

# TRUCK WEST

November 2011 Volume 22, Issue 11

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

## Convoy is a record Breaker! Breaker!

By Adam Ledlow

**PARIS, Ont.** – The delighted laughs of the athletes, the roar of engine after engine filing down the highway, and the hooting and cheering from family, friends and industry folk lining the driveway filled the air near the Paris Fairgrounds on Sept. 17, signalling the start of the seventh annual World's Largest Truck Convoy.

The event was once again raising money in support of the Special Olympics, with organizers setting a goal to beat last year's tally of \$40,000. And beat it they did, with total donations reaching \$54,000 by day's end with the aid of 57 participating drivers.

"From a meagre beginning of 17 registered drivers (in the week leading up to the event), we are thrilled to have the 57 trucks turn out, and are once again astounded by the drivers' determination to collect pledges for Special Olympics," said Tammy Blackwell, event coordinator for the southern Ontario convoy. "While they enjoy the friendly competition for lead truck, they genuinely applaud each others' efforts for the best results Ontario can achieve. Our sponsors ensure we have a foundation to continue

Continued on page 8



**NO PRESSURE:** A competitor maneuvers his truck into position during the National Professional Truck Driving Championships in Calgary, as judges look on. Photo by Jim Bray

## National Professional Truck Driving Championships: A trucking showdown in Cowtown

By Jim Bray

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Everyone makes rookie mistakes, but when push came to shove at the 2011 National Professional Truck Driving Championships, it was a rookie who made the fewest errors – and ended up driving off with the title of Grand Champion.

The rookie in question was Claude Tessier who, while he may

have been a "Rodeo rookie," has actually been driving trucks for the best part of 30 years – 22 of them with Groupe Robert out of Montreal, Que.

Tessier hauls a bit of everything to the Midwest and east coast of the US – including hospital and bathroom products – and he told *Truck West* via an interpreter that what finally got him to enter the

championships in his home province was pretty much a dare from a friend.

"It started when (a previous champion) and I arrived from a trip and it took him two or three times to back the load into the dock straight," Tessier says. "I teased him that for a champion he had problems and that he should watch

Continued on page 24

## Introducing 'downspeeding'

Taking 'run slow' to a new low



See pg. 32

### Inside This Issue...

- **Tribute to the troops:** Rosenau Transport has deployed a specially designed trailer that honours Canada's Armed Forces. Page 7
- **Fenced off?:** The US is considering fencing its border with Canada. Why aren't trucking insiders more concerned? Page 16
- **Training conundrum:** Are Alberta's commercial drivers as well trained as they should be? Page 26
- **Cat on track:** We take a spin in the new Cat CT660. Does it live up to the hype? Page 34

### Mark Dalton O/O



Page 36

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# CLASS 8 TRUCK SALES TRENDS

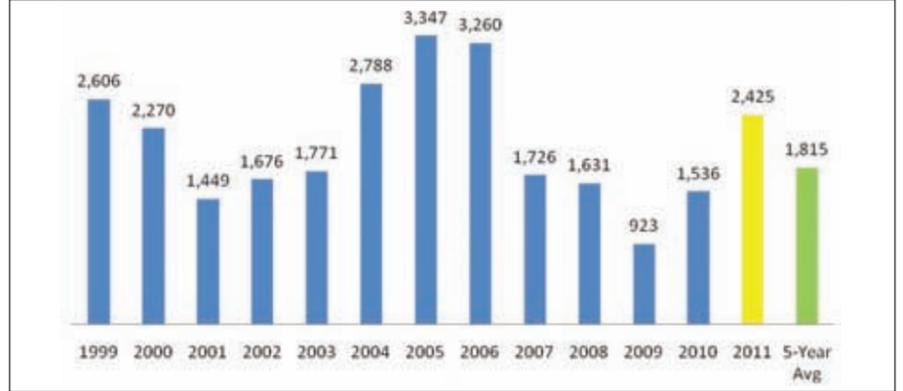
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## Monthly Class 8 Sales – Aug 11

This was one of the best Augusts the Canadian Class 8 market has experienced over the past decade. The 2,425 Class 8 trucks sold in August far surpassed the monthly totals from last year as well as 2007 to 2009 and from 2000 to 2003. The month's sales tally also surpassed the five-year average for the month by more than 600 units, the third straight month this has happened.

OEM	This Month	Last Year
Freightliner	550	369
International	520	314
Kenworth	595	327
Mack	110	99
Peterbilt	260	167
Sterling	0	0
Volvo	193	172
Western Star	197	88
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2425</b>	<b>1536</b>

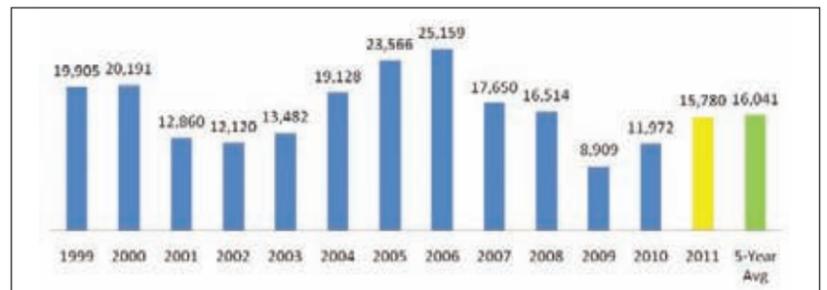
## Historical Comparison – Aug 11 Sales



## Class 8 Sales (YTD Aug 11) by Province and OEM

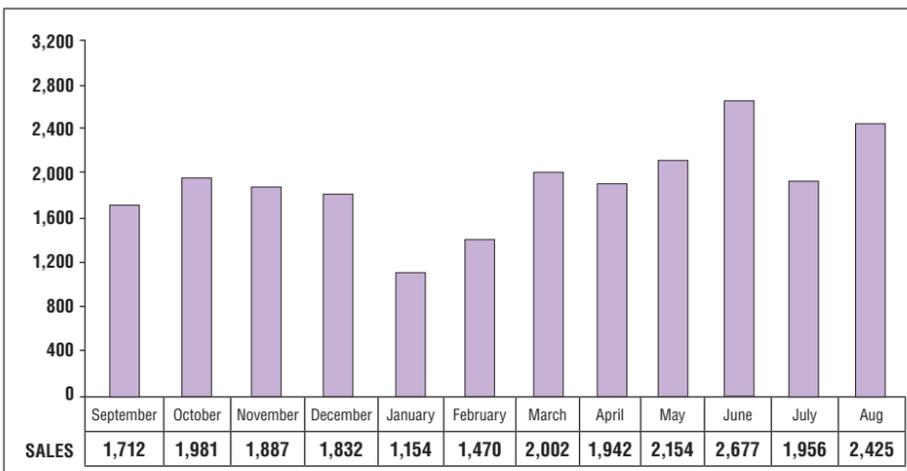
OEM	BC	ALTA	SASK	MAN	ONT	QUE	NB	NS	PEI	NF	CDA
Freightliner	236	406	105	228	2,179	647	197	72	11	24	4,105
Kenworth	295	1,202	226	99	573	715	88	0	0	0	3,198
Mack	46	150	76	54	501	156	30	23	0	11	1,047
International	226	505	60	204	1,090	730	182	93	9	48	3,147
Peterbilt	200	533	146	125	353	234	91	19	0	0	1,701
Volvo	97	105	40	185	644	304	85	38	0	4	1,502
Western Star	213	333	52	26	172	184	43	48	1	8	1,080
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1,313</b>	<b>3,234</b>	<b>705</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>5,512</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>15,780</b>

## Historical Comparison – YTD Aug 11



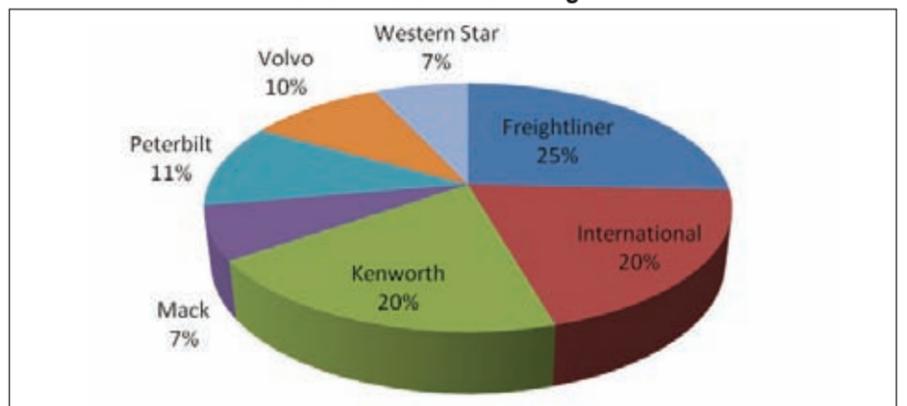
So far, the YTD sales totals are significantly better than the sales figures posted in both 2009 and 2010 and also better than the results after the first half of 2001, 2002 and 2003. The YTD totals are also now less than 300 units off the five-year average and showing continuing improvement with the last three months running above the five-year average. The improvement in truck sales may be an indication that the economy is doing better than the public perceives, however with trucks ordered months in advance one has to wonder what the impact will be on future sales from the current spate of bad news stirred up by nervous stock markets.

## 12 - Month Sales Trend



The 2,425 trucks sold in August made it the second strongest sales month of the past 12-month period, just slightly behind June when sales climbed above 2,600 Class 8 trucks. So far, sales have climbed above the 2,000 mark for four of the first eight months of 2011 and came within less than 60 of achieving that mark on two more months.

## Market Share Class 8 – Aug 11 YTD



Freightliner jumped out to an early lead at the start of the year with 28% market share and continues to hang on to that lead, although its share has declined. International, a former market leader who has adopted different engine emissions technology than the rest of the OEMs, is battling it out with Kenworth for second place. Peterbilt and Volvo are the only other two manufacturers enjoying a 10% or greater share of the Canadian Class 8 market.

Source: Canadian Motor Vehicle Manufacturers Association

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# Are drivers pigs? Or will they return your respect?

I wrote a blog for our Web site Trucknews.com that generated an interesting assortment of comments. In my entry 'Want to run nice trucks? Treat your people right, the nice trucks will follow,' I opined that providing drivers with nice, well-maintained equipment will lower driver turnover and result in a more content workforce that is easier on equipment.

I made the observation following a visit to J.F. Kitching & Son, an Ontario aggregates hauler that replaces its trucks every five years, pays its drivers a decent hourly wage and by the very nature of their business, has them home daily.

As a result, Kitching has very little driver turnover and most of its drivers have been with the company long-term. They are given shiny new trucks to operate and they tend to keep them looking that way.

While my conclusion may have been overly simplistic, it's just plain wrong, according to several respondents, who insist drivers are pigs who are bent on destroying any piece of equipment and won't lift a finger to take a paper towel and some Windex to their company-owned trucks.

