

# TRUCK WEST

May 2010 Volume 21, Issue 5

Delivering daily news to Canada's trucking industry at [www.trucknews.com](http://www.trucknews.com)

## Post-mortem of a costly recession

*Driving for Profit seminar explores recession's impact*

By James Menzies

**MISSISSAUGA, Ont.** – By now, everyone has seen the much-discussed Nike commercial in which the voice of Tiger Woods' late father said to the golfer: "I want to find out what your thinking was, I want to find out what your feelings are – and did you learn anything?"

While the question was taken out of context, the suggestion was that Tiger's late father was referring to the golfer's well-documented off-course transgressions.

Meanwhile a similar scene was playing out at the Capitol Banquet Hall in Mississauga during the latest Driving for Profit seminar.

Only this time it was the voice of Transportation Media editorial director Lou Smyrlis asking a panel of three courageous fleet managers what their thinking was and, of course, 'did you learn anything?' from the recession.

The recession Smyrlis was referring to has hammered the trucking industry over the past couple years.

While it's finally loosening its grip on the Canadian trucking industry, mistakes were made and

Continued on page 12

## Stranded

*RCMP rescues stranded truckers as Manitoba winter roads suffer a sudden spring meltdown*



**MELTDOWN:** The sudden thawing of Manitoba's winter road network left drivers stranded – and northern communities without access to vital supplies.

Photo supplied by the RCMP

**WRONG LAKE, Man.** – Truckers became stranded and required RCMP rescue when Manitoba's winter road network suddenly and unexpectedly

thawed in mid-March.

On March 15 at about 8:30 a.m., a trucking company called the RCMP and informed them one of its commercial drivers was unac-

counted for during a run to St. Theresa's Point First Nation.

The 52-year-old driver left St. Theresa's Point on March 12 but had not arrived in Winnipeg.

The RCMP discovered the driver's rig had become stuck in the mud and the driver was stranded without food.

The driver, who also suffered from a medical condition, needed help.

Believing the driver had become separated from a convoy of truck drivers on the winter road, the RCMP said it acted quickly and dispatched a plane to search for the missing driver. The pilot noticed a stranded semi with a flatbed carrying another semi just north of Wrong Lake and also saw the driver nearby, waving at the plane.

During a second loop, the pilot discovered several more stranded semis on the south side of Wrong Lake. The stranded drivers kept a fire going to keep warm.

"Since there is nowhere to land a plane in that area, RCMP chartered a helicopter to retrieve the driver with a nurse and RCMP officer from Bloodvein First Nation with food and water on-board," the RCMP reported after the rescue.

"At 2 p.m., the truck driver was found safe and otherwise in good health. He was transported to safety to Bloodvein First Nation where arrangements were made to fly him home."

For industry reaction on what went wrong, and the continuing difficulty of serving remote communities, see the related story on pg. 16. □

## Is long and tall dead and gone?

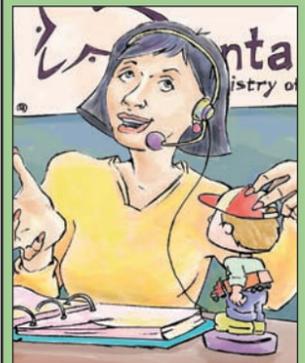
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## Inside This Issue...

- **Oil's well:** Manufacturers say SCR technology won't require major changes for engine oils. Page 17
- **Licence renewed:** Mark Dalton can't get any answers from the MTO on its senior driver policy. Page 18
- **Got a dime?:** Financing criteria hasn't changed, but getting financing could be more challenging. Page 22
- **Trimac training:** Trimac's new Calgary-based state-of-the-art Learning Centre is now open for business. Page 24

## Mark Dalton O/O



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# CLASS 8 TRUCK SALES TRENDS

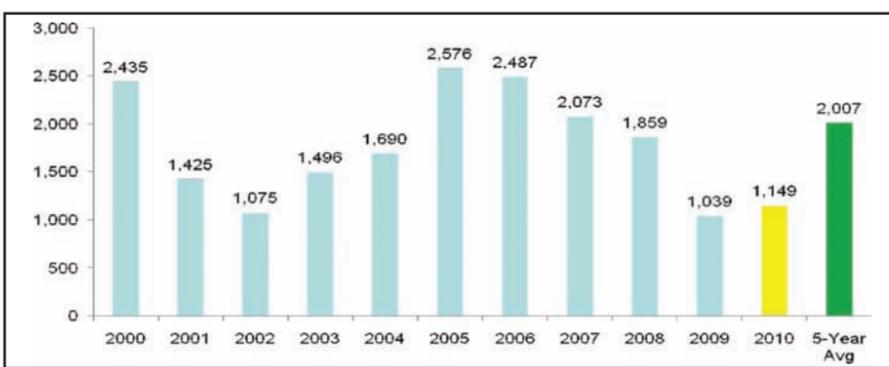
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## Monthly Class 8 Sales - Feb 10

Class 8 truck manufacturers were hoping for a rebound this year from the depressed market of 2009. Two months into the year, the rebound seems to be there but, so far, it's very muted. Truck sales are up from last year but only marginally so. There were 1,149 Class 8 trucks sold in the Canadian market in February, which is an improvement over the 1,039 sold the previous February but not much of one. So far, 2010 ranks as the second worst sales year after the disastrous 2009 and is more than 800 vehicles behind the five-year average.

OEM	This Month	Last Year
Freightliner	263	239
International	342	320
Kenworth	221	75
Mack	59	91
Peterbilt	130	67
Sterling	14	90
Volvo	41	101
Western Star	79	56
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,149</b>	<b>1,039</b>

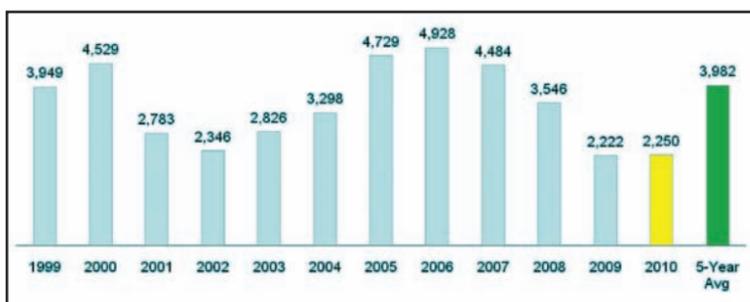
## Historical Comparison - Feb 10 Sales



## Class 8 Sales (YTD Feb 10) by Province and OEM

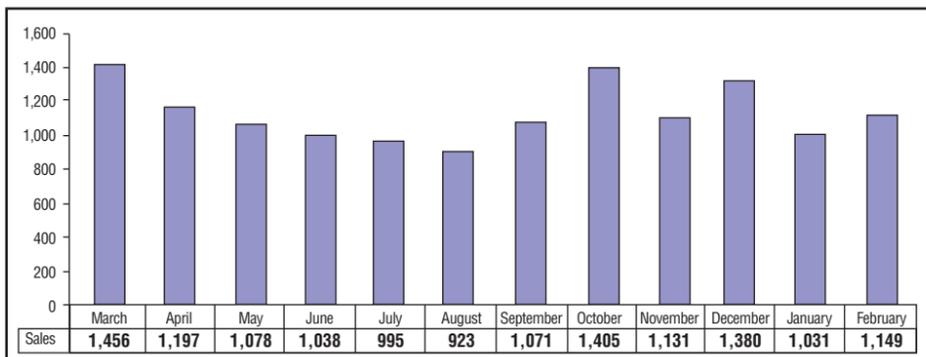
OEM	BC	ALTA	SASK	MAN	ONT	QUE	NB	NS	PEI	NF	CDA
Freightliner	36	40	66	42	219	80	27	20	0	2	532
Kenworth	49	140	26	20	57	123	8	0	0	0	423
Mack	6	8	9	13	31	27	6	3	0	0	103
International	34	70	8	27	274	143	23	16	0	6	601
Peterbilt	18	36	22	21	54	78	15	6	0	0	250
Sterling	4	8	0	2	1	9	0	0	0	0	24
Volvo	2	19	8	11	77	32	17	1	0	0	167
Western Star	22	38	5	4	34	13	7	26	0	1	150
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2,250</b>

## Historical Comparison - YTD Feb 10

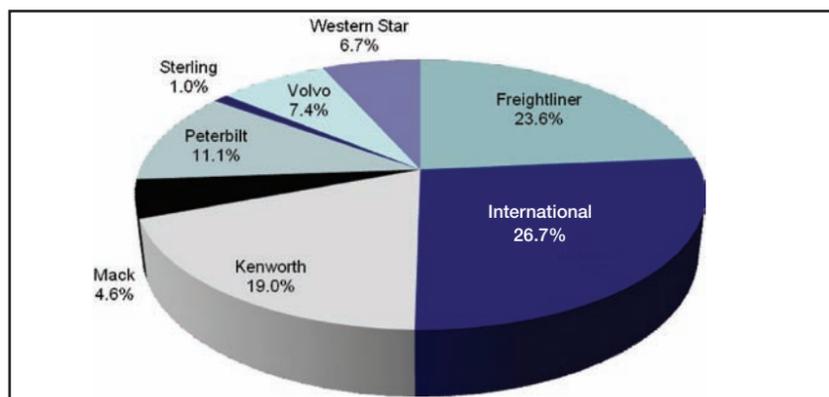


The previous year was the worst year for Canadian Class 8 truck sales of the past decade and one of the worst since the economic slowdowns of the early 90s. The first quarter of 2009 was so weak that, three months into the year, sales were about 3,000 off the five-year YTD average and about 5,000 off the banner year of 2006. Will the first quarter of 2010 prove to be similarly lacklustre? So far, the improvement in truck sales is marginal. There are signs that freight volumes are starting to grow yet trucking remains in over capacity and financing institutions are being tight fisted when it comes to lending money to small- and medium-sized companies looking to get into new equipment.

## 12 - Month Sales Trends



## Market Share Class 8 - Feb YTD



There are many reasons motor carriers remain reticent to purchase new trucks. Despite bankruptcies and fleet size reductions, there are still too many trucks chasing too little freight. Although indications are that freight volumes are growing, growth remains tentative. Pricing for trade-ins remains less than appealing and access to capital for new truck purchases remains limited. The new trucks also come with 2010 emissions standards compliant engines, which add about \$10,000 to the price of a new rig.

International, once again, captured the market share crown in the Canadian Class 8 market in 2009, ending up with a commanding 29% share of the market. But the fight for market share this year will be particularly interesting as International stands alone with its advanced EGR solution to the 2010 emissions standards compared to the SCR option all other truck manufacturers have chosen. Although it's too early in the game to determine how the market share battle will unfold, International has, again, jumped in front after Freightliner held an early lead in January.

Source: Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association

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# Will retailer put trucker needs first?

As this issue of *Truck West* was being put to bed (kicking and screaming as it was), news broke that Canadian Tire had won a deal to be the fuel provider and convenience store operator for all of Ontario's 23 service centres along the 400-series highways.

You know, those service centres the province has been shutting down in bunches with cement barriers in many cases erected to keep weary truckers from pulling off for some much-needed rest?

Canadian Tire? Not exactly a chain that's synonymous with serving truckers.

Sure, maybe with their DIY projects around the house on those rare weekends at home, but certainly not as a major commercial cardlock operator.

One one hand, it's refreshing to see a Canadian company won the contract and it'll be good for the Canadian Tire money collections, but by the same token the announcement has left me wondering if truckers' needs even factored into the decision?

Details at this point are scarce. Rest assured, we are working on obtaining them and will have a more complete report on the implications for truckers in the next issue.

I just hope there'll be ample truck parking and the fueling stations will be trucker-friendly. Who knows?

Maybe Canadian Tire can set a new standard for trucker-friendly fueling stations in Ontario. It wouldn't be difficult. Here are just a few suggestions I received in a recent e-mail from a frustrated driver:

## Editorial Comment

**James Menzies**



For starters, they could provide truck-sized squeegees with long handles and fresh windshield washer fluid.

Free air for tires would be a nice feature. We all know how important maintaining proper tire pressure is for fuel economy (and hence the environment) and safety too. Put the air someplace trucks can access it.

A properly-maintained parking lot would be nice as well, with potholes filled in a timely man-

ner and pools of grease and oil cleaned up regularly.

When you consider the cost of a fill-up for a semi, they should be treated like the Kings and Queens of the Highway that they are when they come rolling into these fuel stations.

These provincially-owned service centres are vital to the Ontario trucking industry. Truck stop parking spaces fill up quickly and there are few other trucker-friend-

ly places to park along Ontario's most well-travelled trucking corridors.

Truckers were rightly angered when the province pulled the rug out from under them and began closing these service centres en-masse in a poorly-planned revitalization initiative.

There's an opportunity here for redemption, but the devil is still in the details and it'll be some time before we know how serious the province was in making these service centres trucker-friendly. □

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



# Don't waste a good recession

This is a tense time for our industry. It seems we're stuck in a prolonged in-between phase with the recession technically over (the economy is growing again) but with the recovery nowhere near as robust as would have been hoped.

Many of the motor carrier executives I spoke to in January and February were telling me they've seen little in terms of growth in freight volumes.

March seems to have been better, but although there is hope for the coming months, there is also a great deal of uncertainty. And, as a result, there is a great deal of anxiety.

