the truck if I'm needed to go and move something" he said. "You got more utilization because then you can go from being staff in the office down to in the field."

Docken has been in the business since the first major downturn in 1986 and he said this downturn reminds him of that one. "Back then, you couldn't get a job pounding nails. You couldn't get a job doing anything. I don't think there is a magic formula – just keep on plugging away and hope for the best," he said. **TW**

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