"We have high spec' equipment washed weekly by hand in our own wash bay yet can't get drivers to keep their interiors even close to respectable," one manager said. "It gets very discouraging when a company spends a lot of money on spec'ing a truck out for driver comfort, pays him/her \$60-80k



annually, make sure the exteriors are shiny and clean...then have a driver who won't lift a finger to do his/her part."

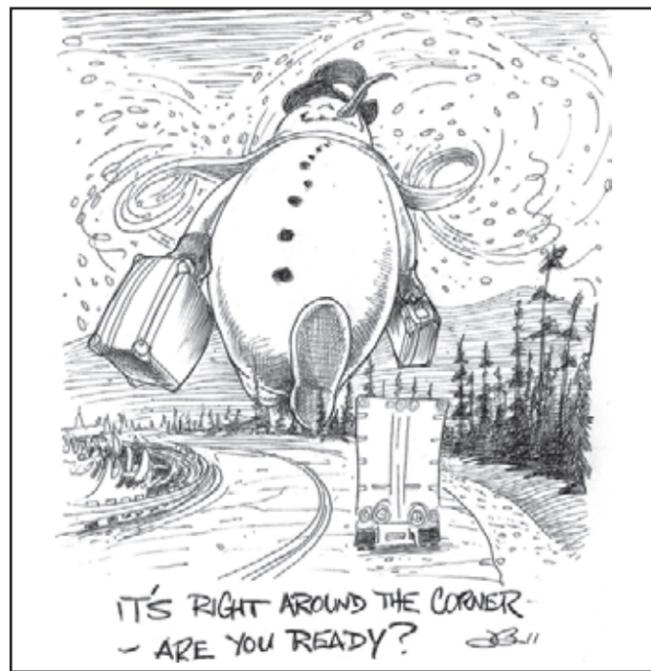
Another commenter added: "For the first number of years of owning my own equipment, back in the 80s, I personally cleaned all five trucks inside and out, and provided each cab with a Windex bottle, paper towel, flashlight, CB radio, basic tool set, wisk broom, 12-volt vacuum. I gave this up because, the trucks looked like a pigsty anyway. The Windex bottles and paper towels were nowhere to be found, the flashlights were under the driver's air seat smashed to pieces, the CBs could not be kept working longer than a week at a time. Tools were missing, (the) wisk broom couldn't be found and the vacuum was broken."

Some drivers also weighed in, noting they do indeed take pride in running premium equipment and do their part to keep

it looking decent, even when it requires them to do some polishing while waiting to be loaded or unloaded.

It's unfair to generalize an entire segment of the workforce, as professional drivers are as diverse a bunch as the population at large. I still believe in most cases, providing drivers with clean, well-maintained equipment will deliver tangible benefits to the company owner. Clearly, not everyone agrees. What are your thoughts? Check out the blog at Trucknews.com and weigh in. □

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



## Private fleets: Benchmark yourselves

We've done something great, something groundbreaking, with the help of one of the most respected organizations in this industry. And I can't wait to tell you about it.

But first I need to give you a little background so you can understand why I'm as excited as I am. You see, for the past decade every opportunity I got – whether it was when invited to speak to industry groups, or when sharing data with companies wanting to market their equipment to the Canadian trucking market, or in simple conversations with the many industry friends I have made over the past 20 years – I have made a point to stress the importance of private trucking.

Why? Well, first, being as involved with industry stats as I am, how could I not? Private trucking is the quiet giant of Canadian transportation. It's at least as large as the for-hire sector, if not larger, accounting for about \$35 billion in annual activity. There are close to 12,000 private truck fleets, according to our records.

But the main reason I have always stressed the importance of private trucking is that I have long felt it does not get the attention or respect it deserves – not from the media, not from marketers and certainly not from the government agencies tasked with understanding the industries they regulate.

It has been more than a decade since Statistics Canada or Transport Canada has done any substantial re-



search on private trucking. How can this be justified when private fleet transportation is estimated to account for 2.5% of Canadian GDP? As a result, I believe too many supply chain decisions are being made and too many opinions held in the absence of recent and reliable market data.

Okay, enough complaining. Let me now tell you what I'm so excited about.

We have collaborated with the Private Motor Truck Council to finally get private fleet managers the kind of specific market data they require to make informed decisions about their operations. The first project from this initiative, the 2011 Canadian Private Fleet Practices Benchmark Study, is now available. Our goal was to provide private fleet managers with benchmark information that will allow them to compare their practices and results with similar operations and with the fleets employing "best practices."

We gathered data on more than 100 questions across 13 categories, ranging from key challenges and composition of private fleets to operational costs, operating policies and hiring practices.

Let's look at idling policies, for ex-

ample, to see the kind of information you can glean from the Benchmark Study.

Not only can you use the Benchmark Study to find out the percentage of private fleets that have an idling policy, but you can also compare how many do so by size of fleet and also compare that to fleets judged to be employing industry best practices. But that's not all. You can use the Benchmark Study to find out which idling time limits are most used by private fleets – 0 minutes; 1-3 minutes; 4-5 minutes; 6-10 minutes; over 10 minutes. Need more information, such as whether policies like automatic shut off or different rules for summer vs. winter are being used? No problem, we have that too. And, of course, you can compare those as well by fleet size and against the industry leaders.

Oh, but we didn't stop there. We really wanted this information to be comprehensive; we really wanted private fleets to be able to compare apples to apples. So you can use our data to benchmark by geographic scope of operation and by region too.

We believe our research provides valuable input for private fleet managers looking to plan for the future. The report is available for purchase on www.trucknews.com. It's a quick download. Have a read and let me know what you think. □

– Lou Smyrlis can be reached by phone at (416) 510-6881 or by e-mail at lou@TransportationMedia.ca. You can also follow him on Twitter at Twitter.com/LouSmyrlis.

## IN BRIEF

## New truck route to bypass Estevan

**ESTEVAN, Sask.** – The location of a new Estevan truck route bypassing the community, has been selected.

The route was presented at a public open house last month. The 12-km truck route will run north of the city from the intersection of Hwy. 39 and Shand Road to Hwy. 39 west of the city. It will initially be built as a two-lane road, the province has announced, however it will be constructed with future twinning in mind as truck volumes increase.

Pre-construction is set to begin this fall with on-road construction taking place during the 2012 construction season. It will take about three years to complete the truck route.

“The Estevan truck route will improve traffic flow, enhance safety and generate potential development opportunities in the Estevan area,” said Jim Reiter, Saskatchewan Highways and Infrastructure Minister. “We’ve come up with a plan for a bypass that meets current demands and allows the bypass to evolve as traffic volumes and the Estevan area grow.” □

## Verigo moves

**EDMONTON, Alta.** – Wireless log-book provider Verigo has announced it has moved to a new location, just north of the Whitemud Freeway on the southeast corner of 51 Ave. and 91 St.

The new location as of Oct. 1 is #312-8925, 51st Ave, the company announced. For more info, visit [www.verigo.ca](http://www.verigo.ca). □

## “By 2020, it will be crazy. Don’t expect to get anywhere near a city,” expert warns

**REXDALE, Ont.** – North American shippers have enjoyed a 30-year run of declining logistics costs but that is about to change, according to George Stalk, senior advisor with Boston Consulting Group, and lingering unwillingness to deal with a crumbling infrastructure is to blame.

While higher oil prices is a clearly visible factor creating upward pressure on logistics costs, less obvious, but critically important nonetheless, is the effect of congestion on extended supply chains, Stalk told the recent 25th annual Transportation Conference, held at the Woodbine Racetrack in Rexdale, Ont.

“It will bring into question supply chain models that have essentially been handed down from the 60s and 70s. Change is happening underneath the eyes of our clients,” Stalk warned.

He painted a future scenario where gridlock rules everywhere. North American ports, many of which flirted with capacity prior to the recession, will once again be pushing the limits of their capabilities. And they will have a tough time growing beyond their current footprint due to public opposition to further industrial growth on waterfronts. Yet container lines such as Maersk are placing 15,000 and even 18,000 TEU ships into their rotations, which could actually result in greater congestion.

“One could argue, the bigger the ship, the greater the congestion,” Stalk said. “There could be a flotilla of ships waiting to be unloaded. It could become the second Wall of China.”

Containers coming off the dock need an efficient infrastructure to quickly move them inland but Stalk pointed out there is little appetite to grow rail lines. And demand for trucking capacity is growing four times faster than it is being created.

Don’t count on air freight either, according to Stalk. He believes airport capacity in the US will be gridlocked by 2015 unless planned improvements are actually made. Over the past 40 years only three major airports have been built in North America – two were replacements and one was a failure (Mirabel).

Since 1975 there have been 16 runway projects cancelled. Key airports such as Boston have been working for three decades to add capacity due to public opposition.

“By 2020, it will be crazy...Don’t expect to get anywhere near a city,” Stalk said, adding that to fight back new relationships are required among transportation stakeholders. He advised that the focus should be on faster and better service that is appropriately compensated. □

## Free webinar on automating HoS now available

**TORONTO, Ont.** – Hours-of-service, and how each fleet handles this critical issue, will be one of the most important differentiators in the Canadian marketplace in the years to come.

As the economy improves and demand for trucking services grows, drivers will once again become a limited resource that can have a negative effect on fleet growth plans.

How can we deal with this limited resource in a more efficient, more effective and perhaps less costly manner?

Join us for an informative webinar as we explore how three Canadian fleets have automated their hours-of-service using Shaw Tracking’s solution.

The folks you will be hearing from were directly involved in the implementation with their companies and will share valuable insights on both the challenges and benefits. The webinar is now available on demand at [Trucknews.com](http://Trucknews.com). Simply visit [Trucknews.com/videos](http://Trucknews.com/videos) or go to our Web site and click the ‘Videos’ item on the menu bar.

The Webinar is entitled *Automating your HoS: Understanding the reasons, challenges and rewards*.

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ALBERTA

# Trucking for troops

By Jim Bray

**EDMONTON, Alta.** – Truck drivers perform a vital service, often under difficult circumstances, but there’s a group that performs what many consider an even more important service under even worse conditions. And there’s a trucking company that’s doing its best to make sure no one forgets about them.

The group in question, of course, is the Canadian Armed Forces, a collection of folks who put their lives on the line so the rest of us don’t have to.

Carl Rosenau, head of Rosenau Transport, an Edmonton-based carrier with terminals in all four western provinces, not only proclaims proudly his unqualified support for the Canadian Armed Forces, he’s putting his money where his mouth is by deploying a specially-designed trailer to honour the troops.

“We try to support the troops as much as we can,” Rosenau says, noting that his company has been donating football and hockey tickets to the troops as one way of thanking them. He wanted to do something more visible, however, so he commissioned the decorating of a brand new trailer that has become a huge, rolling tribute to Canada’s Army, Navy and Air Force.

It was all done without official sanction, though that wasn’t by design.

“We’ve been trying to get this done for a year and a half, maybe two years,” he says, “and we could never get permission from anybody. We never did get permission from anybody. We talked to Colonels, Staff Sergeants, and nobody could give me the answer that it’s okay to do it. I just got up one day and said ‘To hell with it,’ and we just did it. I don’t think anyone’s going to tell me to take (the decals) off.”