While everyone I've spoken to at recent industry events is very optimistic about 2011, no one seems to have figured out yet what 2010 will bring.

For the many carriers hanging on by their fingernails, just looking to make payroll from week to week, the anxiety is obvious. But even established carriers are feeling anxious these days.

Their anxiety may not be about making it through the next week, but they have real concerns about how long it will take them to repair the damage to their companies the last couple of years have wreaked. For example, rates in the

## Viewpoint

**Lou Smyrlis**  
 Editorial Director



truckload market over the past 24 months have dropped between 15% and 25%, exclusive of surcharges. (And our own research clearly shows that surcharges, such as detention, have also taken a distinct hit during the recession.) And, to make matters worse, many shippers are trying to stretch out payment terms.

During the best years the industry has seen, trucking companies made about eight to 10 cents on the dollar. In other words, profit margins were tight at the best of times and carriers clearly didn't have much to play with. As Mark Seymour, president of Kriska Transportation, candidly told me, in a stable year you get a 5% rate increase in TL. So even healthy 5% increases compounded over the next three years are only going to take the industry back to where it was prior to the recession.

Yet such increases are far from guaranteed. They're certainly not

coming this year. Our research shows the majority of both carriers and shippers expect rates to remain about the same this year as last.

As Seymour and many other trucking executives have pointed out repeatedly over the past year, there is a lot of desperation in the market right now amongst carriers for volume, and shippers are taking advantage of that. They are bidding the business every time they think they can take another rate reduction. That's going to prove a hard habit to break as long as the industry remains in over-capacity.

What it all boils down to is a very difficult atmosphere in which to operate a trucking business with a long-term vision and continued investment. If there is anything positive in all this, it's that motor carriers have learned some very tough lessons over the past 24 months; lessons I hope they won't forget when we finally do return to better times.

That truly would be a waste of a good recession. □

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## Behind the headlines

*Truck West's* weekly WebTV show *Transportation Matters* has earned top honours for the series, winning the Best of Multimedia division at the Truck Writers of North America's annual Communication Awards March 25.

The award was one of 10 won by *Transportation Matters*, *Truck West*, and its contributors – the group's best showing since the peer-judged competition started seven years ago.

The awards, held each year at the Mid-America Trucking Show in Louisville, Ky., recognize excellence in trucking industry journalism in both the trade and the mainstream press, as well as excellence in communication with the industry by public relations professionals. The awards include categories for writing, graphics, broadcast, Web sites, and internal communications.

*Transportation Matters* won a bronze award for its "Fergus Truck Show 2008" episode in the Truck Show category, a gold award for its "Mascot Truck Parts Tour" episode in the Business cat-

egory, and another gold award for "TMTV – The Series" in the Series category – which eventually won Best of Multimedia for its division.

Executive editor James Menzies took home a trio of awards in the Magazine Writing division; a silver for "Traction In A Winter Wonderland" in the Technical: General category, a second silver for "Spec'ing Shunt Trucks" in the Product Application category, and a gold in the News category for "Too Restrictive?"

For outside contributors, writer Edo van Belkam's popular series "Mark Dalton: Owner/operator" won a bronze award in the Fiction category, TFS Group's Scott Taylor won a bronze for his "Tax Talk" column in the Magazine Writing – Series category, while Joanne Ritchie of the Owner-Operators Business Association of Canada took home a gold award for her column "Voice of the Owner Operator" in the same category.

"Being recognized by our peers is a highly sought-after honour. Our editorial and video production teams are dedicated to providing accurate and timely information. These awards solidify that dedication and reaffirms the direction we have taken with our editorial products," said Rob Wilkins, *Truck West* publisher. □



Ledlow

## Manitoba to increase truck weights

**WINNIPEG, Man.** – Major bridge and highway upgrades in Manitoba have paved the way for heavier truck loads, the province has announced.

Transport Minister Steve Ashton announced the changes recently, noting "Manitoba is a major trade route and our significant funding increases to upgrade our highways and bridges are now helping trucking firms, industries and farmers reduce hauling costs so they can operate more efficiently."

Spring weight restrictions are also being removed from certain roads thanks to the upgrades.

Changes to the following routes will soon allow for the heaviest legal truck loads year-round: over 120 kms of PTH 68, from PTH 6 to PTH 5; more than 110 kms of PTH83 from Russell to south of Swan River; and an additional 43 kms of PTH 8, from PR 229 to PTH 68 near Gimli.

Spring weight restrictions, meanwhile, will be removed on: 26 kms of PTH 3 from Crystal City to La Riviere; 21 kms of PTH 3 from Melita to Medora; all of PTH 57; and three kilometres of PR 264 from Rosburn to PR577.

The funding has resulted from the province's 10-year, \$4 billion highway renewal plan announced in 2007. □

## Canadian trucking industry on upswing

**TORONTO, Ont.** – Drawing data from its Loadlink freight-matching service, TransCore's Canadian Freight Index is showing signs of improving conditions for the Canadian trucking industry.

The upward trends reflected in the Canadian index are consistent with improvements in US conditions, according to TransCore.

The daily average posting of Canadian loads on TransCore's Loadlink system has increased 56% in February 2010 compared to February 2009. Truck postings have decreased about 10% over the same time, likely indicating that excess capacity is being trimmed or that carriers are filling up with freight from contract shipments, TransCore indicates.

The company also says there's been an overall improvement in the truck-to-load ration of 42% year-over-year.

Also of note, cross-border loads posted a 63% increase year-over-year in February and carrier truck searches are also on the rise.

TransCore's Loadlink freight- and equipment-matching service is used by nearly 5,000 Canadian transport companies. Data derived from the system has become an indicator of spot market freight for Canadian and cross-border surface transportation. □



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Safety

# CSA 2010 offers tools to improve safety, profitability

The fear mongers appear to be hard at work. As the US prepares to introduce a new safety rating system under CSA 2010, fleets and drivers are being rocked by false rumours that suggest they will be declared unfit, insurance will be denied, or that employees will even be arrested at roadside scales.

In reality, the new initiative being applied to every cross-border trucker is something that informed fleets will embrace. It offers a new array of tools that can play a key role in successful recruiting strategies, identifies the challenges associated with high-risk drivers and makes it possible to address the hidden issues that would otherwise lead to costly losses.

There is simply no question that the related Safety Management System will offer a more detailed analysis than today's SafeStat measurements.

The new system – being introduced this July – will track details about every crash and safety-related violations within seven Behaviour Analysis Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS). And these seven BASICS will sound very familiar to any fleet that monitors safety performance.

Regulators will now be tracking reports of unsafe driving, fatigued driving, driver fitness, controlled substances and alcohol use, vehicle maintenance, cargo-related issues and reportable crashes.

All of these details will be stored

## Ask the Expert

Rick Geller



in the Motor Carrier Management Information System that will track five years of crash data and three years of inspection data such as out-of-service violations.

But unlike a simple count of the number of incidents, CSA 2010 will also weigh the severity of individual violations and the timing of each event.

A recent violation will be weighed more heavily than one that took place several years ago, and each measurement will be used to identify the specific factors that increase the likelihood of a crash.

The scores that emerge will then be compared against the performance of similar fleets, establishing meaningful benchmarks along the way. The work behind CSA 2010 has also introduced some impressive planning tools to help fleets maintain favourable ratings.

The US Department of Transportation, for example, has unveiled a clearly identified Safety Management Cycle which will walk any fleet through the individual steps that can improve performance. The checklist helps to identify written policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, qualification

and hiring, training and communication, monitoring and tracking, and finally a form of meaningful action that will address any safety-related concerns.

And one of the biggest changes of all comes in the form of a system that will measure and record the performance of individual drivers for the very first time.

Under existing operating records, a newly-hired driver could add six unwanted points to a company's profile, lose their job, and then take their bad habits to the next unsuspecting employer. Meanwhile, the fleet that hired them in the first place will need to live with the points for as long as 30 months.

But the new CSA 2010 reporting system will hold drivers accountable for their actions and share the related details through the Pre-employment Screening Program (PSP).

A recruiter will be able to tap into the records as long as a job candidate has signed the required consent form.

Of course, this initiative involves more than addressing the actions of a single driver. The data available through CSA 2010 can be used to support a variety of programs, whether they involve refining training efforts across a fleet or other interventions that can take place before a crash ever occurs.

Rather than taking a shotgun approach to addressing as many safety-related issues as possible, a training initiative will now have the chance

of honing in on specific challenges that increase the likelihood of a loss.

They are the types of initiatives that can have a direct impact on profitability, even in the midst of a struggling economy. After all, fleets that have introduced Markel's high risk driver strategies have been known to reduce their losses by as much as 75%.

The financial impact of related incidents will undoubtedly take many companies by surprise. I recently asked one fleet to circle May 26 on every calendar because each dollar made up to that point was being used to offset safety-related losses.

Think of it like the Tax Free Day that businesses will use to determine how much money they need to make before covering their tax bills.

Think of it as proof that CSA 2010 can lead to the strategies that will improve a fleet's bottom line. □

– This month's expert is Rick Geller. Rick is the director of safety and signature services for Markel Insurance Company of Canada and has more than 25 years experience providing loss control and risk management services to the trucking industry. Send your questions, feedback and comments about this column to [info@markel.ca](mailto:info@markel.ca). Markel Safety and Training Services, a division of Markel Insurance Company of Canada, offers specialized courses, seminars and consulting to fleet owners, safety managers, trainers and drivers. Markel is the country's largest trucking insurer providing more than 50 years of continuous service to the transportation industry.

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Answers on page 26

### Across

- International Harvester cabover, debuted in '63
- Sport for electric-cart drivers
- Chrysler Canada truck brand, way back when
- Mack construction-truck model
- Informal roadside eateries
- Quebec-based trailer maker
- Former Mack model
- Cargo-carrying conveyances
- Speeder-snagging system
- Modern tire type
- Pneumatic-suspension components
- Defunct GMC clone of Chevy Titan
- Toddler's Tonka-truck terrain
- Engine-block material (4,4)

### Down

- West, on a road map
- Semitrailer-and-pup rigs (1,6)
- Exhaust-stacks output
- A former flat-front Freightliner
- Mississauga manufacturer, \_\_\_\_ Bus Industries
- Truck fleet operating expense (4,4)
- Accelerator, in other words
- Highway-spanning structure
- Truck-usage category (2,4)
- Word on tour-group bus
- Eastern Ontario-based carrier
- Heavy-duty Petro-Canada engine oil
- Tailgate another truck
- New-truck-related bank transaction

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# Understanding and controlling the winter blues

I caught a rather severe case of the winter blues this year.

I had feelings of irritability, a craving for comfort foods, loss of interest in usually enjoyable activities, poor concentration and loss of energy.

After the high of the Christmas season, feeling a little down in January has become part of the normal seasonal work cycle for me. By the end of January, I am normally in the groove of a new year and the bluesy feeling has passed. But not this year.

This year the feeling of simply being tired is clinging to me. That feeling of fatigue aggravates the normal daily irritations I face on the road each day often blowing them out of proportion. So I had to face the question: What has changed?

I spent more time on the road in 2009 than what I would consider normal and that trend continues to the present day.

This revelation comes as no surprise; it is a direct result of the downturn in the economy. As I investigated this line of thought, I realized that the quality of my time on the road has also changed dramatically.

It is the quality and not the quantity of time I am spending on the job that has a far greater effect on my state of mind.

My last trip to Michigan is a good example of this. It was short but not sweet.

I left my home terminal in Ayr, Ont. at 8:00 p.m. It was a simple, straightforward load. I was switching trailers in Kalamazoo, Mich. then heading up to Grand Rapids for a load that was ready the following evening. Simple. No time issues or hours-of-service issues to deal with.

I planned to be in Grand Rapids by 2:30 the following morning, get a good night's sleep, then kill the balance of the day before hooking on to the load that evening and making the five-hour trip back to Ayr. The problem was that 25 kms after leaving the terminal in Ayr, I got a Check Engine light and then – bingo – the engine derated. I contacted dispatch, flipped around and headed back to the terminal.

Luckily there was another highway tractor in the yard. I slid my gear into it, while dispatch modified the Customs documents. Then I was off again; but now it was almost midnight.

The Kalamazoo load had to be delivered by eight in the morning. At this point I had plenty of time – but not plenty of energy. I crossed the border, grabbed a 90-minute nap at the first rest area and had the trailer in the dock in Kalamazoo by 7:45. I grabbed an empty trailer out of the yard in Kalamazoo and made it up to Grand Rapids well within my 14-hour window.

It was 9:45 in the morning. My load was scheduled for eight or nine that evening.

You would think after having been up most of the night, sleeping wouldn't be a problem. But



Over the Road

Al Goodhall

that short nap in the middle of the night combined with the bright sun, warm spring weather, and the hustle and bustle of a busy day taking place around me made sleeping difficult.

It was 9 p.m. when I started rolling out of Grand Rapids. By the time I arrived at the port of entry in Sarnia, I had been fighting off the waves of fatigue for over an hour.

Ironic isn't it? You can operate well within the hours-of-service rules and still not be fit to be on

the road. This is a circumstance that is more common than any of us like to admit. It goes to show that longer trips do not equate with more fatigue. It's all about the quality of time we spend within each and every day.

I have come to understand over the last couple of weeks that I'm not suffering from the winter blues. I'm dealing with a type of shift work sleep disorder. According to the National Sleep Foundation I have most of the symptoms: Insomnia; disrupted sleep schedules; irritability; reduced performance; and excessive sleepiness.

Understanding this makes me feel a little better but I still have to cope with it.

I can't lay the blame for this situation at the feet of my employer

or anyone else for that matter.

In fact my employer has bent over backwards to keep us all moving out here and financially I had a good year last year. Obviously it has come at a price though.

It goes to show that despite all the procedural issues and regulatory changes we are facing in this industry each and every one of us is responsible for making the decisions that affect our individual health and well-being. That will never change. □

– 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> and you can follow him on Twitter at [Twitter.com/Al\\_Goodhall](http://Twitter.com/Al_Goodhall).

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## Tax Talk

# Why you should plan ahead for the July 1 HST deadline

## When it comes to HST, planning pays

Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) is coming to Ontario on July 1 and the government is selling the idea that blending the 5% GST and 8% PST in Ontario is going to save manufacturers, restaurants, retailers, and other businesses so much money that they'll be able to lower their prices and we'll all benefit.

Stop laughing. That's what they're saying.

Personally, I figure there'll be more to gain during the rush to beat the deadline on purchases that will cost more after the HST takes effect.

Think about your local gas station. Gasoline already has GST in the price, so if gas is \$1 a litre on June 30 it's going to be \$1.08 on July 1. I'll see you in line.

Industry lobbyists have been calling for an HST in the province for years, saying the current system is inefficient and regressive. The basic principle is that HST is fully-refundable whereas PST is not. HST is also simpler to administer. Right now, truckers face at least three different sales tax regimes: the PST, the Multi-Jurisdictional Tax (MJVT, a special PST on IRP vehicles), and the federal GST.

Probably the easiest way to think about how HST will affect you is to look at IRP and non-IRP operations.

### Tax Talk

Scott Taylor



#### For IRP fleets

When Ontario introduced IRP in 2001, one selling feature was that PST is not applied to repairs and maintenance or the purchase and leasing of equipment.

Just show the dealership your Cab Card and you were PST-exempt. Instead, PST (renamed MJVT) is paid annually with your IRP plate renewal. After July 1, IRP vehicles will now have to pay HST on all of these items.

Because HST is fully-refundable, owner/operators and fleets will get their money back. But isn't it better not to pay it at all, to have the purchase be tax-exempt, rather than to pay the cash and wait three months to claim an input tax credit on the HST? It's a step sideways, not ahead or backwards.

#### For non-IRP fleets

Non-IRP fleets will be able to claim the HST as fully-refundable instead of having to pay non-re-

fundable PST on everything, potentially a big savings.

For example, a \$100 repair for an IRP vehicle costs \$105 with \$5 refundable through GST. For non-IRP vehicles, that same repair costs \$113 with \$5 refundable. Starting on July 1, everyone will pay \$100 for the repair plus \$13 HST and then file to have the \$13 refunded.

The numbers get bigger on capital purchases. For example, that non-IRP truck that cost \$100,000 plus \$8,000 PST will cost \$100,000 after the \$13,000 HST refund. That's where the government is gambling that the HST will have its biggest effect.

Those savings on capital purchases may entice companies to stay in Ontario, creating jobs and reducing unemployment.

#### Bad timing

The existing tax on multi-jurisdictional vehicles would no longer apply to renewals or new registrations of these vehicles under IRP on or after July 1.

In addition, these vehicles will no longer be subject to RST (exit tax) when they cease to be registered under the IRP on or after July 1.

Ontario has told IRP jurisdictions that they will no longer be required to charge the annual prorated sales tax on behalf of Ontario for renewals or new reg-

istrations under IRP if the registration year begins on or after July 1.

What about vehicles registered before July 1? If your IRP fee structure covers May 2010 to April 2011, will Ontario refund tax for months beyond June 2010? We've asked IRP officials and no one knows the answer.

I do know this: carriers are delaying some capital purchases – trucks and trailers – until July when they feel they will be cheaper due to HST.

The transition to HST won't be easy, and you should talk to your accountant about how to manage the process with respect to taxes on your own billing – like, if you pick up a load on June 29 and deliver it on July 3, how do you apply the taxes?

But let's hope auto companies and other manufacturers in Ontario see the benefits and decide to stick around.

And hey, since they're saving so much money because of HST, maybe they'll pay more for your service. Stop laughing! □

– 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](http://www.tfsgroup.com) or call 800-461-5970.

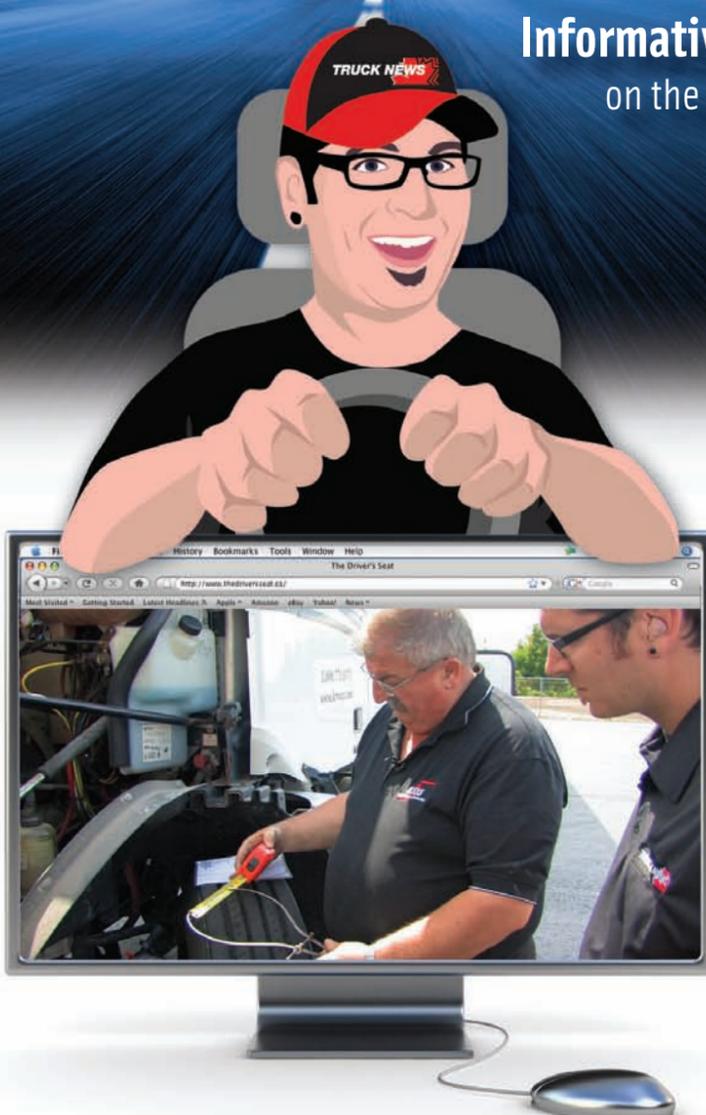
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# Fleets take a look back, and ahead following recession

■ Continued from page 1  
lessons learned.

Candidly fielding questions about the impact of the recession and how to take advantage of the recovery were: Mark Bylsma, Spring Creek Carriers; Trevor Kurtz, Kurtz Trucking; and Rob Penner, Bison Transport.

The three crowded onto a single sofa while a philosophical Smyrlis asked them what they've learned from the recession.

Bylsma admitted Spring Creek made mistakes early on in the downturn, by adding about 30 trucks during an uncertain time.

"We recognized at that point in time that some of our growth initiatives were costing us money and new lanes we developed were running at a loss and we were taking our attention off our core lanes," Bylsma admitted. He said the company has learned to shift away from an "if we build it, they will come" mentality when building new lanes.

"We thought we'd start the lane, let customers know and three months or six months later it will be a profitable lane," Bylsma reasoned. "We were missing the forest for the trees. Now, we haven't grown all that much, one or two trucks here or there strictly when there's a need for it with an in-house client."

Bison's Penner is hopeful other trucking companies have also learned valuable lessons about managing growth – but he remains skeptical.

"I'd like to say growth is one of those things that our industry has learned, but I don't necessarily believe that," he said, admitting Bison itself "hasn't been labeled conservative in too many things and growth is one of them." Penner added "We are going to get pressured into making decisions and taking chances, and our economy and successful organizations have always grown and done well because they take risks."

Penner said it's too early to be



**TRIPLE THREAT:** Three top carrier representatives candidly discuss lessons learned from the recession at the most recent Driving for Profit seminar. Pictured from left to right are Trevor Kurtz of Kurtz Trucking, Mark Bylsma of Spring Creek Carriers, Rob Penner of Bison Transport, and Lou Smyrlis of Transportation Media.

considering growth strategies, however, when rates have been hammered by 20% or more and gaining back lost ground may take years.

Bylsma said Spring Creek has managed to maintain its rates with most of its direct customers.

Shippers paying LTL rates, for instance, are expecting next day deliveries to Toronto from the Great Lakes states – essentially expecting expedited service at LTL rates.

"Once you've done it once or twice, they come to expect next

'For the first time in the history of our company, we were going through the numbers and saying, 'How are we going to become more efficient and still allow these guys to make their house payments'?'

Trevor Kurtz

"At a certain point in time, you have to put a value on your service and it needs to be reflected in your rates," he said.

What Bylsma has noted is not only downward pressure on rates, but corresponding upward pressure on service.

day delivery," he said. "All of a sudden, your third-party LTL rate and your expedited service becomes the expectation."

All three trucking company executives admitted the industry is still suffering the effects of excess capacity, which is exacerbated by the low cost of used equipment.

"You can buy a reefer now for next to nothing, so there were a lot of guys that went out and bought one and figured 'Hey, I'm going to haul pharmaceuticals or HazMat'," said Kurtz.

Injecting some humour into the seminar, Penner shared his own highly-scientific capacity barometer: "We know there's still too many trucks out there because our competitors are still working."

Once the chuckles subsided, he said volumes seem to be picking up and the company is beginning to gain some traction when discussing rates with customers. But it'll be a long time before rates reach pre-recession levels, he predicted. Kurtz agreed.

"You can name your price going to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, but trying to go to Chicago, Atlanta and those places is still brutal," he said.

"It's going to be a long time before those heavy lanes come around. Squeezing rates up is next to impossible right now and we're

working every day just to keep what we've got."

On coping with the recession, the three fleets on the panel all employed different strategies. Kurtz said his company froze salaries and had to scrap a "second trip" bonus – but driver pay rates remained in tact. The recession hit Kurtz Trucking later than most, Kurtz said, but when it did hit, it hit hard.

"For the first time ever in the history of our company, we were going through the numbers and saying 'How are we going to become more efficient and still allow all these guys to make their house payments?'" he recalled. "That was the biggest battle. My brothers and I would meet every two weeks, go over what we did last week and what we're going to do next week to right-size things."

Bylsma said Spring Creek didn't have to lay off any employees, although it left certain positions unfilled when people left the company. It didn't reduce salaries but it froze driver pay rates and salaries.

Penner said Bison also made it through without reducing pay for drivers or other staff.

"We didn't roll back anyone's wages in any way, shape or form," he said.

"We've taken the approach of having the right number of trucks and keeping them rolling. We kept our pay-for-performance strategies in tact."

Penner said Bison did eliminate about 200 trucks – mostly company trucks – from its fleet by simply letting the leases expire.

The benefit of leasing trucks on four-year cycles is that the fleet can contract by 25% in any given year, he pointed out.

Penner took issue with fleets that downsize on the backs of their owner/operators, which does nothing to address excess capacity in the marketplace.

"One thing we found odd when talking to different fleets about reducing capacity over the last two years is the first trucks they shed are the owner/operators," Penner said.

"But that doesn't reduce capacity it just forces them into taking another job somewhere. If we all relied on owner/operators, we'd never have much hope of managing our capacity. Our decision to let them go isn't their decision to go out of business, they will now compete against me tomorrow."

A surprising benefit of the recent hard times for Bison Transport was that it provided opportunities for everyone to step up and contribute to the ongoing success of the company. Management employed a bottom-up strategy for improving efficiency and controlling costs, which has resulted in great ideas from some unexpected sources.

"We're developing our next level of leadership," Penner said, "some that we expected, some that are complete surprises."

Going forward, Smyrlis asked for advice on how trucking com-

Continued on page 14

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**Missing from:** Berwick, Nova Scotia

**Height:** 5' 10"

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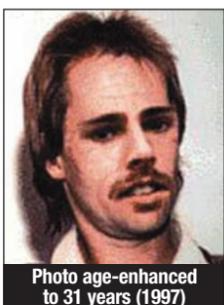


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Feature

# Long road back

## 'Educate the client' when trying to restore rates to pre-recession levels

■ Continued from page 12

panies can gain back some of the rate losses they suffered through the recession.

"Educate the client," advised Bylsma. "On the direct client basis, it is all about the relationship. On the 3PL side, it's linked 100% to capacity and as that shifts, we'll be able to command higher rates."

Bylsma said he shows customers bulletins from industry associations that call for rate increases and tries to educate them on the cost pressures facing the trucking industry.