The trailer isn’t used to haul freight but, rather, it’s meant to be taken to various shows, parades and the like. The company had it on display at September’s National Truck Driving Championships in Calgary, for example, which was one of its first appearances. It has also been in Lloydminster, Cold Lake, Fort McMurray and Medicine Hat in Alberta, as well as Swift Current, Sask. Rosenau’s “Force-ful” statement was also on-hand when artist Dave Sopha’s Portraits of Honour mural made its way through southern Alberta in mid-September, participating in a bit of a parade from Lacombe, Alta. to Medicine Hat.

As with its appearance at the Nationals, Rosenau’s ‘Support our Troops’ truck was driven in the Portraits of Honour procession by Carl Rosenau’s nephew, Michael ‘Motor’ Rosenau, owner/operator of MTR Transport. The younger Rosenau’s day job consists of doing pickup-and-delivery in the Calgary area under contract with Rosenau, but he’s happy to take time some off to drive his uncle’s tribute trailer.

“Canadian and US soldiers are risking their lives for our freedom and everyone should remember that as they walk down the street,” Motor says. “Don’t take that for granted.”

Rosenau’s rolling remembrance is usually driven by staff out of the company’s Edmonton headquarters.

“We get a lot of our guys volunteering to pull it around and they do it with pride,” Carl Rosenau says.

Rosenau isn’t a veteran himself, but supporting the troops and the reasons for which they fight is a cause that’s near and dear to his heart. He wants to do even more for Forces members as well. “We’re trying to find jobs at Rosenau for troops who are coming home,” he says. “There’s a bunch of them coming home and they don’t have any jobs to come home to. We’ve already got our arm in the air and registered with the Forces base saying ‘Come on over to our place. We’re hiring.’”

At the least, Rosenau says, it’s something for returning members to think about. “If you’ve been driving over in Afghanistan, you might want to carry on doing it back here at home. Who knows?” Carl reasons.



**ROLLING TRIBUTE:** Rosenau’s military tribute trailer is pictured here behind Michael Rosenau’s Freightliner FLD120. *Photo by Jim Bray*

Not surprisingly, reaction from public has been good so far. “We’ve gotten e-mails from people who’ve seen it and said it looks great and they appreciate that we’re doing it,” Rosenau says. “We got one from someone whose son was an amputee; you just about choke on tears when

you read that letter. It’s phenomenal, the response we’re getting.”

Rosenau says he plans to keep the unit going as long as he can. There’s no charge for the truck to make an appearance. “You just call for it and if we can, we’ll show up with a truck and a driver,” Rosenau says. □

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## CANADA

# Manitoba's Convoy sets a new fundraising record

Continued from page 1

this event and without their support as well we would be unable to have reached over \$300,000 for Special Olympics in the past seven years.”

As in past years, the drivers raising money took part in that “friendly competition” to best each other by collecting the most pledges, with the victor being given the honour of ‘lead truck’ for the convoy. This year that privilege belonged to Don Poll, having raised \$4,190 in support of the Special Olympics.

“This is what we fight for,” said Poll, a driver with Drumbo Transport out of Ayr, Ont., when asked how it felt to be named lead truck. “I was quite happy. It’s for a good cause. I have three nieces that are in the Special Olympics, so that helps out.”

Rounding out the top three spots for most money raised were Brian Hilton of MacKinnon Transport (\$2,814) and Stephane Gauthier of SG Detailing and Polishing (\$2,150).

Once underway, the convoy of trucks and its police escort wound itself west along Highways 403 and 401 to Putnam, Ont. before heading back to the Paris Fairgrounds for lunch, prize draws, speeches and a game of bocce – replacing the usual baseball game from past years – which pitted the top 12 truckers (based on pledges raised) against an eager group of Special Olympians.

Blackwell said the Special Olympics folks have been pushing to include a game bocce – an up-and-coming sport for the organization – at the event for the past couple of years. Event organizers channelled the game’s Italian heritage with a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the mob, which saw the participating truckers donning bright orange jumpsuits from the Milton prison, plastic handcuffs and name tags reading Lucky Luciano, Tony Soprano and other real and fictional mobsters.

“(The drivers) like it. They like



**POLL ON POLE:** Don Poll earned the lead position at this year’s World’s Largest Truck Convoy for Special Olympics in Paris, Ont. The Ontario leg of the event raised \$54,000 while a similar event in Manitoba raised another \$45,000 for Special Olympics. *Photo by Adam Ledlow*

that interaction,” Blackwell said. “I have had phone calls in the past when it was baseball, and it was, ‘How much to get onto the team this year?’ They are asking if \$1,200 or \$1,500 will get them

onto the team.”

Rob Langille of Sharp Transportation in Cambridge, Ont., has relished hearing the athletes’ speeches at the event since he started attending four years ago.

“The first year I came here, I thought that if you left here and didn’t have a bit of a tear in your eye, then you’re not human. It’s that touching,” he told *Truck West*. “And they don’t give up; they have all the drive in the world. I wish I had half of it. I’d be a better person. That’s why I keep coming back; just to help out. If I didn’t drive then I’d come back as a volunteer.”

Having been at all seven southern Ontario convoys since the event’s inception, Barry Vivian, an owner/operator with Connell Transport in Hamilton, Ont., enjoys the camaraderie with his fellow truckers, but also the convoy itself, which sees Special Olympians filling the passenger seats in the trucks.

“It’s always nice to talk to them and meet them here. They are always so excited and bubbly...just to see them and their reactions, they’re so alive. It hits you right in the pit of the stomach and just makes you want to help out that much more,” he said.

And no one appreciates the truckers’ enthusiasm and willingness to help more than the Special Olympics organization itself.

“The interaction between the drivers and the athletes has always been amazing,” said Lynn Miller, manager of marketing and fundraising for Special Olympics Ontario. “It is a feel-good opportunity for the drivers to be engaged with athletes, not only from this community but athletes across Ontario. They are very benevolent and enthusiastic, and they love to see what their funds can do for the athletes.”

“A lot of friendships have come out of this event and a lot of the athletes come back every year and request to be with certain truck drivers who they have formed those bonds with over the years,” added Cody Jansma, manager of Ontario Law Enforcement Torch Run, at his first convoy with the organization.

“I think they’re very appreciative of what the truckers do and the amount of money that they raise for their program that let them go and play the sports that they want to play.”

## Manitoba convoy breaks fundraising record

But the southern Ontario version of the World’s Largest Truck Convoy wasn’t the only one hitting the highways in support of the Special Olympics in September. Special Olympics Manitoba hosted its own convoy event Sept. 17, winding its way from Oak Bluff around Highway 101 and back, raising a record-breaking \$45,000 in the process.

“Special Olympics Manitoba (SOM) was thrilled with the enthusiastic support of both the trucking industry and the law enforcement community that made this event so successful,” officials told *Truck West*. “SOM has over 2,100 athletes who benefit directly from funds raised at events throughout the year, and to have raised over \$45,000 at this event was an unexpected, yet wonderful, surprise. We’re looking forward to seeing all of our new friends again next year.” □

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## SAFETY

# Prepare your equipment long before the snow flies

The realities of winter driving conditions can appear quicker than some fleet managers might expect. The same driver who enjoys a warm fall day when picking up a load in Southern Ontario could face ice and blowing snow by the time the truck reaches a northern community like Wawa or Sault Ste Marie.

Equipment obviously needs to be prepared for that cold blast of reality before it arrives.

Seasonal preventive maintenance projects involve everything from fluids to batteries and tire choices, but those who complete the work will be better prepared for the winter to come. Consider the difference that can be made with an added focus on the following:

## Fluids

Even in the days of long-life coolant formulas, maintenance teams



## Ask the Expert

DAVID GORUK

might want to inspect the condition of existing fluids – especially if the truck's cooling system was serviced during the summer months. Most Canadian fleets will want a formula that can withstand temperatures as low as -45 C.

It isn't the only fluid that deserves attention. Those who plan to travel between Canada and the southern US, for example, will need to supply trucks with bottles of diesel conditioner. Otherwise, the fuel bought in the warmer climate may begin to gel once exposed to colder weather.

Airline anti-freeze, meanwhile, may play a key role when trying to

release any frozen brakes. Users simply need to be aware that there are differences in the formulas. A standard methyl hydrate will tend to dry out seals and attack the pistons in brake valves, leading to bigger brake problems to come.

## HVAC systems

HVAC systems will also require some attention as temperatures begin to plunge, and the work is not limited to checking bunk heaters.

Air conditioners deliver the dry air needed to defrost windows, but the cables that control them have been known to stretch, stick and seize over time. A careful inspection will make sure the air can be controlled when it's needed.

When it comes to heating systems, older equipment can also include a valve in the heater hose that keeps hot water out of the heater core in

the summer months. These valves need to be re-opened every fall.

## Batteries

A close look at the batteries can help to ensure that a truck will start on the coldest mornings, but the inspection is not limited to the work of a battery tester. Disconnecting cables, cleaning terminals, adding a corrosion inhibitor and retightening every connection will help to ensure that any current is delivered when it's needed.

## Tires and chains

When it comes to ensuring traction, tire choices obviously play a role in keeping trucks under control. The low treads that might be acceptable on summer pavement could become a safety hazard in slick conditions, and any treads should be deep enough to handle the worst conditions in a journey.

Some areas present bigger challenges than others. Fleets in Thunder Bay, Ont., for example, have been known to install lug tires on every position, even though the softer compounds might require new treads on the steer axle before the season comes to an end. It is an added cost, but that still pales in comparison to the price of a roadside service call.

The chains that wrap around the tires deserve a close look of their own. A set of chains that has been sitting under a bunk since last winter may actually have a broken link or bent clasp. If there is too much wear in the metal, drivers may spin their tires and break a link the first time they rely on the added traction.

## Winter supplies

Stranded drivers will certainly appreciate a bag of sand that can offer some added traction on an icy surface. The sand should just be stored somewhere other than a rear deck plate, where the bags have been prone to rip open and dump their contents on the highway. Some fleets are even storing a few four-litre plastic jugs of ice-melter in their trucks.

Of course, the preparations are not limited to the equipment. A survival kit in the form of winter clothing, food and water can make a difference if a truck is stranded. Just ask the drivers who had to sit through a 36-hour closure of Ontario's Hwy. 402 last winter.

Collectively, they are all steps that can put any truck on a safer path, no matter what challenges the cold weather might offer. □

– This month's expert is David Goruk. David is a senior advisor with Safety and Training Services for Markel Insurance Company of Canada and has more than 25 years experience in providing loss control and risk management services to the trucking industry. 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. To read about more industry hot topics, visit Markel's Web site at [www.markel.ca](http://www.markel.ca) and click on the Articles & Essays section.



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OVER THE ROAD

# Time is of the essence

## It's time for the industry to invest in its driver pool by providing adequate rest time

One of the things I enjoy most about trucking is the time you have to spend with yourself.