Kurtz echoed those remarks,

noting the best customers want to be informed about industry issues such as the costly new emissions requirements and CSA 2010.

"If you just go in and say 'I need a rate increase to buy new trucks and pay for fuel,' they don't care," he said.

"My customers who have stuck with me want to know what's going on. They care." As for the others, "I can't wait for the day I don't have a truck for them," he admitted.

"Information is key," added Penner. "It's a lot more science than it is guts, like it once was and

I think you have to have lots of good tools and systems and communication to ensure people understand why we're doing what we're doing and asking for what we're asking for."

Did any good come of the recession and the difficulties of the past couple years? Bylsma thinks so.

"I look at our survival as a success story," he said. "We had to get more involved in the organizational side of things. We got back into a micro-managing situation where we're keeping an eye on every expense and consolidating loads where we have to. How do we get more freight on the truck? How do we get more deliveries and pickups out of our drivers? We (management) often wonder how well-off would we be today if we were this efficient five years ago?"

"If I was this efficient in 2004 and 2005, I'd be retired – and I ain't that old," joked Kurtz.



**TIME TO TEACH:** Spring Creek Carriers' Mark Bylsma says keeping clients well-informed is key to commanding higher rates.

"I'm excited about the future. If we can stay this efficient and stay positive and keep everyone focused on what they're doing...when this ship turns around I think we're all going to win." □

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## Manitoba

By Jim Bray

**WINNIPEG, Man.** – Talk about getting bogged down at work!

In what could almost seem like a real life episode of the *Ice Road Truckers* TV show, more than 100 drivers found themselves stranded in the middle of nowhere, waiting to be rescued, as Manitoba's winter roads ran out of winter.

The roads, which date back to the 1950s, are usually open for about eight weeks and are used to deliver an entire year's worth of supplies to isolated, mostly aboriginal communities in the province's north.

The system was built by the private sector originally and freight was transported on cat trains. The province took over responsibility for construction and maintenance in 1971 and upgraded the roads to accommodate trucks.

The roadways are built over a variety of terrain, including water, muskeg and mud, and are a vital lifeline for the communities they serve, some of which don't have airstrips nearby that can be used as a back-up.

One of the communities fortunate enough to have an air strip is Red Sucker Lake, north of Red Lake, Ont., in the section of Manitoba that spreads northeastwards towards Hudson Bay. According to Bob Dolyniuk, general manager of the Manitoba Trucking Association, the community normally would be serviced by a winter road that starts at Pine Dock, some 400 kilometres away on Lake Winnipeg west of Atikaki Provincial Park.

Dolyniuk says Red Sucker Lake didn't receive all of its diesel fuel allocation before the roads closed, so the rest of its shipments will have to be flown in. "It should be okay in that regard," he says, "but it's going to be extremely expensive."

The early closure – which went into effect March 15 – has left governments scrambling not only to get the supplies in, but to get the stranded truckers out, a task accomplished sometimes by helicopter and sometimes by quad. Clearly, it's not only a dangerous situation but also a very expensive one – and if Al Gore is right and we can all expect to be surfing the breakers of the Arctic Ocean before long, the problem may not be solved any time soon.

Still, people are trying to find solutions, including one that sounds not only like a blast from the past, but something distinctly "pie in the sky."

The idea, put forward several years ago by Dr. Barry Prentice at the University of Manitoba, is to use dirigibles as airborne freighters.

Such huge, lighter-than-air craft could indeed float serenely above the muskeg and water, but the MTA's Dolyniuk points out that they could have a very serious drawback in that particular part of the world: wind. "There's a lot of it coming through there," he says.

Then there's the question of whether or not humanity is ready to embrace a technology remembered chiefly for the Hindenburg accident.

# Meltdown

**Manitoba truckers find themselves on thin ice, looking for answers as winter wanes**

That's only one possible solution. Fortunately, there are others, though Dolyniuk acknowledges that they're limited.

"You've got to look at the whole situation and what options you have," he says. "You can use winter roads, you can build all-season roads, you can fly it in by planes or you can try dirigibles. To me those are the only options that would be available."

### Time for all-seasons?

Building all-season roads would be a blessing in those years when Old Person Winter decides to take an early vacation, but it raises the issue of how cost-effective it would be, especially considering the fact that such roads would only serve relatively few individuals – about 30,000 people, according to the Province of Manitoba, spread widely over some 20 communities.

Dolyniuk says the province is looking currently at building such a road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, "but you're talking hundreds of millions of dollars," he says.

"And you're talking about crossing the Canadian Shield muskeg, bog, lakes, rivers, creeks – it's rough terrain to say the least."

Such a solution would take years to complete, too.

In the meantime, people are being left high and (with luck) dry, far from either their homes or their destinations, while isolated

communities twist in that infamous Manitoba wind.

As far as the stranded drivers are concerned, Dolyniuk says "The people that are up there now, if they haven't gotten them out, they're going to be there for the season. It's happened before, though not to the extent that we're talking about here."

And while it doesn't happen often – Dolyniuk says only one company had to leave a tractor-trailer behind last year when the season ended – it's still a major concern from a humanitarian and logistical point of view.

Financial, too: even if the people get out, the equipment ends up stranded until the following year's freeze-up.

That's not good for the owners' bottom line. Surely, there must be a point at which it becomes cheaper to build permanent roads?

### A question of cost

"That's the point," Dolyniuk says, "because if you're talking about flying the supplies in there it could be millions and millions of dollars for the one season."

And even the communities like Red Sucker Lake that have landing strips are limited because often the strips aren't large enough to handle bigger transport planes and "there's a cost associated with having to use the smaller planes."

Still, it's inevitable that something will be done, someday, and

Dolyniuk thinks the eventual solution will indeed be all-season roads.

"Everything I've heard so far has been relative to that road system," he says.

"Keeping in mind that there's probably at least a good half-dozen different winter roads in the province."

Needing multiple roads makes the situation even more complicated, though the government could prioritize the road building, doing it piecemeal.

"Some of other winter roads are obviously much farther north," Dolyniuk says, pointing out that the northernmost road extends to points nearly equal in latitude to Churchill, so they should stay frozen more reliably and be more dependable than the ones farther south.

Assuming one wants to rely on the weather.

Dolyniuk says Manitoba actually did study building a road right up to Nunavut, up the west side of the province, but "they were talking about somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$2 billion."

That's a serious chunk of change in these economic times, especially considering the small population bases on either side of the border, coupled with the fact that such a road would make more sense if Nunavut were to get involved as well, extending it north from the Manitoba border.

Then there's the issue of spending limited resources as wisely as possible.

"The other side of it," says Dolyniuk, "is if there's \$2 billion to be spent would we rather see them build a road to Nunavut or improve the condition of Highway 17 through northern Ontario? Where's the majority of the traffic?"

The Manitoba Trucking Association doesn't have a dog in this hunt, officially, though Dolyniuk says it's obviously supportive of all-season roads because "road transportation is far more economical than flying freight in and looking at long-term cost benefits to the communities and the government, all-season roads would make more sense."

In the meantime, the government of Manitoba has been lobbying the feds to cover the cost of air freighting goods caused by the early closure of the winter roads. Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation Minister Steve Ashton was in Ottawa just before the roads closed to press his case with his federal counterparts.

He said in a press release before his meeting that "They have a role to play in providing for northern residents" and he urged Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to cover the cost of flying in goods.

As of press time the minister was unavailable for further comment, however.

However it ends up playing out, the eventual solution promises to be difficult and expensive – yet essential for the people who rely on those supplies to get them through the year and for the truckers who get the supplies there. □



**GOING NOWHERE:** Trucks that were on Manitoba's winter roads when a sudden thaw struck were bogged down in mud and unable to continue. In at least one case, the driver had to be airlifted out by RCMP.

Photo supplied by the RCMP

# Gearing up for 2010:

*SCR technology requires no major changes for engine oils, manufacturers say*

**By Julia Kuzeljevich**

**TORONTO, Ont.** – On-highway diesel engines using selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to meet EPA2010 emissions standards will not require a new grade of engine oil, suppliers say.

For most North American OEMs, according to oil experts, there will be no difference in lubricant needs for SCR, which works by mixing diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) with engine exhaust. This then flows through an SCR catalyst and reacts to form nitrogen and water vapour. DEF consumption will depend on the engine manufacturer, but expectations are that it can be about 1-3% of the diesel fuel consumed.

According to the Diesel Technology Forum ([www.dieselforum.org](http://www.dieselforum.org)), SCR technology can reduce NOx emissions up to 90%, hydrocarbon and CO2 emissions by 50-90%, and particulate matter (PM) emissions by 30-50%, a win-win for both the trucking business and the environment.

By all accounts, the American Petroleum Institute-designated CJ-4 group of oils, which were formulated for the demands of EPA07 engines with exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) technology and diesel particulate filters (DPFs), should also be suitable for all 2010 engines.

“The recently launched CJ-4 category seems to be performing quite well in the EPA07 engines and is expected to do the same for the new 2010 engines. No new oil specification has been generated for the needs of the 2010 engines,” said Allan Murray, category manager for automotive/commercial and industrial engines at Petro-Canada Lubricants.

“Generally, the new CJ-4 products have been well-received by mixed fleets as this new spec’ is back serviceable. However, the use of lubricants that do not meet the CJ-4 specification would not be recommended for the 2007 engines and newer,” he said.

Dan Arcy, OEM technical manager for Shell Global Solutions (Shell Lubricants), said that while there are two different technologies in the post-2010 engine market, existing oils will work with both.

“Navistar is the one outlier using advanced EGR, which is basically higher levels of exhaust gas recirculation. Everyone else is going with SCR. In both cases though, the recommended oils will be the CJ4, API-recommended oils. I’ve been in the business over 20 years, working with heavy-duty engine oils. For 2010,

this is the first time that oil hasn’t had to change to lubricate the new engines. So in one sense one of the real benefits is not having to worry about changing engine oils for the 2010 trucks. These oils are also backwards-compatible, and can be used on 2007 and earlier engines,” said Arcy.

The CJ-4 engine oils came out in 2006 with improvements in wear and deposit control, and restrictions on the amount of sulphated ash that accumulated in the particulate filters when the oil is burned off. The OEMs asked for limits to this sulphated ash, noted Arcy.

“Our tests have shown that SCR does not add any new requirements as far as oil properties are concerned,” said Gary M. Parsons, global OEM and industry liaison manager with Chevron Oronite Company (which develops, manufactures, and markets fuel and lubricant additives). “In fact, SCR is less restrictive than DPFs are. DPFs require low SAPS (sulphated ash, phosphorous, and sulphur) oils to prevent premature plugging due to ash-forming components,”

## **Drain intervals, DEF and fuel economy**

For 2010 engines, required drain intervals will depend, as they usually do, on a variety of factors relative to the fleet’s operations, such as OEM recommendations, how much fuel is consumed, and the quality of the oil.

Parsons noted the use of SCR systems allows the OEMs to modify their combustion strategies to optimize their engines for fuel economy and “allow more engine-out NOx knowing the SCR system will take care of the NOx reduction in the exhaust aftertreatment system.”

“In those cases, EGR rates will be reduced from 2007 levels which may allow for extended drains,” he said. “Lower EGR rates should reduce soot loading, operating temperatures, and acid formation. All of those should lead to directionally longer drain intervals. However, operators do need to employ used oil analysis because nitration may become more of an issue than in the past. Nitration leads to nitric acids which will deplete the total base number (TBN) of the oil,” said Parsons.

Parsons noted that he has not heard of any specific scepticism regarding oil technology.

“The SCR/DEF OEMs are all recommending 35,000 to 60,000 mile drain intervals. Navistar,

which is using ‘optimized EGR’ has recommended 25,000 mile drains,” said Parsons.

Shell’s Arcy said engine oil can also contribute to improved fuel economy with new or existing engines.

“With fuel pricing starting to inch up a little bit, fuel economy is definitely a topic of conversation. We see some of the OEMs starting to lean in that direction. From an oil standpoint, we can improve fuel economy with synthetics or semi-synthetics in the engine. Most are already using them in the driveline,” said Arcy.

“We have seen a 1.6% reduction in fuel use using a 10W30 in the engine. Some of these little numbers do add up. We see this as a trend. Volvo is factory filling with 10W30 right now. The synthetics offer better cold starting, and it is worth checking for fleets if this may be an option,” he added.

Fleets and owner/operators running APUs may also want to consider a 5W40 synthetic oil, Arcy noted, “because if the truck is going back and forth from a northern climate and then heading south, the engine on the APU must be able to start in extreme climates. Synthetics were designed to protect under extreme conditions, both extreme hot and extreme cold.”

With regard to diesel exhaust fluid and access to refills, fleets will have to decide the approach that works best for them, said Arcy.

“The fleets will have to decide whether they will top it up at the fleet’s terminal or have them top up on the road. It will mean extra equipment.

“If they’re terminalling it, they’re going to have to have it somewhere warm because diesel exhaust fluid will freeze. Those are things they are going to want to talk about with their supplier,” he said.

## **Are fleets prepared for 2010?**

Increases in truck prices in both 2007 and 2010 related to more stringent exhaust emissions standards have made fleets aware of the extra equipment on the trucks.

“I believe that learnings from the EPA07 engine introductions were not lost on the 2010 engine introductions,” noted Murray.

“From what we have heard, the diesel particulate filters have proven to be very durable and most fleets have not accumulated enough mileage since 2007 to require a removal and cleaning of the DPF ash yet,” said Parsons.

He noted that the move away from API CI-4 PLUS to API CJ-4 was slow to begin with for a couple of reasons.

“First, the number of post-2007 trucks in the fleet requiring API CJ-4 oil is relatively small, especially with the drop in new truck sales due to the downturn in the economy. The fleets have had good success with API CI-4 PLUS oils in the pre-2007 trucks and have little incentive to change to API CJ-4 until an appreciable number of post 2007 trucks are in the fleet. Second, until the start of 2010, the off-highway market is still allowed the use of low-sulfur diesel fuel (up to 500 ppm sulfur). API CI-4 Plus has a higher TBN and is better formulated to neutralize the higher levels of crankcase acids formed due to higher fuel Sulfur levels.”

However, the switch to CJ-4 oils is gaining momentum, Parsons noted.

“Beginning in 2010, all diesel fuel has to be ultra low-sulfur diesel fuel (ULSD = 15 ppm sulfur maximum). Now that all the diesel fuel is ULSD, many of the on- and off-highway fleets can and will switch to API CJ-4 oils. In addition, many of the major lubricant marketers have discontinued the widespread availability of API CI-4 Plus oils in favor of API CJ-4 oils,” said Parsons.

With regard to any scepticism about the emergence and adoption of the 2010 engines, Parsons said that with additional costs announced by the OEMs for 2010 trucks (about US\$8,000-\$10,000 more than equivalent 2007 trucks), and with the slowdown in the economy and financing still difficult in some areas, purchasing new trucks is difficult.

“It remains to be seen if the diesel exhaust fluid infrastructure will be an issue for early adopters, but that is a concern. The OEMs such as Volvo, Daimler, and Cummins are all advertising up to 5% fuel economy gains of 2010 trucks versus 2007 trucks. That’s exciting to the fleets and will become an even bigger factor if fuel prices rise,” he said. □

## **Want more info?**

Check out the following Web sites for more information on your 2010 oil and lube requirements:

**Castrol:** [www.castroltectionextra.com](http://www.castroltectionextra.com)

**Chevron:** [www.deloperformance.com](http://www.deloperformance.com)

**Imperial Oil:** [www.imperialoil.ca](http://www.imperialoil.ca)

**Petro-Canada:** [www.lubricants.petro-canada.ca](http://www.lubricants.petro-canada.ca)

**Shell:** [www.shell.ca/rotella](http://www.shell.ca/rotella)

**Total Lubricants:** [www.total-lubricants.ca](http://www.total-lubricants.ca)

Mark Dalton: Owner/Operator

# Licence renewed

By Edo van Belkom

The story so far...

Mark is looking for a load. Bud has a sweet one to California that won't be ready for a few days. In the meantime, Bud asks Mark to help an older driver, Charlie Knowles, get his licence renewed. Charlie's a real character and Mark agrees to help out.

Mark had agreed to help prepare Charlie Knowles for all the tests he needed to complete in order to get his commercial driver's licence renewed, but what that meant, Mark didn't have a clue. Other than a physical every few years, Mark hadn't been tested on his driving ability since he'd first received his licence and that had been some 15 years ago. How could he prepare someone for something he didn't know anything about?

So he logged onto the Internet and checked out the Ontario Ministry of Transportation's Web site, but was unable to find anything about driver licence renewals for commercial drivers 65 and over. Although Mark wasn't a computer genius, he'd used the Internet before and could usually find what he was looking for, so his results were puzzling. There was a section for drivers renewing their licences over 80, and all kinds of help with renewing expired licences and booking appointments for new tests, but nothing about what Mark wanted to know. Mark wondered if he'd missed something on the site, but to the best of his abilities he couldn't find anything about the MTO's licensing policy regarding older commercial drivers.

Mark had hoped that the Web site would help him understand the reasoning behind the policy, but the fact that he couldn't find anything – even using the site's own search engine – made him think that perhaps the program was too new, or the ministry wasn't very proud of it, or it was just another tax-grab kind of program like Drive Clean. There had to be some real reasons drivers were required to jump through all sorts of hoops just because their most recent birthday was their 65th? Mark wanted to know what they were, so he decided to call them up and ask.

It took a while before he got connected to a human being who could answer his questions, but when the right woman finally came on the line she was both pleasant and professional.

"How can I help you?"

Mark decided to start slowly. "Yeah, my dad is a truck driver and he's 64

right now, but his birthday's coming up in a month, and he's scared to death of losing his licence. That isn't going to happen is it?"

"Not if he renews his licence."

"This year?"

"And every year after 65."

"That doesn't seem fair. He hasn't had a problem in years...in fact he's never had an accident in his life."

"That's admirable sir, but research has shown that older drivers are more likely to develop medical conditions that affect their ability to drive. After 65, drivers are one-and-a-half times more likely to have an accident than drivers between 45 and 64."

She knew her stuff, that was for sure. And Mark could concede the fact that as drivers got older they had more health issues. So an eye test and a physical were probably a good idea, but that didn't explain the rest of it. "So why do they have to be road-tested too?"

She paused, as if thinking. "The licence renewal process has been developed with the help and consultation of the people in the industry to enhance truck safety. That includes re-assessment of a person's driving ability."

Mark sighed, knowing he probably wasn't going to get anywhere with this woman. "You know, a lot of drivers have to rent trucks and trailers to take their tests, costing them money and a day off work just to keep their licence."

"That's unfortunate."

"And if a driver has been on the road 40 years without a problem, why should he have to prove he can still drive? That seems like age discrimination to me."

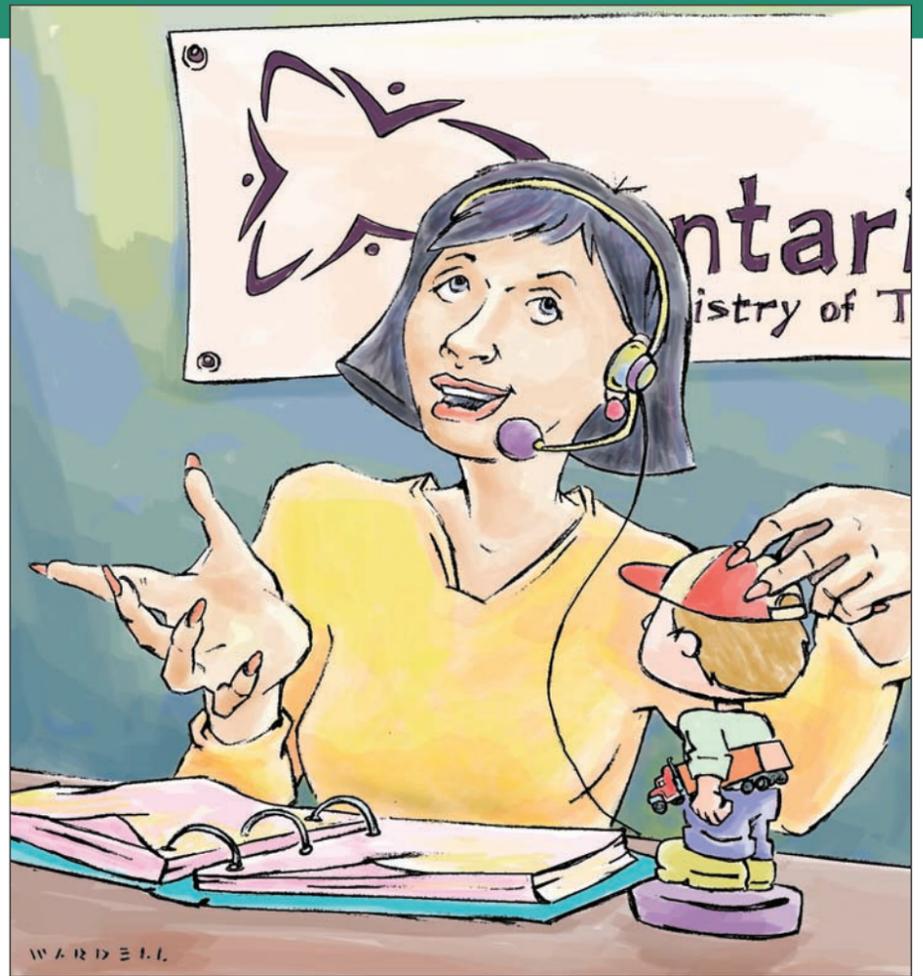
"The ministry regularly reviews the renewal requirements. If you have concerns – as you obviously do – then I suggest writing to the Ontario Transport Minister, or your member of provincial parliament."

"Write a letter?"

"Yes, sir."

Mark hung up the phone. 'So be it,' thought Mark. If there's a test, then it was his job to make sure Charlie passed it.

Mark met Charlie in the parking lot of a truck yard out by the airport. Charlie was sitting in his pick-up at the far end of the yard and when Mark pulled in, he wasted no time getting out of his truck and hopping into Mother Load. He scaled the cab so easily and slipped in the open passenger side door so effortlessly, Mark would have never have guessed the man was a



senior citizen.

"You Mark Dalton?" Charlie asked in his thick Scottish accent.

"You don't remember me?"

Charlie looked at him strangely. "Should I?"

Mark smiled and related the story of the early days of his truck driving career when he'd been recently divorced and he'd let his personal appearance get out of hand. He'd looked like a bum, but Charlie had called him a loser. "Do you remember that?"

Charlie's eyes narrowed as he looked Mark over. "Aye, I remember. You were a loser then. You still could be. I don't know that much about you."

Mark had considered thanking the man for shaking him up enough to get his life back on track, but it didn't seem the right time for it now.

"How much you gonna charge me?"

"What?" Mark said. He hadn't thought to charge anything. As far as he knew he was doing Bud a favour. "Did Bud tell you you'd have to pay?"

"He didn't, but I've called around to the schools and some of them charge \$3,000... and that's just for a refresher course."

"That's a lot of money."

"You bet it's a lot of money, especially when I've been driving truck twice as long as the snot-nosed boy who'll be teaching me has been on the planet."

Mark was aware of the insult, but he couldn't help but smile. Charlie was such a character. Who else could insult someone who was doing something nice for them? "Bud asked me to do this. I wasn't going to charge you anything."

What passed for a smile appeared

on Charlie's face. "Then the price is right," he said, continuing to stare at Mark through narrowed eyes. "And what about using your truck for the test? You'll be charging me for that, I suppose?"

Again, Mark hadn't thought about what truck Charlie would use. Obviously the man had no truck of his own and would have to rent one to do the test. Renting a truck was a costly endeavour, especially when it would be for just a few hours. "I guess I could let you use my truck."

"For free?"

Mark didn't like the word free. He was doing a favour for Bud and that implied that Bud would return the favour some day. But as far as Charlie was concerned, the use of truck would indeed be free. "Yes," he said at last. "Free."

Charlie nodded. "Good. But you better get a trailer. I can't exactly drop a trailer on the day of the test if there isn't one attached to the truck now, can I?"

Speaking of tests, Mark had been interacting with Charlie for all of five minutes and he felt like he was the one who was being tested – most of all his patience. "I'll make sure," he sighed at last.

"Right then! Let's get started." □

**- Mark Dalton returns next month in Part 3 of Licence Renewed.**

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

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# A day in the life of a professional construction truck owner/driver

## Part 2 of 2

– The following is the conclusion of a two-part look at a day in the life of a professional construction truck driver:

When entering the load site, the professional driver notices that a truck ahead of him has left the load site with his trailer gate open.

The professional driver calls out to the driver on his CB radio and advises him to stop and close his gate.

Unfortunately, the driver is not listening. He is talking on his cell phone and has failed to clean off his sideboards after loading.

He leaves the load site and travels all the way to the dump site, spilling wet sticky material all the way without noticing. When the professional driver arrives at the load site, he is stopped by the site supervisor and asked who is spilling material?

The professional indicates to the supervisor where the wet, sticky material has spilled so he can dispatch a crew to clean up the mess.

After loading, the professional driver observes the DoT has set up an inspection as a result of the spilled material on the roadway.

A DoT officer pulls the professional over to check his licence, registration, brake travel and weights.

The officer asks if the professional knows about the spilled material and he advised him the contractor has dispatched a clean-up crew and will be sending the driver who caused the mess home.

After getting a CVSA sticker for passing the Level 1 inspection, the professional driver proceeds to the dump site.

When he returns to the load site, the trucks are backed up because of a loading delay.

The message is passed onto the other trucks on the job so they don't all bunch up at the load site.

Now there is time to grab a bite of that healthy lunch.

Most contractors don't allow drivers to stop for a lunch or coffee break, so the professional driver grabs a bite to eat when he gets the chance.

After dumping, the professional driver needs to clean his boxes.

It is important to keep the boxes as clean as possible to prevent the product build-up in the box and to prevent contamination. The professional drivers alternate cleaning out their boxes so the trucks don't pile up at the dump site.

It is important to space out at the load site, dump site and along the haul route.

The professional driver will do several in-route inspections with his boxes up in the clean-out area. He checks his duals for rocks, hammer-checks his tires, and checks to ensure his wheel nuts are tight and threads are even on all studs.

He keeps the boxes up so he can observe the driveline, check for

### Constructive Dialogue

Ron Singer



fluid leaks, etc.