That probably sounds a little strange, but that's what I equate with the freedom of the open road. You're free from interference, restrictions, and external authority. You're independent. Many drivers would say that our freedom and independence is under threat from unnecessary rules and interference from government and special interest groups.

I wouldn't say all rules are unnecessary and I'm not big on conspiracy theories, but I do think our independence has been compromised because of the universal controls



Over the Road

AL GOODHALL

placed on our time. By imposing change through legislation rather than through ongoing training and professional development, how can drivers not feel their independence is under threat?

Each individual driver needs the flexibility to plan their own time in order to meet all the demands placed on them while obtaining the required rest to operate safely. Drivers wonder among themselves

why this basic tenet of safety is so difficult to comprehend outside the driver pool?

So as I've been writing about the trucking lifestyle and driver health issues over the course of the past several months, I've been searching for the common denominator we all share. What is the key issue that affects the well-being of all drivers?

It's been in front of me all along and that is the issue of 'time' itself. Within the industry, time has morphed into an economic factor over the past few decades to be managed by companies as a means of controlling costs.

In fact, time is the lifestyle factor that affects every aspect of a driver's health and well-being. Time is now the primary stressor that impedes a driver's performance rather than the enabler it should be. Look at just a few examples and it becomes obvious how time impacts driver lifestyles at every turn.

First, look at the issue of income. In the past, drivers have enjoyed an

above average income for the work they have performed. This has allowed a driver to step away from the truck for a period of time when the demands of family, fatigue, and the simple need for leisure time required it. But that is now a thing of the past. Income has not kept pace with the cost of living and now drivers work continuously to maintain the standard of living they have enjoyed in the past. Drivers now are required to work at their performance peak continuously. The result is a constant state of burnout and low morale. It has become increasingly more difficult to look after ourselves, to put ourselves before the demands of the job.

Second, look at the HoS (hours-of-service) issue and the related issue of EOBRs (electronic on-board recorders). Look at all the research that has been performed in the past and continues today in relation to sleep science and the effects of fatigue on drivers.

Drivers get it. This information goes to the core of coping with and managing fatigue as drivers go about their daily duties. But was this data presented as an enabler to improving the lifestyle of the individual driver? No. It has been wrapped in a legislative blanket that stymies performance and in many instances leads to situations that incite fatigue and push drivers beyond their comfort zone.

Third, look at the issue of driver training and retention. In the past, independent truckers made up the majority of the driver pool and the development and mentoring of drivers was a part of daily life on the road. Now we have safety departments with a focus on compliance over training.

The time that is needed to invest in driver training and mentoring has been cut in the name of cost reduction and the trucking industry has built itself a precarious house of cards. With an aging demographic and a lackluster attitude towards developing professional drivers over McTruckers, it is no wonder that many industry managers and owners now share a genuine concern that the industry is facing a perfect storm when it comes to this issue.

What is the bottom line here? Our industry is all about service. Corporate profitability is dependent on a driver's performance and well-being. Drivers need to operate in an environment that feeds their sense of independence and freedom in order to enjoy their work and in order to attract new blood into the industry. Cutting into a driver's time may have showed short-term gains on the bottom line of many corporate operating statements but we are now left with a lingering long-term malaise as a result.

It's time for the industry to reinvest in its driver pool by providing adequate rest time, taking a fresh approach to fatigue management, and providing ongoing and professional driver training. □

— Al Goodhall has been a professional long-haul driver since 1998. He shares his experiences via his 'Over the Road' blog at <http://truck-ingacrosscanada.blogspot.com>. You can also follow him on Twitter at [Twitter.com/Al\\_Goodhall](https://twitter.com/Al_Goodhall).



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CANADA

# Freight volume growth will be slack; peak season will be muted, analyst warns

By Lou Smyrlis

**MISSISSAUGA, Ont.** – Expect slackening to flat freight volumes for the remainder of 2011, warned Cormark Securities’ David Newman at the recent SCL-Nulogx breakfast conference aptly entitled *Transportation Strategy: Planning for 2012 in Uncertain Times*.

Cormark’s Freight Monitor, which is an average of four key North American transportation market indices, declined to 3.6% in July after peaking at 12.4% in June 2010. It has been on a fairly steady decline since the start of the year. The monitor includes the ATA Truck Tonnage Index, the Cass Freight Shipment Index, the Big Three West Coast Port Volume Index and the US Trailers on Rail Car Index.

While pointing out the index is still in the positive territory, conditions have become more difficult in the face of anemic demand versus a supply chain inventory build last year, said Newman, institutional equity research analyst, transportation and industrial products.

“It looks like the peak season will be somewhat muted...We are in a period of tepid growth but we are not going into a full-blown, ugly recession,” Newman told the capacity crowd gathered at the Mississauga Convention Centre.

The Truck Tonnage Index published by the American Trucking Associations is highly correlated to the inverse of the inventory-to-sales ratio. A high inventory-to-sales ratio implies sales need to recover and inventories decline before freight picks up. After reach-

ing an all-time high in January of 2009, the Canadian inventory-to-sales ratio declined substantially through January 2011. By June of this year, however, it had peaked again before dropping back down.

“Inventory levels edged down for the first time in July since September 2010, while sales increased after three consecutive monthly declines. We do not expect inventory restocking practices to remain strong in the second half of 2011 and early 2012 as a more modest peak season is expected this year,” Newman said.

The loss in momentum is reflect-

ed in the stock market. The TSX Transportation sub-index is down 6.7% year-to-date (YTD) while the Dow Jones Transportation Index is down 17.4% YTD.

“We are in a period of tepid growth but we are not going into a full-blown, ugly recession,”

David Newman, Cormark Securities

ed in the stock market. The TSX Transportation sub-index is down 6.7% year-to-date (YTD) while the Dow Jones Transportation Index is down 17.4% YTD.

What’s causing the weakness? The Canadian economy is expected to be amongst the top performers of the G-7, which may not be saying a lot at this point.

Newman points to the weakness in the US economy as the main culprit. About 70% of the US economy is driven by the consumer but continuing high unemployment rates and weak housing prices are making the US consumer reluctant to spend.

The unemployment rate in the US held steady at 9.1% in August as US

employers created zero net jobs that month. Things do look better on our side of the border with the Canadian unemployment rate at 7.3%. However, employment has been stagnant for two consecutive months.

On the positive side, employment in the Canadian transportation and warehousing industry posted the highest growth rate of all industries at 6.3% over the past 12 months, Newman noted.

US housing starts dropped to a three-month low in August at 571,000 as foreclosures, declining prices and unemployment held

back construction. Canadian housing starts declined to a bit less than 185,000 in August from about 205,000 in July.

The various consumer confidence indices are trending downward. The Conference Board’s Consumer Confidence Index declined to 44.5 in August, its lowest level since April 2009. OECD’s Consumer Confidence Index for Canada declined to 76.9 in August, the lowest level since July 2009. And the percentage of Canadian companies expecting better performance next

year dropped to 61.7% in August from 68.3% in July.

Still, Newman figures we should be able to “spin out of this within a short period of time.”

He figures the indicators will start looking positive again mid next year.

He reminded the transportation professionals in attendance that Asian trade is continuing to drive global demand for commodities, Canadian businesses have strong cash flows and the debt reduction they underwent through the recession has left them in a better position to weather another storm. In addition, transportation companies have reduced their costs and reined in capacity.

In addition, the Bank of Canada is keeping short-term interest rates unchanged and signaling that rates will remain low for many more months while the US Federal Reserve has pledged to keep the benchmark interest rate at a record low at least through mid-2013.

“Although we are witnessing early signs of a slowdown, economists are forecasting growth for the third and fourth quarter,” Newman said.

The *Wall Street Journal’s* consensus for US GDP growth is 2% for the third quarter and 2.1% for the fourth quarter.

The Bloomberg consensus for Canadian GDP growth is 2% for the third quarter and 2.2% for the fourth quarter. □

## Anemic economy points to slow growth for freight rates: Dr. Alan Saipe

By Lou Smyrlis

**MISSISSAUGA, Ont.** – “General truck freight rates should grow at an average annual rate of 1-2% through 2012,” Dr. Alan Saipe told transportation professionals attending a recent SCL-Nulogx breakfast conference entitled *Transportation Strategy: Planning for 2012 in Uncertain Times*.

Fuel surcharges should stay in the 15-18% of the base rate range, unless crude costs rise sharply because of supply issues, Saipe added.

Saipe, president of Supply Chain Surveys, is the architect behind the Canadian General Freight Index (CGFI), published by Nulogx since September of 2009 with data going back to January 2008. The index tracks changes in over-the-road freight costs month by month and is derived from a large database of freight transactions. Costs include base freight charges, fuel surcharges and other accessorial charges. It includes domestic and cross border truckload and LTL transactions.

The index has shown generally declining truck rates to June of this year. While domestic LTL rates have increased 0.3% compared to 2010, domestic TL rates are down 3.4%. Cross-border LTL rates are down 1.3% and cross-border TL rates are down 1.7%. Overall truck rates are down 2.4% to June of this year compared to the previous year.

(It’s important to note the CGFI is restricted to general over-the-road

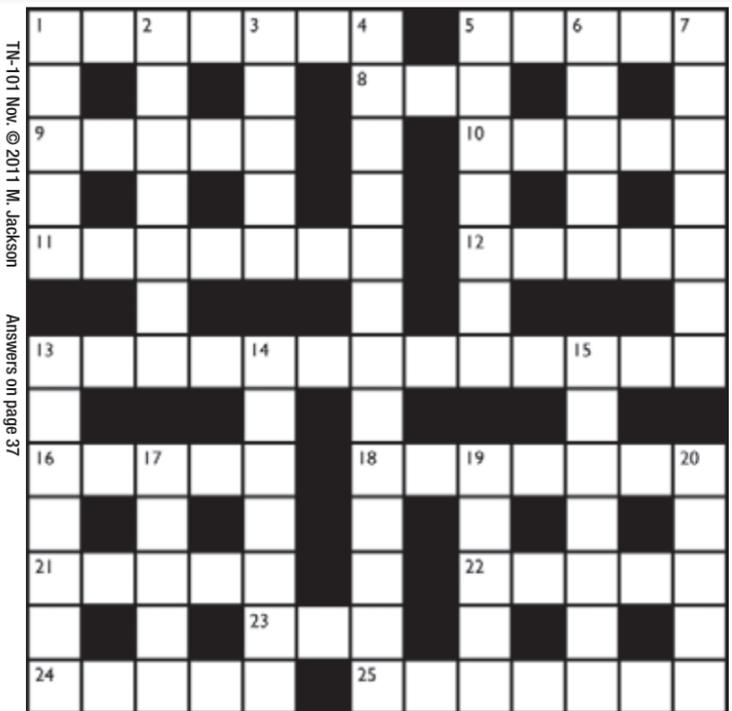
freight and does not include liquid bulk, dry bulk, forest products or other specialized freight. It also does not separate contract vs spot market pricing).

Fuel surcharges meanwhile have averaged 16.5% of the freight rate YTD to June for domestic LTL and 23.2% for domestic TL, according to the CGFI. The average fuel surcharge YTD to June for cross-border LTL has been 19.6% while cross-border TL has been 18.3%. Overall, the average fuel surcharge to June has been 18.7%.

Saipe noted that diesel fuel costs tend to mirror the price of West Texas Crude, adding that while most industry observers think there will be a steady upward trend in crude costs over the long run, “no one is really good at predicting these things over the short-term.” His own prediction was for crude to come down to about \$80 a barrel and to hover between \$70 and \$90 for the near future. Barring any surprises, Saipe said, current economic realities will keep both fuel and transportation costs in check.

“A second recession is still possible, and slow GDP growth is expected for the next two years in the US, Europe and Canada. European sovereign debt problems have not been fully resolved and continue to threaten the global recovery...the consensus is that weak demand will affect pricing in the next six to 12 months. Eventually Asian growth will drive prices upwards,” Saipe concluded. □

### THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE



**Across**

1. Killed the engine unintentionally
5. HaulTec’s aluminum dump trailer brand
8. Diamond T’s 1967 merger partner
9. Above-cab van-body portion
10. O/O component
11. Border crossing south of Montreal
12. Word on Hawaiian plates
13. Warehouse workhorse (8,5)
16. Anti-theft-system noisemaker
18. Wrecker assignments (3,4)
21. Turbo adjunct, \_\_\_ gauge
22. Tire insert perhaps, \_\_\_ tube
23. Engine’s electronic control unit, briefly (1,1,1)
24. Roadside greasy spoon
25. Manitoba border-crossing town

**Down**

1. Traffic tie-up
2. Indiana maker of LCF vocational trucks
3. Cartage company’s delivery range
4. Big-rig safety issue (6,7)
5. Radiator liquid
6. Body-filler brand
7. Pneumatic-brake-system component (3,4)
13. Truck or trailer type
14. Speed \_\_\_\_, engine-control device
15. Driveshaft components, briefly (1,6)
17. Wheel-nut cover design
19. Truck brand bought by Volvo in 1981
20. Clear-the-road sound

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OPINION

# Saving the planet?

## It takes more than a set of side skirts to be the saviour of Mother Earth

I used to be a full-time trucking writer. Sometimes it would be a struggle to come up with something new to write about.

After the news items and technical stuff had been taken care of, it was a challenge to come up with something original for opinion pieces. But there's no such problem now; this column is writing itself. In fact I often have to self edit or I could fill the magazine from cover to cover.

As it says at the bottom of my column, I still make my living from driving truck. I keep in touch with new developments, especially on the technical side of things.

I'm still a kid at heart and big



machines still excite me. I also stay abreast of other developments in the industry, but my little piece of the magazine is about the day-to-day stuff that affects us all.

Driving around as I do, I'm perfectly located to talk about life in the trenches.

This month's piece came about while I sat in a back-up on Hwy. 401. I was stationary for some time,

then we'd do a 200-yard shuffle and stop again.

During the 15 minutes that I sat like this, I was alongside another big truck, but this was no ordinary big truck. It was one of those 'Saving the Planet' trucks – well, that was what it said on the side anyway.

It made the rest of my journey pass by in a jiffy. I was chuckling away to myself; here was a tractor-trailer that announced itself to the world as the answer to all our problems. Quite a bold statement, especially when its only contribution to world peace and harmony were a set of big mud flaps nailed onto its side rails.

Now I come from the land of the \$10 gallon of fuel; over there they have some really advanced ideas about fuel mileage and aerodynamic efficiency.

Designs are tested in wind tunnels and they have many contours; some are for appearance, but even those have a positive effect on the aerodynamics. Over here, we have

an extra thick mud flap masquerading as an aerodynamic side skirt.

There are no requirements for any performance levels on these skirts, they just have to be there. Buy a new trailer and as long as it has skirts, it qualifies for the SmartWay program.

It's a California thing again, isn't it always?

Now, back to the 401. The tractor unit was an 06 model, its EGR valve was doing its thing as it sounded like a giant vacuum cleaner. I say doing its thing, it wasn't doing what it was designed to do, which, according to the claim on its side was 'saving the planet,' as it was belching clouds of black smoke.

It also had recapped tires and the trailer axles, at least, were way out of alignment if the condition of the treads were any indication.

The fact that the trailer went down the zipper line while the tractor was a foot to the right reinforces that.

So the answer to all our problems was in fact no such thing. Let's for a moment forget that a 25-ft. strip of plastic is not aerodynamic alchemy, even if it were, the savings could be equaled by fitting tires with low rolling resistance and aligning the truck and trailer.

Those recaps were also likely to go bad long before a first life tire and the manufacture of a tire is not the most environmentally-friendly process, so this again takes away any planet saving provided by the big mud flap.

The whole saving the planet thing is just plain old-fashioned smoke and mirrors; there are many more ways to do that on a big truck, things like using oil bypass systems and extending drain intervals by up to 10 times, using synthetic lubes, ensuring that your engine is performing at its optimum levels, spec'ing direct drive transmissions, the aforementioned low rolling resistance tires... in fact, there are about 60 things you can do to a big truck to reduce fuel consumption and 'save the planet' in the process.

Sure, aerodynamics play a big part in that, but look at motorsports and aircraft.

Aerodynamics play a huge part in both, but not since the days of the Wright Brothers has a loosely mounted flat surface been featured on any plane.

The same applies to motorsports; the only flat surface on any race car is underneath.

However none of that actually matters. Let's be honest, if you can reduce your fuel costs you're not doing it because you're a tree hugger, you're doing it because you'll earn more money.

So even if you do follow all 60 fuel saving ideas, you'll still make me smile when I see your 'Saving the Planet' truck, because we both know the truth, it's not about 'carbon footprints,' it's about the 'dollar bill.' □

– A fourth generation trucker and trucking journalist, Mark Lee uses his 25 years of transcontinental trucking in Europe, Asia, North Africa and now North America to provide an alternative view of life on the road. You can read his blog at [www.brandtruck.com/blog](http://www.brandtruck.com/blog).

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2 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> 65.66 <small>(61.95 + 3.71 GST)</small>				

NB, NS & NF Add 14% HST to Price / Quebec Residents Add QST (7.5%) To Total

DO YOU WISH TO RECEIVE OR (CONTINUE TO RECEIVE)

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YES  NO

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS**

1) How many vehicles are based at or controlled from this location? Please indicate quantities by type:

— No. of Straight Trucks \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Trailers \_\_\_\_\_  
 — No. of Truck-Tractors \_\_\_\_\_ No. of Buses \_\_\_\_\_  
 — No. of Off-Road Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_

2) Does this location operate, control or administer one or more vehicles in any of the following Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) categories? Please check YES or NO:

14,969 kg. & over (33,001 lbs. & over)...	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
11,794-14,968 kg. (26,001-33,000 lbs.)...	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
8,846-11,793 kg. (19,501-26,000 lbs.)...	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
4,536-8,845 kg. (10,000-19,500 lbs.)...	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Under 4,536 kg. (10,000 lbs.).....	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

3) This location operates, controls or administers:

Diesel powered vehicles.....	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Refrigerated vehicles.....	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Pickups or Utility Vans.....	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Propane powered vehicles.....	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

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

5) Indicate your PRIMARY type of business by checking ONLY ONE of the following:

a) <input type="checkbox"/> For Hire/Contract Trucking (hauling for others)
b) <input type="checkbox"/> Lease/Rental
c) <input type="checkbox"/> Food Production / Distribution / Beverages
d) <input type="checkbox"/> Farming
e) <input type="checkbox"/> Government (Fed., Prov., Local)
f) <input type="checkbox"/> Public Utility (electric, gas, telephone)
g) <input type="checkbox"/> Construction / Mining / Sand & Gravel
h) <input type="checkbox"/> Petroleum / Dry Bulk / Chemicals / Tank
i) <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturing / Processing
j) <input type="checkbox"/> Retail
ji) <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale
k) <input type="checkbox"/> Logging / Lumber
b) <input type="checkbox"/> Bus Transportation
m) <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please specify) _____

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

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

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## INDUSTRY

# The battle against cargo crime

## We need an all-in to win

We have a problem. On top of all the other challenges our industry faces, we're getting ripped off every day – quite literally, in fact.

I'm referring to truck cargo crime, a problem that costs \$5 billion in this country and half-a-million dollars a day in the GTA alone according to various sources and highlighted in the CTA report on cargo crime in Canada released last spring.

But that's really just the tip of the iceberg. This type of crime is being perpetrated by large organized criminal enterprises that use the proceeds to fund drugs and weapons smuggling, fraud, human trafficking and other illegal activities detrimental to society, including misconduct that could be a threat to national security.

Cargo that is stolen and sold in illegal markets shifts revenues from legitimate businesses to criminals and depletes tax revenues. And – most disturbingly – it is becoming increasingly violent, putting hard-working truck drivers and other industry employees at grave risk.

Police and insurance companies estimate that as much as 60% of cargo crime incidents go unreported. Carriers complain that even when the authorities are alerted, cargo crime doesn't have a high enough



### Industry Issues

DAVID BRADLEY

profile to receive much of a response. That's a conundrum.

There are a lot of reasons for this. Other than a few proactive police divisions scattered across Canada, too many people perceive cargo crime as being victimless.

Its effect on the economy is also underappreciated. There is very little communication among regional police forces and it also doesn't help that truck and cargo thefts don't get categorized independently from most other property crimes.

They're often handled as burglaries and, as anyone who's ever reported their kid's bike stolen surely knows, recovering stolen goods isn't usually a big priority for police. Historically, penalties for perpetrators do not seem to match the seriousness of the crime.

Meanwhile, the problem continues to worsen. The rate of thefts is climbing with more types of cargo being targeted than ever before. Food shipments, including fresh food, now rival high-value, easy-

to-sell products like electronics as the most commonly stolen types of goods.

So what can and should be done about it? For the first time, all of the major stakeholders – the police agencies, the insurance sector, government and the trucking industry – are working collaboratively in an effort to more effectively combat the problem. The issue is finally getting some much-needed attention from the national media. Recently passed federal legislation aimed at curbing auto theft and the sale of stolen property by organized crime syndicates through stiffer sentences could also apply to tractors, trailers and cargo theft. (If this is so, it will still take the Crown Attorneys and the courts to seek and to hand out the stiffer sentences upon conviction).

And then there's us. The industry is its own best safeguard against cargo crime. Motor carriers are doing more to protect themselves, like: conducting more vigilant personnel security screening; route risk assessments; and investing in cargo security systems for equipment and facilities.

But more needs to be done and everyone needs to get on-board. If we as carriers don't take the lead, we can't expect others to fight the problem for us.

One major stumbling block is the lack of a nationwide cargo crime database. Information from the truck-

ing community is necessary to gain additional resources, understand the true extent of the problem and create countermeasures to better deal with it. There's no central agency that currently collects such data. Therefore, it's up to us.