Professional drivers don't travel with their boxes in the air because it's extremely hard on the equipment and could tear down power lines, creating a life-threatening condition.

The professional driver is now headed back to the load site for the final load of the day.

He is communicating with the drivers to ensure they charge the proper hours and travel time. They give a friendly nod and wave to the operators, drivers and crew.

The professional driver leaves

the job site to proceed to the fuel stop for his daily fueling and equipment check. The professional always fuels at the end of the day, checks fluid levels, hammer-checks the tires, checks the wheel nuts for tightness and again checks the threads on the wheel studs. He cleans his windshield, mirrors, headlights, tail lights, signal lights and brake lights.

He fuels at the end of the day so he doesn't leave it to the morning and risk being late at the job site.

The contractor expects you to be on the job on time and the professional driver always shows up on time.

After fueling and checking his truck, he proceeds back to the yard. He then does the most important vehicle inspection of the day – the post-trip.

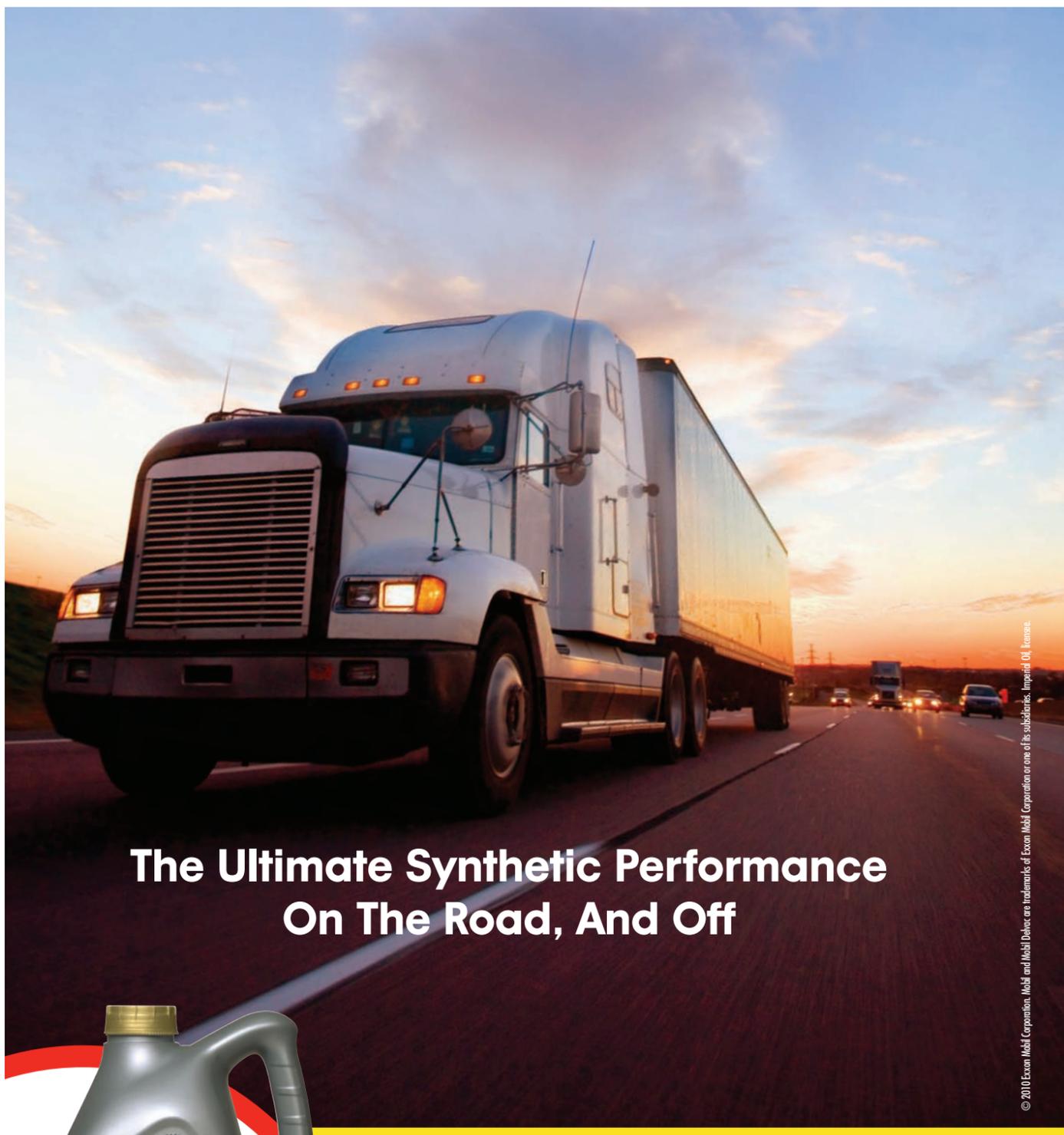
He completes all the relevant paperwork and stops by the shop

to discuss the post-trip with the mechanic to ensure there are no misunderstandings.

The professional driver always greets his peers and wishes them a good night. He has now completed a 12-hour day. He struggles through rush hour traffic to get home to his family. It takes twice as long to get home as it took to get to work.

When he pulls into the driveway, the professional driver is greeted by his wife and kids. Just another day's work as a professional driver in the construction truck industry. □

– Ron Singer is owner of Ron Singer Truck Lines and president of the Alberta Construction Trucking Association. He can be reached at 403-244-4487 or by e-mail at ronsing@telus.net. ACTA's Web site is www.myacta.ca.



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# Lenders say they're open for business

## But freight shortage means few are buying

By Ingrid Phaneuf

**TORONTO, Ont.** – When it comes to access to credit in the wake of the economic downturn, the good news is it's slowly becoming more accessible. The bad news is, it's only becoming more accessible for larger carriers who have already managed to weather the storm.

"Is access to credit getting easier?" asks Vince Piccolo, vice-president of sales at CIT Financial, which specializes in lending to O/Os. "From our point of view, the answer is no." Repos may be slowing down but they're still happening he says. "We do our best to try to avoid them so that our clients can keep on operating, but we're still not seeing any considerable improvement in the market," Piccolo says.

Piccolo blames downward pressure on rates and the shift to east-west routing from cross-border traffic for decimating Canadian O/Os in recent months. "It's been really hard on the little guys," he says, adding dry van truckers have been hit the hardest, while flatbed and reefer operators are doing marginally better. "There aren't a lot of reefers or flatbeds on the market so they're more in demand for freight," he says.

CIT is really only taking new business from carriers who've been in business for at least five years, adds Piccolo.

"Our criteria hasn't changed, we're still taking 10% down from owner/operators we feel good about, and offering them the same interest rates, depending on how reliable they are."

Still, Piccolo does hope to see overall economic improvement for the trucking industry in the next year or so, something that lenders who deal with larger carriers are already eagerly anticipating.

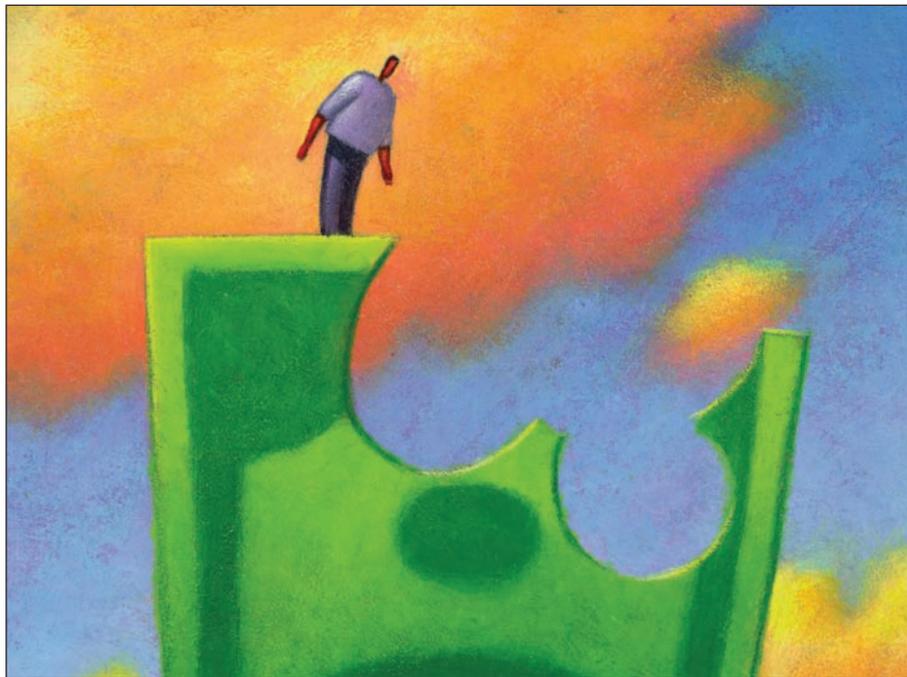
In fact, GE Capital has already geared up for new business, by becoming Navistar's preferred provider of retail financing for trucks and buses in the US (GE Capital has held the same status in Canada since 1986). The company's new financing relationship, announced March 9, is a clear indication that the economic tide is turning.

"Rate volatility has stabilized and we are cautiously optimistic about the Canadian economy going into the spring," says Patrick Palerme, president and CEO of GE Capital Canada. "It is trending the right way."

Credit is available and it's business as usual at GE Capital, Palerme says, as long as carriers can show they've made the right decisions during recent hard times.

"We haven't changed our underwriting criteria," he adds. Still, carriers who come shopping for a loan may find themselves being scrutinized slightly more thoroughly than in better times.

"Because we have observed a significant deterioration of com-



**CREDIT CRUNCHED?:** Financial institutions are gearing up for new business, but did the recession take too big a bite out of company's balance sheets?

panies' balance sheets as a consequence of the poor economic conditions, we are now asking for more information that will help us reveal trends in financial stability and stable operations," says Palerme.

"For example, even if over 36 months there is an indication of a downward trend, there may be more information that will show that the right actions were taken that will point towards a reasonable forecast of an upward trend and, in such a way, assure credit-worthiness."

Companies may be asked about their latest financial trends, not just annual, but quarterly and monthly, their operations and cash flow (ie. fuel surcharges, accessorial charges for wait times, etc.) and about their business plans.

"We want to see whether the results match their projections, to get a good feel for the company and how it is performing through the current cycle," says Palerme.

When it comes to lending, Daimler Truck Financial execs are also cautiously optimistic.

"Recovery is slow, and we expect it to remain so throughout 2010," says managing director, Ian Loveless. "So credit crunch wise, yes, things are slowly getting better." But Loveless also insists that the company's lending criteria has not changed throughout the crisis. "We are part of the Daimler Group and as such we have a responsibility to support our dealers and customers, so through the last two years, where we've been able to find fundamentals, we've continued to lend."

Basic fundamentals include regularly-maintained balance sheets, good operating ratios and working capital.

"For companies with good track records and good plans, and for fleets who've been addressing their issues and needs and have strong balance sheets there's no need to cut back on our lending practices. The same goes for O/Os. As long as they've been keeping up with their payment require-

ments, we have no reason to alter our standard practices," says Loveless.

Still, repossession rates have been higher of late, Loveless admits. "But it's the same situation as in the 2000s, where the industry hit a bump in the road. Our activities are not out of the norm for a cyclical type of business such as trucking."

When it comes to O/Os, Daimler Financial assesses each operator according to his or her own merits, says Loveless.

"We're typically not into lending for a high-risk deal," says Loveless. "We don't typically charge a higher rate or ask for a larger down payment in order to be able put a deal together." That said, Loveless says he's seen the O/O market shrink in Canada. "The customers we're seeing have come through tough times, weathered the storm and are still a fairly good risk."

The issue is still overcapacity, he adds. "Sales are down and that's because of excess capacity that still exists today. It's also resulted in smaller companies being shuffled out of the business. There's just not the demand to support them."

Indeed, the Ontario Trucking Association reported at the end of last year that 34% of carriers suffered freight volume losses of 20% or more in 2009. And as far as purchasing equipment goes, OTA reports 64% of fleets say they will not change their net number of tractors or trailers, while 26% say they'll add tractors and 29% say they'll be buying trailers. OTA says those numbers are improvements over previous surveys.

Still, some lenders are already looking forward to the recovery. Multiple mergers may be just around the corner as the economy picks up and capacity starts to diminish, points out Elian Turner, director of investment banking for Scotia Capital.

"What people don't realize is that through 2009, banks were in contraction mode, but now that

they've done their housekeeping, they're looking to grow their assets and lending books. Banks are looking for good companies to invest in and there is no reason to preclude trucking when it comes to mergers and acquisitions." Still, Turner admits he is not yet seeing many new deals coming up in the trucking sector.

"Clearly, there is still a capacity issue," says Turner. "But things are getting better. While many carriers were parking trucks during the last 12 or 15 months, we haven't seen as many bankruptcies as had been envisioned of late. But there still isn't any reason for people to purchase new equipment when it comes to general freight."

But Turner expects to see an earlier recovery in some areas of the industry, specifically by carriers who've weathered the storm and are looking to ride the next wave.

"We will start seeing a greater meeting of minds between buyers and sellers, a number of owners of businesses probably realize they've left a lot of value on the table," says Turner.