To address this, CTA recently teamed up with the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) to implement a new CTA Cargo Crime Incident Report form.

The form is an essential first step towards establishing a nationwide database. Each time your company experiences a cargo crime such as theft, fraud or a hijacking, it is essential that you go to our Web site ([www.cantruck.ca](http://www.cantruck.ca)) and fill out the online Incident Report form and click on the appropriate box to automatically e-mail it to us and print a copy for yourself.

The information will be shared only with IBC (not individual insurers) and the law enforcement community. The carrier's identity is kept completely confidential.

Since we launched the form a few weeks ago, CTA has been processing two or three reports a day. That's a great start towards finding solutions to this problem but we need to keep it up and everyone needs to get involved. I encourage all carriers to make use of this new tool as a simple step towards combatting cargo crime. □

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

# This is one test you just may want to fail

As tests go, this is one you might prefer to fail.

Having read many articles and sat through a number of presentations on a pervasive health issue that affects commercial drivers as well as the general public, I thought it was time for me to take the next step in my research.

So last month I took the sleep apnea test – purely, as I say, in the interest of research. And also because my wife made me.

I'm sure there are many readers who have taken this test, but I'm equally sure that many haven't even taken the first step towards diagnosis, the one where you ask your family doctor for an opinion or a referral.

This is one of those health concerns that can seriously affect your everyday life, relationships, and even more importantly, your safety – particularly if you drive for a living.

So, I thought that if I walked you through my experience, it just may encourage a few of you hold-outs to get checked.

Getting tested is actually a pretty straightforward process, at least in the clinic that I attended. On the appointed evening, five of us were scheduled to be tested and we all arrived at more or less the same time.

The usual medical forms were filled out, and then we all watched a 15-minute video on the subject of sleep apnea that provided an explanation of the causes and potential treatments.

As an aside, this test is nothing like some of those other ones; you know the ones, where you drink some foul



### Private Links

BRUCE RICHARDS

tasting liquid and ultimately end up exposed on a hospital table while a series of nurses come and go and your doctor does some things that make you wince?

The preparation for this one, except for the requirement to abstain from alcohol on the day of the test, didn't include any particular inconveniences.

So, after that short digression, back to the clinic: Once the basic paperwork was completed and the video screened, I was led off to my private bedroom and asked to change into my sleeping gear.

This room arrangement is not unlike a college dorm – just about enough room to swing a cat (my cat, Hooligan by name, hates that phrase), with a chair, blackout curtains and a bathroom down the hall. Comfortable enough for a one-night stay.

I sat on the bed and read my book (that's another tip: be sure to bring something to do to occupy the waiting time involved) until a knock on my door presaged the entry of my clinician.

Together we ran through an extensive review of my family's health history, ultimately narrowing it down to my own.

This only took a few minutes, but if, like me, you didn't pay all that much

attention to your grandparents' health issues, there may be a little guesswork involved in your answers.

Then it was on to the next step – getting wired up. For this we had to sit in the hallway (another good reason to bring your PJs along) with a couple of other folks who were also being prepped. During this step they attach monitoring wires to those being tested.

This is quite a procedure in itself. Wires are attached to many parts of your body – the top and side of your head, your face, chin, neck, and legs – but thankfully bypassing anything private. These, it is explained, will monitor everything that happens while you sleep (*everything?*), from involuntary leg movement, to grinding of teeth, to your brainwaves. No need to worry though, they say the machine can't read your thoughts. (Remember the Dylan line 'You'd need a dump truck momma to unload my head')?

I watched the guy across from me get fitted (only because he was watching me), and I thought we must both look like a couple of Cyborgs, or another alien from a Star Trek episode – wires extending from all sorts of places, ready to be plugged into the master monitor.

Then I was led back to my bedroom and instructed to lie down and get comfortable. Keep in mind that with all those wires attached to your body, and straps across your chest and stomach – comfort is a remote concept.

My clinician plugged me in and we went through a few more tests to ensure that she had a baseline for re-

actions such as blinking, eye movement, etc.

Finally we arrived at the stage of "Goodnight, and have a good sleep. We will wake you at 6 a.m."

'Not so fast, lady,' I thought. You see, considering all the stuff attached to you, being in a strange room, and the sound of computers beeping (similar sound to the ones that tell the McDonalds guy that the fries are ready), it's pretty tough to just go to sleep on cue.

An hour later, I was still wide awake.

A light knock on my door brought my clinician with a sleeping pill.

Apparently lying in bed awake wasn't helping the testing process, they actually want you to fall asleep.

I took the pill and eventually did go to sleep and as promised, at 6 a.m. the lights burst on and I was unplugged and told that I could go home.

That last part sounded great to me.

I was looking forward to my own bed and to getting some sleep. In a few weeks or so, they say I'll have the results.

So, you see, the test is simple and painless.

If you think or even suspect you may have a sleep disorder, do yourself a favour – take the test! If nothing else, you'll have some stories for your friends. □

– The Private Motor Truck Council is the only national association dedicated to the private trucking community. Direct comments and questions to [trucks@pmtc.ca](mailto:trucks@pmtc.ca).

## BORDER

# Talk of fence along Canadian border doesn't rattle trucking reps

## Trucking officials on both sides of the border say a border fence is unlikely

By Ingrid Phaneuf

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Trucking industry insiders are meeting the latest report on how US Homeland Security and US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) can beef up security on the Canadian border with a resounding “meh.”

In the words of David Bradley, president and CEO of the Canadian Trucking Alliance: “It’s their country so they can do what they want, but a fence at the US-Canada border is just a goofy idea; more optics, more theatre of security.”

“With the US government debt spiraling out of control you’d think they might have other things to worry about than building fences. Guess they’ll have to cut a hole through it to allow the oil pipeline through.”

The draft report, which among other things considered the feasibility of constructing a fence along the US-Canada border, was released for public comment Sept. 29.

(You can view the report at [www.northernborderpeis.com](http://www.northernborderpeis.com)).

Specifically, it examines the possible environmental impact of various security enhancing options over the next five to seven years and invites comments on its proposals to use “fencing and other barriers” on the 49th parallel to manage “trouble spots where passage of cross-border violators is difficult to control.”

Options include increased use of radar, sensors, cameras, drone planes and vehicle scanners.

More pertinent to cross-border carriers are the proposed improvements or expansion of Customs facilities at ports of entry.

CBP has already considered but ruled out the hiring of “significantly more” border patrol agents to increase the rate of inspections, stating staffing has already risen in recent years (700% since 9/11).

Trucking insiders, meanwhile, are more interested in the soon-to-be announced results of ongoing negotiations between Canada and the US, which purportedly aim to strike a deal to increase cross-border trade efficiencies.

### The real deal

Negotiations for a deal to increase border efficiencies and reduce congestion were officially kicked off back in February, when Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and US President Barack Obama issued a joint declaration entitled *Beyond the Border: Shared Vision for Perimeter Security and Economic Competitiveness*.

“We intend to pursue a perimeter approach to security, working together within, at and away from the borders of our two countries in a way that supports economic competitiveness, job creation and prosperity, and in a partnership to enhance our security and accelerate the legitimate flow of people and goods between our two countries,” said a draft version of the deal released to the *Globe & Mail*.

According to the draft, other aspects of the deal will include:

- An integrated cargo security strategy that ensures compatible screening methods for goods and cargo before they depart foreign ports for the US or Canada;

- A joint approach to screening people seeking to enter the United States or Canada, including new security investment in the top 10 publicly owned ports of entry;

- Cross-border sharing of information on serious offenders, criminals and suspects;

- A joint approach to port and border security;

- A closer working relationship between Canadian and US militaries in emergencies, building on a 2008 agreement that sets out rules for how each country can call for the other’s assistance.

### Report is a “yawner”

With such negotiations currently underway, the recently released environmental report is of little or no consequence, explains Margaret Irwin, American Trucking Associations’ director of Customs, immigration and cross-border operations.

“At this stage, and after everything that happened after 9/11 with the C-TPAT and more inspections, this is a real yawner,” says Irwin.

“Besides, we’re not interested in what seems to be the focus of this latest report, which is more about immigration and the area between the border crossing. What we’re concerned with is just-in-time delivery. We’ve been asking the governments to move the border away from the border (by creating off-site commercial inspection and security infrastructure). But it’s going to take some time to work out how we’re going to do that.”

“The negotiations (announced in February) are high-level. As for

this latest report – it’s really in the weeds. What we care about is using the C-TPAT and FAST programs to make the ports of entry operate better and to help inspectors focus more on the bad guys.”

Irwin believes that the “wise” use of more technology for the purposes of border security could actually increase traffic efficiency through ports of entry.

Her hope is shared by Yanke vice-president of road services Bryan Richards.

“The silver lining may be that increasing security between border crossings could create more comfort and ease concerns at the ports of entry,” says Richards. “But I don’t think this particular set of proposals is going to have much of a direct impact on trucking.”

Richards’ greatest fear is that borders could shut down completely if another incident like 9/11 occurs. “I got worried recently on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, when the security levels were elevated to yellow and orange,” Richards admits. “I would say my biggest concern would be if there was another incident – if there was a knee-jerk reaction and they closed the border down – I would be out of business in three days. Let’s hope that if they actually go ahead with beefing up security at the border, cooler heads will prevail if and when a crisis occurs.”

The v.p. is also a proponent of “moving the border away from the border” to increase the efficiency of truck inspections: “There was an indication in the report that they are still proposing modernization of land ports of entry – and there seems to be a lot of support on both sides for the perimeter security agreement. I doubt very much that an environmental report will override that.” □

## New report identifies worst freight bottlenecks on US highways

ARLINGTON, Va. – The American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have released the findings of their annual report on congestion at freight-significant highway locations.

The research, which assesses the level of truck-oriented congestion at 250 locations on the US national highway system, uses ATRI-developed analysis methods, customized software tools and terabytes of data from trucking operations to produce a congestion severity ranking for each location. This ongoing research, which is part of the Freight Performance Measures (FPM) initiative, is sponsored by FHWA’s Office of Freight Management and Operations and operated by ATRI.

“Strengthening the efficiency of supply chains is becoming a critical component of US economic growth. Challenge number one is identifying the freight bottlenecks,” said Kevin Knight, chairman and CEO of Knight Transportation. “Fortunately, ATRI’s report goes far in using real-world data to tell us where the impediments lie.”

The FPM congestion monitoring effort combines anonymous truck GPS location information with sophisticated software applications and analysis techniques to assess the levels at which truck-based freight was affected by traffic congestion in 2010. The result is a clear documentation of system chokepoints, especially during peak travel times in urban locations.

“The impact of traffic congestion on truck travel is well known, but rarely in a fashion where we can pinpoint projects for resource allocation and reconstruction,” said Keith Bucklew, manager of multimodal planning for the Indiana DoT. “The FPM program continues to provide real value to public sector transportation managers.”

ATRI and FHWA will be building upon the list of 250 locations for future analyses; if there are freight-critical transportation points that should be added, stakeholders can offer suggestions through the Web site highlighted in the report.

For access to the full report, including detailed information on each of the 250 monitored locations, visit [www.atri-online.org](http://www.atri-online.org). □

## CBSA hints of possible cabotage crackdown

OTTAWA, Ont. – The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) has taken steps to clarify its position on cabotage while bringing enforcement in line with that of the US, the Canadian Trucking Alliance (CTA) has indicated.

CBSA issued a new Customs Notice on the point-to-point movement of domestic freight in Canada by foreign-based motor carriers and tractor-trailers.

While the notice does not signal a change in the rules, the CTA says it serves as a reminder of what the rules are and may signal that CBSA will be paying closer attention to the activities of foreign-based carriers in Canada.

This will come as welcome news to Canadian fleets and drivers, many of whom have voiced concerns about violations and lax enforcement.

The CTA agrees it’s a widely held belief by Canadian carriers that the US is far more aggressive in enforcing cabotage rules.

The CBSA has said it will conduct post-release compliance verifications and issue sanctions against violators.

“The rules are, quite frankly, very complicated – on both sides of the border – so whatever can be done to improve the level of understanding about them is a step in the right direction,” said CTA chief David Bradley. “It is also extremely important that there be a level playing field for carriers based in both the United States and Canada and that is only achievable if everyone plays by the rules.”

However, Bradley also noted the Alliance would like to see a joint approach towards modernizing the current rules in both countries.

“We’re not talking about wide-open cabotage, but I think if anyone were to take a step back and look at the situation, and see different rules for trucks and the people who drive them, and restrictions on something as simple as repositioning an empty trailer, they would realize that this is an area that is crying out for reform,” he said. □

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## OPINION

# The unprofessional driver: They're easy to identify

The trucking industry has achieved its best compliance and safety record ever, North America-wide. That is truly an amazing achievement considering the economic turmoil the trucking industry has faced over the past few years.

Our industry has made great improvements regarding compliance with the National Safety Code and rules including hours-of-service, load securement, etc.

We as an industry we should be proud of our achievements regarding the improvements to road safety. The trend for our industry over the past few years has been to work closely with governments and their agencies, politicians, and industry representatives at the executive level. This process has been good in some cases, but bad in other cases, leaving our industry with a false sense of security.

The process has divided the trucking industry into two groups. The first group sets the rules (they have the power). The second group follows the rules (they are the ones no one is listening to).

The problem starts when the first group has no respect for the second group and does not listen to what they have to say, which is the case today and has been for so many years. The result is a very divided and conquered trucking industry.

The most important component



## Constructive Dialogue

RON SINGER

in the road safety equation is the driver. There have been no recent improvements regarding driver training and education, standards or certification for all drivers.

Four-wheelers get their licence without any mandatory training and are free to drive anywhere, anytime in any condition, at any speed – even in snowstorms. They truly have no idea what they are doing and what the consequences are for their ignorance.

How about the commercial drivers out there? Lets make a few comparisons between the professional veteran drivers and the new 'replacement' drivers.

The trained professional veteran driver does a thorough pre-trip, en-route and post-trip inspection. They take these inspections seriously. The untrained, unprofessional driver doesn't even know which components to check and fail to do an en-route inspection. You will notice their tire carcasses all over the road.

The professional driver always drains their air tanks in cold weather. Not the unprofessional driver; he is in too much of a hurry. You

will notice him a few miles out of town, halfway off the road with the bottoms of the tires worn down to the rims.

You will see the professional driver doing en-route inspections at the brake checks. The unprofessional driver? Not this guy. He blasts by the brake check. Further down the hill, you will notice him passing every truck in sight, smoke pouring from his wheels, brake lights blazing. He now knows what brake fade is, because nothing happens when he steps on the brakes.

You will see the veteran driver meticulously cleaning freshly accumulated snow out of his boxes, properly preparing prior to loading. Not the unprofessional driver. He's too lazy and thinks 'what's a little snow in the box going to hurt?' Well, when he gets to the dump site, he finds out what a little snow in your box will do. He's stuck laying on his side because the product he was hauling stuck in his box and now the truck has rolled over, narrowly missing workers on the site.

You will see the professional driver thoroughly checking and double-checking his fifth wheel locks after hooking up his trailer and before leaving the yard. The unprofessional driver? He has already hooked up to his trailer and left the yard. He got out before the professional driver but, you guessed it, just a mile down the road, there he is. He has lost his trailer in the middle of a busy in-

tersection. In rush hour. Blocking travel from all directions.

For years our veteran drivers have been telling us all about the lack of training, education, standards and certification for all drivers using our roads today, from the four-wheelers to the heavy haulers. Nobody is listening.

Our veteran drivers have seen the light and are so fed up no one is listening that most of them just want out. They are fed up, put off and can't wait to retire. And they are truly justified in how they think.

The trucking industry will surely pay the price for not listening to them. They are leaving the trucking industry in droves and being replaced with less skilled workers.

In the next few years most of the veterans will be leaving our industry, with no suitable replacements. As for our record of the safest, and most compliant trucking industry ever North America-wide?

I hope we aren't too late to make the necessary changes we need to make, to maintain the safest, most compliant trucking industry ever.

The signs are there: Is there anyone listening? □

– Ron Singer is owner of Ron Singer Truck Lines, a director of the North America Truckers Guild and member of the Alberta Construction Trucking Association. He can be reached at 403-244-4487 or by e-mail at ronsing@telus.net.



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## Retirement plans on hold?

As I write this column, the stock markets are taking yet another beating. The average Joe (or Joanne) who has been investing in the stock market has seen their retirement nest eggs become just a tad scrambled.

It looks like Greece is going to default on its debt by the end of next year. It's amazing to think that such a small country can have such a huge effect on the world's economies.

'Freedom 55' is quickly becoming an unrealistic goal for most people. Financial investment programs aimed at achieving early retirement should really update their programs to reflect the times.

'Fat Chance 55' comes to mind. As some of you know, I'm just back to work after being off six weeks recovering from surgery. I had a sample of what life is like waking up every day without anything constructive to do.

Here's a shock: It wasn't fun. In fact, I was bored to tears. I think when (if) the time does come when I am ready financially and mentally to retire, there's got to be a reason for me to get out of bed.

In case you were wondering what those reasons could be, here you are.

My retirement activity wish list goes something like this:

- I get up each day and play as much golf as humanly possible without getting a divorce;



## Publisher's Comment

ROB WILKINS

• I take my lovely wife out on the town to "the Bingo" twice a week. There I master the fine art of playing four cards at a time (without constantly asking the person next to me what the last number and letter was);

• I win at said "the Bingo" and use the money to supplement my meager income;

• I call my friend John at least once a week to talk about how my Leafs beat his Habs in the seventh game of the 2023 Stanley Cup playoffs;

• And finally, I call my friend Rob to talk about how my Leafs beat his Bruins in the seventh game of the 2024 Stanley Cup playoffs. Sweet, now that's living!

I'm praying that the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security programs we're entitled to will still be available when it's my turn to collect.

Unfortunately, I doubt "the Bingo" is going to supplement much of my income. Not when you're up against the experienced grandmothers I'd be playing against. □

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

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## OPINION

# Show them the money

## Why a funding fix for students is needed

Check any list of trucking issues going back several decades and “driver shortage” will be there.

What you won't find though, is a shortage of opinions about how to define it, what's causing it, and how to fix it.

There's even debate about whether it's good or bad.

According to many fleet bosses surveyed by the American Transportation Research Institute (ATRI), trucking is in a crisis situation, facing a shortage of unprecedented proportions that will have catastrophic results.

Others, like Toronto-based



Voice of  
the O/O

JOANNE RITCHIE

Vitran's president and CEO Rick Gaetz, have a more positive outlook.

Speaking at last fall's meeting of the Ontario Trucking Association, Gaetz predicted the shortage could prove a vital aid in helping trucking companies improve their profitability and find a way to pay their drivers better.

Whether a blessing or curse, there's no denying that trucking, like every other sector of the economy, is facing shortages of qualified workers as the population of the industrialized world grows older, and peoples' attitudes and expectations towards jobs and work change.

Shortages of qualified workers are already showing up in a variety of industries, including trucking.

While we've come a long way in identifying some of the challenges of attracting people to a driving career, many companies just aren't there yet with the kind of things that are going to get people excited about a job in trucking: a safe workplace, a decent wage, a healthy lifestyle and good life/work balance.

Others, happily, are.

When I need a dose of healthy optimism and a reminder that there are, in fact, excellent employment opportunities, with quality employers, for qualified drivers, I call up my friend Andy Roberts, owner and president of Castlegar, B.C.-based Mountain Transport Institute.

Andy has no shortage of interest from people considering a career in trucking, nor does he have a shortage of inquiries from carriers looking for MTI graduates.

So what's the problem? It's all about the money.

Proper training that meets established standards and results in skill sets that allow individuals to get jobs right out of school is critical, but good training from a school such as MTI is expensive.

Andy is currently running classes of four students – in the past it was eight to 10 per class – not because people aren't interested, but because they can't access funding to take the program.

That fact is that potential students – including many unemployed or under-employed people who want to retrain for trucking jobs – simply can't get enough money together to pay for tuition, books, transportation, and accommodations, and they'll find precious little if they go looking for help.

Even MTI students who learn to drive the toughest, steepest mountain grades in the country on B.C.'s Hwy. 3 would be intimidated trying to negotiate CanLearn, the federal government's mind-boggling Web site that supposedly tells you everything you need to know about post-secondary education funding.

But you can troll the site for hours ([www.canlearn.ca](http://www.canlearn.ca)) and still not get a straight answer to the question, does truck driver training qualify for any financial assistance?

You have to look long and hard for a brief mention of Skills Development, the Employment

Insurance-based program that is the primary source of funding for driver training – available only to people who have lost their job and are eligible for EI support.

But if you're unemployed, or are working but want to change jobs, or perhaps interested in trucking as a second career?

It depends. The feds provide some funding to provinces under a series of bilateral labour market agreement for programs and services for workers who are not eligible under EI, so if you happen to be in the right place, at the right time, and have the appropriate lack of skills, you might be eligible for a few bucks.

But it won't likely get you anywhere near a school that gives you the kind of training that will land a satisfying job with carriers like those, say, that come looking for MTI graduates.

Then there's the Canada Student Loan Program that provides loans and grants to students who demonstrate financial need – if they've first applied for a provincial/territorial student loan. The problem is that current student loan programs, both federal and provincial, are set up for relatively low-cost and long-term college or university style programs and don't allow for loans that fund shorter, more expensive programs such as professional driver training.

Again, it's hit or miss, depending where you go to school.

My friend Andy is a strong believer that a viable student loan program is a win-win situation for all involved: students could access training that allows them to be employable, carriers could fill their empty seats with qualified professional drivers, the government would get the money back to reuse for the next student, the schools would get motivated students, and we all win with safer roads.