"We had tremendous value creation over the last decade with companies benefiting from strong volumes and strong rates. Earnings were high and so were valuations because private equity firms had money invested in the income trust sector. A lot of owners who consolidated and held during the last 12 months are now asking themselves how long it will be until they return to those potential peak valuations? They're asking themselves what their earnings will have to look like?"

Mergers and acquisitions in the trucking industry certainly haven't been happening in the last 12 months and won't be happening anytime soon, says Turner. But Turner is still looking forward to the next upswing, where he expects a renewed confidence for buyers and financiers alike.

In the meantime, here's what you can do to get credit now:

1) Diversify your sources to mitigate risk and benefit from the specialization and/or expertise of your lender.

2) Know what your needs are for the year, and on a quarterly basis.

3) Sit down with your financial partners early on to discuss your financing needs and set up a pre-approved line of credit.

4) Reassess your needs on a quarterly basis.

5) Stay in communication with your financial partners and don't hesitate to ask them about financial solutions.

6) Have a business plan and discuss it, along with your financing needs, with your financial partner.

7) Tell your lender about your projections and your results.

8) Show how trends in your operations indicate that you have control over your operations and you have an understanding of the business environment you are operating in.

9) Be proactive.

10) Always have your financial statements in order and auditable if not already audited. □

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\* Modern Tire Dealer, 2008

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**Fact : Hankook Tires provide tremendous value to the consumer.**

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that focuses on providing innovative products that are high in quality. And the company's effort has been recognized and certified. But did you know the tires provide excellent value to consumers? Hankook tires are very cost effective in comparison with comparable quality products and have been well-recognized for their value. Call your local dealer today to find out how much you can save with Hankook products and how they can deliver better value. The news you hear about the price, quality and value of Hankook Tires will be some of the best news you will hear in 2009.

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# Trimac opens state-of-the-art Learning Centre

By Jim Bray

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Trimac Transportation's new Learning Centre is the next step in the far-flung company's ongoing quest to ensure it has a steady stream of qualified pros ready to roll.

It's also more than that. Ken Arthur, Trimac's central training instructor for Canada and the man who's the face of the Calgary facility, also sees it as a way to help bring more professionalism to a trucking industry he thinks could use it.

"We truly want to make sure that our employees are set up to succeed," Arthur says, stressing that "when you set somebody up to fail, you shouldn't be surprised when they do and when you set people up to succeed, typically they will – and so will everybody else around them. Our job is to give them the tools."

Opened officially on Jan. 1, the Trimac Learning Centre builds on the success of an earlier one in Sherwood Park, near Edmonton, and is now the home base for the company's training initiatives across Canada. And with a background stretching back to 1986 with Trimac, including driving and training, Arthur appears to be a good choice to run it.

"I've been involved with the training for many years," he says. "I worked with the guys one-on-one, taught them the job and mentored them in the trucks as well." Arthur always thought the idea of having a central training facility was a good one and, through a bit of geographical good fortune, the region he happened to be in "kind of pioneered it."

The Sherwood Park facility started operating nearly three years ago, but Arthur says it made more sense to use Calgary as the central base going forward. He points out that not only is Trimac's headquarters in the city, but "Calgary is typically an easier centre to fly in and out of," because when people fly into Edmonton they're often routed through Calgary anyway.

The new facility, on the second floor of an unassuming building, will see all new Trimac hires receive training – not only drivers, but mechanics, wash rack workers and even traffic supervisors. "It's actually a four-day program, but we work it into a five-day week," Arthur says.

What they do is create a class for up to 12 employees made up of two sets of up to six each, one of whom could be, for example, petroleum-based and one dry bulk-based.

"We start one group on Monday with a day of product stewardship, teaching the product, the equipment and the basic handling procedures," Arthur says. "Then, on Tuesday through Thursday, everyone would come in for the Trimac basic North American standards criteria, after which the first group would be finished."

That leaves Friday for the second group to receive its specialized product training. "We're still working with that schedule, trying to make it all work," Arthur says. "It's relatively a new deal as far as that goes."



**LESSONS TO BE LEARNED:** Trimac Transportation's new Calgary-based Learning Centre will serve as training site for not only drivers, but also mechanics, wash rack workers and even traffic supervisors.

The training includes Trimac's safety policies – the professional driver improvement courses Trimac calls Decision Driving – wheel and brake training, transportation of dangerous goods, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), Fatigue, Hazard Identification, etc. Arthur says it's a series of basic criteria that's standard across Trimac branches North America-wide.

The multimedia classroom training is done live, using audio and video and the same type of on-board computer drivers will have in their cabs. The Hazard Identification course is a "very basic training on how to identify a simple hazard," Arthur says, "what to do as far as corrective actions – is it something you can fix right now, is it something you need to take to your supervisor, is it something the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) committee has to look at? All of that is included."

Students are also taken right through a Trimac branch, from the office to the shop, wash rack and truck, including how to fuel up the truck and more.

Once students complete the theory portion of the course they then pile into a big van and go for a drive, part of a refresher on the basic driving skills and rules of the road.

"What we've found is that bad habits don't come out in a classroom," Arthur says. "But they truly come out when you get behind the wheel." What happens, he says, is that many of the things learned early in a driving career end up "kind of covered up with dust, and this course gives us the opportunity to blow the dust off and bring the things that we knew back to the surface to make sure we're doing what we should."

One of the skills that tends to collect the most dust, Arthur says, is proper following distance.

"People get very comfortable," he says. "You can go down Deerfoot Trail (in Calgary) and see it just about any moment of the day where everybody's two feet off of each other. It's fine until something goes wrong."

Trimac tries to put some checks and measures in place its drivers can use on the road – whether in their cars or their trucks – to help ensure they aren't disobeying basic rules of the road.

"It's been very successful," he says. "The guys enjoy it and we have some laughs and it works well."

It doesn't end there. "When the guys are done in the Learning Centre, they go back to the branch," Arthur says, "to get their site-specific training because every branch has its own world, different customers, different requirements."

Trimac does most of its recurring, follow-up training via e-learning, including TDG (transportation of dangerous goods) and WHMIS certification.

"We want the employees to come in here and get the full-blown proper training to begin with," Arthur says, "and then the branch takes care of the follow-up e-learning, depending where they're located."

Calgary's Learning Centre is mostly a one-person operation, though Arthur works closely with his partner, Julie Rutledge, in Burlington. "She schedules all training across Canada and conducts training in French and English predominantly in Eastern Canada," Arthur says. "Julie is a big part of the team, working hard at keeping things running smoothly."

Arthur will be working with other driver-trainers from around the company, too.

"We want to make sure they understand the message that's coming out of this classroom," he says, "and we want the same message being sent at the branch level in the truck with the guy."

He'll also be taking advantage of some driver-trainers' specialized knowledge to do product stewardship. "It gives the guys a break from me," he says, "and gives (driver-trainers) an opportunity to build their skills."

As of late March, Trimac had run eight classes through the Learning Centre, with a total of 56 trainees and Arthur says things are only going to get busier.

"We are hiring across the country right now," he says. "It's been a little bit slow but there is some spark out there as far as hiring goes, and that's good."

That doesn't mean the company is looking for people who just walked in off the street and want to be truck drivers, though. "We have a whole list of company criteria," Arthur says, "including a minimum two years' highway experience."

Arthur acknowledges the chicken-and-egg conundrum makes it tough for new drivers. "Everybody wants experience," he says, "but how do you get experience if you don't get the opportunity?"

Trimac does have a process in place to consider occasional exceptions for the right driver, however. "We've had success bringing people up who have limited experience," Arthur says. "And I've mentored them for whatever time it's taken." The upside of a green driver is that they come with no bad habits. "Sometimes it's sort of hard to teach an old dog new tricks."

The Learning Centre can also be used to provide recurring training for drivers the company may deem need it. "We can do a follow-up if there's an incident or something," Arthur says. "We want to get in front of it, we want to stop it before it happens. That's our primary drive."

Arthur credits Trimac's management with fostering the drive for excellence, and with being interested enough in the training aspect to take a hands-on approach. "It's not unusual when I'm teaching classes that some of the executives show up," he says. "They walk in and introduce themselves to the group and it's sincere. They truly want this to work."

The idea is to help the company be proactive, Arthur says. "We want to get in front of the ball and stay in front of it," he says, "and a learning centre like this it sends a very strong message to our people." Arthur says the trouble and expense of sending someone to Calgary from wherever in the Trimac world they may be employed tells the employees that the company takes their training seriously.

"This is not smoke and mirrors," he says. "They have a big investment in it, but they truly believe it will pay off in the end as far as safety and injuries go. We don't want anybody getting injured – it's just that simple."

How are the results so far?

"There have been improvements," Arthur says. "You get peaks and valleys as you do with most things, but we've absolutely seen a success rate."

Arthur bemoans what he sees as a lack of professionalism in a lot of the industry today, some of which he thinks may be made worse by a lack of official recognition that truck driving is a trade like any other, one that takes years to learn. When he was a kid, he says, his father (who wasn't a driver) would target the places where the trucks were parked as the best places to eat. "The truckers were the kings of the road," he says. "Everybody looked up to them. But it's changed and that's why the general public has got a bad taste in their mouth about trucks."

It appears that with its focus on the new Learning Centre, however, Trimac is actively working to instill the needed professionalism and experience into its drivers and, through that, perhaps back into the industry at large.

"Being professional is absolutely critical," Arthur says. "And that's what we want, professional drivers." □

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# Automated pilot projects hope to solve a weighty issue

By Jim Bray

**THOMPSON, Man.** – A robot revolution may be brewing in the trucking industry, one that could help lead to safer roads with less human monitoring from government officials.

More for less? When dealing with a government? How can that be?

Time will tell, of course, but if a couple of current pilot projects in Manitoba and Saskatchewan work out as hoped, weigh stations could be open more hours with fewer staffing hassles and less expense.

The pilot projects are creating automated weigh stations that can be operated and monitored remotely.

“The idea came from Saskatchewan,” says Tim Brown, director of motor carrier enforcement for Manitoba’s Department of Infrastructure and Transportation, referring to a station that has been operating at Macklin, near the Alberta border, for the past year or so. He says Saskatchewan’s robotation concept came to his department’s attention about a year and a half ago, while it was still under development, and that approval for Manitoba’s own experimental station near Thompson came “about year ago.”

And that’s about all Brown is willing to say about it until the station’s official opening later this spring, other than that his department hopes it will give it the more flexible use of its resources.

The Macklin scale started life as a jointly-funded project between the Alberta, Saskatchewan and federal governments and went through a gestation period of about four years. According to John Meed, program manager for Saskatchewan’s Transport Compliance Branch, they were approached initially by International Road Dynamics, a Saskatoon-based company specializing in advanced traffic control and toll management technologies, with

authorities for action.”

The weigh stations use electronic cameras and let the powers that be switch on the sign remotely, instructing trucks to report.

“They’ll have cameras to see who’s there, who’s going by,” Manitoba Trucking Association general manager Bob Dolyniuk says. “And the driver will come in and do everything he has to,” including going up to a wicket and presenting his documentation to a camera there.

‘We can have all the rules and regulations that we want, but if there isn’t somebody out there to ensure that they’re being enforced and complied with, it’s all for naught.’

Bob Dolyniuk

the idea for such an automated weigh station.

Macklin was chosen as the test site, Meed says, because it was half built already. “Then we got a dedicated officer in Regina who operates the scale from there,” he says, noting that, while they’re still working on the protocols and procedures, the facility does allow them to check more trucks than before, and to follow up when necessary. “We don’t lay charges (for offending vehicles) directly,” he says. “But we pass on the information to the appropriate

And while packing all that electronics into the station and hooking it into a monitoring system might raise the initial cost of such a weigh station, the flip side, Dolyniuk says, “is what does it cost to staff a traditional weigh scale and what hours of operation are you going to have?”

Dolyniuk sees it as a way for the government to “hopefully gain some further efficiencies and still do their jobs at an appropriate level.”

The projects are being received warmly by the trucking associations in both provinces. Dolyniuk says the idea could help bring better monitoring of and compliance from the trucking industry, which he thinks is great.

“Our position has been that we want, as an industry, to see an acceptable level of on-road enforcement,” he says. “We can have all the rules and regulations that we want, but if there isn’t somebody out there to ensure that they’re being enforced and complied with it’s all for naught.”

Dolyniuk cites the trucks he says sit on either side of the Manitoba/Ontario border, waiting for the scale there to close, as an example of the need for enforcement.

“There’s a very clear message as to what’s going on,” he says, “because they don’t want to go across the scale.” If such trucks are operating overweight knowingly, he complains, then they’re also operating at

an advantage over other carriers. “Somebody’s getting a deal somewhere,” he says.

Dolyniuk also points to the extra impact of such overweight vehicles on the roadways “that all of us road users are going to pay for. It creates an unlevel playing field.”

Glen Morrison, training manager for the Saskatchewan Trucking Association, says he hasn’t heard any negative comments about the automated station from the industry in his province. “I think the industry is cognizant of safety issues and would also like to take responsibility for those issues rather than have someone running around issuing tickets,” he says.

If the pilot projects prove successful, the concept could spread to other weigh stations and help boost the enforcement the MTA thinks has been lacking.

“I can remember when scales were open for 24 hours a day, seven days a week,” Dolyniuk says, “but that’s not the case today.” He says Manitoba used to be known as the gatekeeper to the West, but “whether it’s resources or the will,” that also isn’t the case today. “Our position as an association has been that we want to see that those who aren’t playing by the laws and regulations are paying the penalties.”

He thinks such a system, coupled with new technologies aboard the trucks, could also lead to greater efficiencies for drivers, including the use of remote sensing.

“Even if the truck doesn’t have to stop,” Dolyniuk says, “wireless technologies would allow you to pull information as it goes by (the weigh station). I think if the issue is resources – as it appears to be – then from our perspective we would expect and hope that governments would make use of technologies to capture this information, including hours of service, electronically. There’s no reason why it can’t,” he says.

Dolyniuk thinks this would benefit companies who play by the rules. “Quite frankly, those who are doing the right things have nothing to worry about,” he says. “If there was the enforcement out there, the other carriers that perhaps aren’t doing what they should might find it a little tougher, and that’s why we need the enforcement.” □

## TRUCK WEST

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Feature

By James Menzies

**TORONTO, Ont.** – There’s a storm of controversy brewing over the declaration that the long-nose traditional-styled truck has reached the end of its usefulness and will soon be put out to pasture.

The notion was first declared by outspoken Navistar exec Jim Hebe at the Technology and Maintenance Council meetings in February.

“We’re in a whole new world today,” he said during a keynote address.

Noting that classic-styled long-nose Class 8 tractors have decreased in market share from 25% in 2000 to just 5.8% today, Hebe said it’s a trend that won’t be reversed.

“It ain’t coming back. That truck is going to be rather unique on the highway,” he said, suggesting that traditional buyers of the equipment will have trouble getting financing.

The theme was revived at this year’s Mid-America Trucking Show. In an interview with *Truck West*, Mark Lampert, senior vice-president of sales and marketing with Daimler Trucks North America said he agrees the owner/operator is going through a transitional phase and will shy away from traditional-styled trucks.

“I think a lot of people are calling the owner/operator dead. We fundamentally do not believe that. What we do believe is the owner/operator is going through a transition,” Lampert explained.

“We would formerly describe him very generically as a guy who bought a set-forward axle with a big sleeper – that’s not an owner/operator today. An O/O today is buying a much more aerodynamic truck, he’s much more business-oriented, much more fuel-economy sensitized – he may be running day cabs in heavy haul applications.

“I totally believe you’ll see a heckuva lot fewer set-forward axle, 600 hp, raised roof sleeper configurations than you ever have in the past, but I’d say the owner/operator is going through a change, buying different equipment than he would buy five years ago.”

Interesting comments coming from a truck maker whose stable includes Western Star – a brand that builds this type of truck exclusively.

Also participating in that interview was Elmar Boeckenhoff, DTNA’s senior vice-president, engineering and technology and he too had opinions on the future of long-nose conventional tractors. Responding to Hebe’s remarks at TMC, Boeckenhoff said “He will probably not dare to say that again over there in the parking lot where all these long and tall guys meet.”

Boeckenhoff went on to say: “There’s some tradition, some heritage that we have to take seriously, because there’s some soul in a truck that’s not only a machine for operating, but there’s a driver who has to identify himself with that truck.”

He continued: “Long and tall,

# Long and tall dead and gone?

## Not so fast, traditional-styled truck enthusiasts counter

from my perspective, will stay in this market, although it will change. It will not be a dinosaur that’s extinct by 2015. There’s no reason long and tall can’t be intelligent and fuel-efficient as well. And long and tall can also be predictive, can also be innovative. Long and tall is an answer to a market need and nothing an OEM imposes on a customer base. The answer is not with us, it’s with the customers who will or will not buy these trucks.”

To explore the issue further, our WebTV show *Transportation Matters* caught up with Hebe and with the camera rolling and in the midst of an owner/operator-packed crowd, he stood by his TMC position without so much as casting a glance over his shoulder. When asked why long-nose traditional-styled trucks have reached the end of their usefulness, he said: “Firstly, they’re pretty expensive, the days of going out and spending \$20,000-\$30,000 more just to have a long hood is just not in the cards. Secondly, the fuel economy difference between a traditional square-nosed conventional and what you can do with a ProStar or an aerodynamic product from one of our competitors is so substantially different from a cost-per-mile, that there’s just not the revenue there (to justify it). At the end of the day, if it makes good sense for a major fleet to be running an aerodynamic product then (it makes sense for an) owner/operator too.”

Hebe also pointed out the International LoneStar offers the best of both worlds, a classic-styled appearance that’s fuel-efficient too. Lou Smyrlis, in his April editorial in *Truck West*, sided with Hebe in the great debate and also declared that long and tall was nearing the end of its reign.

“To be honest, the only thing I find shocking about Hebe’s comments is that it has taken this long to come to this conclusion,” Smyrlis wrote.

He pointed out long-nose conventional tractors are diesel-guzzlers and that using them to attract and retain drivers does little more than attract the wrong type of driver – those who prefer chrome over fuel-efficiency.

“The long-nose conventional has been an icon in our industry for decades. But its time has come and gone. It may have taken the outspoken Hebe to say it; but I think most people in this industry can agree with it.”

Well, that prompted some rather passionate responses from readers who argued it’s too early to be writing the death certificate for long-nose conventional tractors.

“So now you’re onto hating long-nose conventionals?” blasted reader Jeff Long of Ingersoll, Ont. “Why don’t you just admit you hate trucking period? Just

when our industry and professional drivers have been kicked down from a recession and more government interference than ever before, we pick up the *Truck News* and have to read about another possible setback.”

And another reader weighed in with a defense of his own. “Only a truck driver could tell you the pride he feels when he’s behind the wheel of a beautifully-polished long-nose Pete, Kenworth or Freightliner,” wrote Dave Neubuhr. “You are more than willing to put in the extra effort to keep that truck looking that way when you hear the responses of the other drivers telling you how nice that truck is, or the adoration of your boss for keeping his equipment looking top notch. There will always be a market, and yes I agree it’s shrinking, for drivers who want to drive long-nose trucks.”

So with the lines clearly drawn in the sand, *Truck West* decided to take to the street, er, truck stop to get some more driver opinions. You can read them in Adam Ledlow’s Truck Stop Question on pg. 30, but perhaps the strongest comment came from Pete 379 owner Kevin Wilkins.

“I have no intentions of running a slippery truck ever,” he said. “I will rebuild my Peterbilt 100 times before I’ll buy a truck like that.”

So there you have it. As long as there are drivers like that out there, the long-nose conventional still has a pulse. □

– *What’s your opinion? Give us your two cents by calling James Menzies at 416-510-6896 or e-mail jmenzies@trucknews.com.*



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**Opinion**

**Getting licence back can be an obstacle course**

A few weeks ago I noticed an article in the *Toronto Sun* detailing the bureaucracy surrounding reinstating a driver's licence after it has been suspended for medical reasons.

I can tell you that the Ontario Ministry of Transportation has a lot of work to do in this area.

For years I've had calls complaining about the slow process. Sadly (and I apologize) I haven't addressed the issue until now. Unfortunately, I've had a first-hand look into how it works and it's not pretty.

Last July I experienced what is called a 'Lobar Intracerebral Hemorrhage.' It's part of the stroke family and a very scary experience. I'm one of the lucky ones since the odds of surviving weren't in my favour.

Anyway, I did (as you can tell), but I found out rather quickly that

**Publisher's Comment**

**Rob Wilkins**



the Ministry of Transportation has some real issues with stroke victims driving around after experiencing one of these events. A few days into my recovery, I was informed that my licence had been pulled.

To be honest, it was the right call. I had lost almost all of my left peripheral vision and judging distance was a real problem.

Fast forward to Jan. 6. My eyesight had returned to normal (the brain really is an amazing piece of work) and I was off to the optometrist for my eye tests as requested by the Ministry.

I passed with flying colours and I sent my results in the same day. It should be noted that before I did, I called to verify exactly what they needed in terms of paperwork. At that time the nice lady informed me there would be a two- to six-week waiting period before the decision would be made.

I'm not going to bore you with the details, but after countless phone calls, hours of waiting to speak with a live person, promises that it was being looked at "as we speak" or "your request has been elevated," I received confirmation my licence had been re-instated as of March 15.

I should count my blessings it didn't take longer. The *Toronto Sun's* article pointed out that one person had been waiting five months (and counting) for a decision.

I don't think anyone would argue with the role the Ministry plays in keeping our roads safe from medically unfit drivers. It's the process that really needs to be looked at. I can imagine the anguish an owner/operator must go through looking at their rig, parked and not bringing in a dime, while he or she waits for the Ministry to get to their case.

I don't pretend to have the answer but something has got to be done. □

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

**People**

MacKinnon Transport executive director **Ray Haight** has announced his resignation from the company.

Haight has served as executive director of MacKinnon Transport since 2005. Prior to that, he filled various roles with the company, including partner, vice-president, president and COO.

In recent years, he represented the company at the Truckload Carriers Association, where Haight served as chairman in 2008/2009.

Meyers Transportation Services has announced the promotion of two senior managers to the positions of executive vice-president.

**Roman Slugocki** and **Dave Scott**, both long-time members of the Meyers Transportation executive team, have garnered promotions, the company announced. Slugocki will continue focusing on the LTL, truckload and cartage operations in his expanded role with the company.

He has been with Meyers for more than 10 years and in the transportation industry for 33 years.

Scott, in his new role, will focus on further developing pricing, IT systems, maintenance and logistics services, the company announced. Scott has been in the industry for 25 years. Family-owned Meyers Transportation was recently passed on to Jacquie and Natalie Meyers, who oversee operations today. □

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**BOWMANVILLE, Ont.** – At the recent annual meeting of the Technology and Maintenance Council, Navistar executive Jim Hebe proclaimed that the market for long-nose conventional trucks is “dead and gone.”

Citing concerns with fuel costs and vehicle depreciation, as well as an increase in intermodal shipments and shorter truck hauls, the outspoken senior vice-president of North American sales operations said that more aerodynamic rigs are likely the way of the future for the trucking industry. However, fans of the classic long-nose style say driver pride and comfort will still trump environmental and financial concerns. We stopped by the Fifth Wheel Truck Stop in Bowmanville, Ont. to see whether drivers think there is still a future for long-nose conventionals.

**Iannick Pelletier**, a driver with J.R. Denis out of Montreal, Que., says



**Truck Stop Question**

**Adam Ledlow**  
Managing Editor

*Is there still a future for long-nose conventional rigs?*



**Iannick Pelletier**

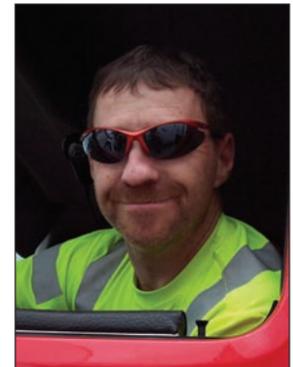
conventional rigs are more stable and classic than their aerodynamic counterparts and he questions the real benefit to fuel economy with

rigs like the Cascadia and ProStar. “When you put the fender in between the tractor and the trailer they say you’ll save one mile per gallon. If you add little wings on it, they say you will get one more mile per gallon. If you get better tires, the same. So everybody should do 13 miles per gallon, but nobody does. It’s the engine that does the good fuel economy. Aerodynamics help a little, but not that much.”

**Jeff Cedine**, a company driver with Celadon out of Indianapolis, Ind., was one of the few drivers to agree

with Hebe, stating that the fuel mileage achieved with aerodynamic rigs can’t be ignored.

“There will probably be a small market (for long-nose) if they can afford it, but they would be wiser to go with something a little more fuel-efficient unless they are doing really heavy hauling; then it probably isn’t going to matter, so they might want the big powerful rigs then,” Cedine told *Truck West*.



**Geoff Yates**

**Geoff Yates**, a Cobourg, Ont.-based driver with 11 years under his belt, says that long-nose will continue to exist so long as pride exists with drivers and they’re willing to shell out the extra cash.

“The price of fuel makes a difference, but when you live in a truck for as long as these guys do, I think they’ll splurge and still keep with the bigger ones,” he said. “They’re making us haul heavier and heavier and we need the bigger motors and we need the bigger gears. The bigger the truck, the better.”



**Kevin Wilkins**

**Kevin Wilkins**, an owner/operator from Fenelon Falls, Ont., says he’s content with the mileage he’s currently getting out of his 379 Peterbilt, adding that the newer trucks are just too expensive for what drivers are earning.

“Our remuneration is so low that for us to go out and spend \$140,000 for a new truck that isn’t as good as my old one is ridiculous. In order to justify that kind of an investment, we need an extra 60-70 cents per mile. I would rather sacrifice a mile to the gallon, which is all I’m doing at best, and have something that’s affordable and something I choose to drive,” he says. “Long-nose conventionals are nearing their end, but...I have no intentions of running a slippery truck ever. I will rebuild my Peterbilt 100 times before I’ll buy a truck like that.”

**William Cook**, a Lindsay, Ont.-based owner/operator, says he much prefers long-nose rigs like his Kenworth W900. “I run about high eight (mpg) and I pull heavy loads anywhere from 50,000 to 53,000 and I don’t have a problem with it. It doesn’t make a difference really about the aerodynamics on trucks because with what these new trucks are getting right now, I’ve got no motor.” □

*and the winner is...*

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