That's why he's behind a “call to action” for the B.C. government to create a new student loan program so anyone who chooses can access money for training to improve their personal situation and become a more effective and productive individual.

The New Student Loan Program Web site (<http://nslp.inthekoots.com>) is worth a visit.

It provides a wealth of background information on both the current and proposed student loan funding regimes, which, although it's B.C.-focused, could be a model for other Canadian provinces.

A higher level of professionalism, starting with excellent training, will justify the higher pay and lifestyle benefits that are needed to attract – and keep – first-rate drivers.

It's clear we need to explore different and creative funding arrangements, and a revamped, trucking-friendly student loan program might be a worthwhile investment. □

– Joanne Ritchie is executive director of OBAC. Do you get what you pay for? E-mail her at [jritchie@obac.ca](mailto:jritchie@obac.ca) or call toll free 888-794-9990.

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TAX TALK

# Make strategic use of your CCA

My column last month about how to tax-plan when you buy or lease a truck triggered some great phone calls from owner/operators.

A few had to do with Capital Cost Allowance, or CCA. That's where you're allowed to deduct a calculated portion of the truck's expense over a period of years as the vehicle depreciates.

Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) recognizes various categories of depreciable property in your business and has assigned rates for each class. There are rules about prorating CCA, recapturing CCA when you dispose of property, how much you can claim in the year you acquire the asset, etc. The information is pretty easy to find and your accountant can help you with the details.

One owner/operator who does his own books called me to confirm that trucks can be depreciated at 20% for the first year and 40% after that. I darned near fell outta my chair. Yes, those are the CCA rates and have been since 1991.

This guy's been using 20-year-old information to calculate his depreciation. And I bet he thinks he's saving money by not having an accountant review his books and file his tax return.

### Flexible claim amounts

Another guy who recently got back into the owner/operator game told me he was advised to lease his truck rather than buy it because it's better for tax purposes. The rationale is that lease payments are expensed as you pay them and are consistent over the term of the lease.

Now, I agree that purchases can cause fluctuations among your actual payments and what you're able to expense. But there's a fix for this.

CCA rates are maximums. You don't have to claim the full amount in any given year. You can claim any amount of CCA from zero to the maximum allowed for the year.

If those rates create a CCA claim amount that, when added to your interest expense each year, produce a total expense that's greater than your payments, all you have to do is roll back the CCA amount to make them equal. Any CCA delayed in one year just helps create a larger amount in the next year. You'll avoid those swings in your income as you can basically match your expense deduction to your payments.

This strategy gives you the best of both worlds: a consistent expense write-off during the life of your financing, and the flexibility to claim more or less expense than your payments. The calculations aren't perfect but they're pretty close.

If you have a really bad year and are showing a loss, you can't reduce your lease payment expense but you can reduce your CCA claim to make your net income look better.

Also, if you have extra income on your tax return (say, from an RRSP withdrawal), you can increase your CCA claim to lower



## Tax Talk

SCOTT TAYLOR

your business income to put you into a lower tax bracket.

There's no one-size-fits-all answer. In my almost 25 years in this business, time and time again purchase financing typically gives an owner/operator more flexibility in good times and bad. Finance companies that are more willing to renegotiate loan payments and early payout penalties seem to be less so when it comes to leases.

### Shop for credit life and disability

One thing you'll confront when

you negotiate a purchase or lease is the push for credit life and credit disability insurance.

This type of insurance can help protect your family and heirs from your loan obligation in case you die or get sick or hurt. The amount of the premium is based on the size of the loan or lease, and the lender will bundle the premiums with your payment.

Sounds convenient, but getting insurance through the dealer can cost thousands more compared to what another insurer may have offered.

The dealership makes a commission on selling you the insurance. It also charges the entire premium cost of the coverage to the front end of the finance contract, elevating the amount of interest you'll pay. It's a nice arrangement for

the dealer, since he's paid based on your interest charges.

We've been able to help clients shop around for this type of insurance. One owner/operator in particular saved \$126.40 a month on his overall payment – more than \$6,000 on the term of his 48-month financing. That's the total savings on the premium itself plus the savings on the interest charged in the financing.

It's a great reminder that the price of the truck is just part of its overall cost. Whether you're reviewing your payment or your depreciation, talk to your accountant about how to make sure that cost is one you can manage. □

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

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**MAINTENANCE**

# A/C service? In November?

## Five HVAC inspections anyone with a pair of hands can do

If there's one thing you can do to get rolling faster on a cold morning, it's to have your air conditioner inspected at the start of the heating season. Your truck's defroster uses the air conditioner to pull excess moisture out of the cab. A properly functioning A/C system will help it clear the windshield faster and more efficiently.

While HVAC repairs demand special tools and training, routine inspections are within anyone's grasp. That's because your primary diagnostic tools are with you all the time: your hands.

Touch and feel are no replacement for a qualified A/C technician and his service tools. But they can give you clues about your system's performance and help speed up the troubleshooting process. Here are five things you can do any time of year to reduce the risk of a costly A/C repair:

### Air flow

Turn on your blower motor and hold up your hand to a vent. Is the air flow as strong and steady as always? The first sign of a plugged fresh air intake filter is a feeling that not enough air is coming into the cab. When the filter has collected so much dirt, dust, hair, and other particles that the air can't pass through freely, it's time to replace it.

There are several types of filters available:

**Paper:** The most common type of fresh-air intake filter is made of pleated paper, like the air filter on your engine. Dirt and debris settle into the folds and build up from there.

**HEPA:** HEPA (High-Efficiency Particulate Air) filters are made of high-density pleated paper and capture extremely small particles that might be harmful to people with allergies or asthma.

**Foam:** Some filters are made of open-cell foam that's charcoal-impregnated to help trap particles from cigarette smoke and neutralize odor.

Your owner's manual will tell you which is best for you and provide a recommended inspection interval. That probably means checking the filter at least twice a year and using a replacement that meets the original-equipment spec'.

### Refrigerant flow

The receiver-drier on an air conditioner contains desiccant to remove moisture from the refrigerant. When moisture and refrigerant combine, the result is corrosive hydrofluoric acid, so it's important to make sure the receiver-drier is functioning properly.

With the system on, the receiver-drier should be warm to the touch. If the canister feels cold, or you see frost on it, there's probably an internal restriction and it needs to be replaced.

Some receiver-driers have a moisture indicator that provides a quick visual cue about the refrigerant's condition. A blue dot means the



### Guest Column

GARY HANSEN

refrigerant is dry; pink, white, or gray indicates moisture in the system. Check the sight glass any time your truck is in for an oil change or other routine service.

The receiver-drier should be replaced every time the A/C system is opened or once a year (mark the installed date on the new drier so it's easy to see). Use a quality all-makes replacement – some cheaper driers lack sufficient desiccant.

### Spongy heater hoses

Heater hoses degrade from the inside out, the result of an electro-

chemical reaction between the coolant (anti-freeze) and different metals in the cooling system (steel clamps, copper heater core, cast-iron head, etc.) Tiny cracks develop in the tubing, typically near the hose ends, which can allow the coolant to reach and degrade the reinforcement yam.

As the hose deteriorates, it sheds debris into the anti-freeze. Now not only is there a weak point in the hose, you have foreign material circulating through the heater core.

With the system off, squeeze the heater hose near the ends, between your thumb and fingers, to gauge its firmness. A spongy hose is a sign that it's weak and should be replaced.

### Sticky heater water valve

It was a hot summer in Canada.

You probably didn't run the heater much. Your truck's heater water valve can stick after a season of disuse and affect your ability to control the temperature in the cab.

If you have a cable-actuated valve and feel resistance at the slider control on the dash, don't force it. You risk bending or damaging the cable. Instead, try actuating the valve manually to break it free.

Cycling it several times by hand usually does the trick.

You may need to momentarily disconnect the cable to manually actuate the valve. If it's necessary to remove the cable, mark the cable position first before you remove it.

For electric water valves, turn the dash control to full "hot" and note the valve position. Next, turn the dash control to the fully "cold" position and recheck the valve position. It should be different. If not, have the valve checked by a qualified technician.

### Oily grime on the compressor

The compressor is the single most expensive replacement component on the A/C system. If it leaks oil, it can overheat and lead to a catastrophic failure.

With the system off, feel for oil or dirt around the shaft seal and for glazing or cracking on the belts. At the same time, look for discoloration on the face of the clutch hub. Any one of these is a sign of heat or potential failure and should be checked by a qualified A/C technician.

The key to feeling comfortable in your cab is to feel comfortable with the components on your A/C system. You don't need special tools or knowledge to perform inspections. You just have to get your hands a little dirty and be diligent about incorporating the A/C system into your PM routine. □

– Gary Hansen is vice-president of Red Dot Corp., which designs and manufactures HVAC systems, components, and replacement parts for heavy trucks and equipment. Red Dot has aftermarket distributors across Canada.



**CHECK THE SIGHTS:** The sight glass on a heavy-duty receiver-drier can indicate moisture in an A/C system. Whenever you change the engine oil or have a vehicle in for scheduled maintenance, check the sight glass. A blue dot means the refrigerant is dry; pink, white, or gray indicates acid or moisture in the system.

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## DRIVING CHAMPIONSHIPS

## Quebec 'rookie' takes nationals by storm

Continued from page 1  
me do it."

Tessier says he'd been joking, but then he did back the load in on his first attempt, which prompted his friend to remark that he had a good eye for the task and maybe he should start entering competitions himself.

The results speak for themselves: Tessier copped not only the title of Grand Champion but was tops in the Single Tandem category and, not surprisingly, won the 2011 National Truck Driving Championships Rookie of the Year award as well.

Tessier says he loved the event, though he found it extremely challenging, with no one section much easier than another.

The rookie champion was accompanied to Wild Rose country by his 20-year-old son, Donald, and his girlfriend Marjolaine Allard, who he says adored the weekend as well, especially a side trip to Banff.

The Banff outing, along with a spouse's program, was held the day before the actual Roadeo on Saturday, Sept. 10. It was a bonus trip set up by the Alberta Motor Transport Association, which hosted this year's nationals. According to event organizer Bud Rice, "We let them loose (in Banff) for three hours and some went up in the gondola, some hung around town, then we had a barbecue."

The championship itself actually got into gear that Friday morning, with the written test and the pre-trip inspection challenges. The written exam consisted of 25 questions culled from a list of about 120.

"It's all relative to what they do for a living," Rice says. "For example, how many pounds of tire pressure would there be in a bias or non-bias tire, or at what temperatures on the road would you need to start worrying about ice? There's safety stuff, dangerous goods stuff, everyday regulations and the like."



**LOTS TO SEE AND DO:** Organizers put on a good show at the National Professional Truck Driving Championships in Calgary. *Photo by Jim bray*

For the pre-trip inspection, trucks were set up before the event with five or six flaws and it was up to the driver to do a complete vehicle inspection and find them all within a limited time.

"For a straight truck you get eight minutes," Rice says. "And for a B-train you get 11 minutes to find all the problems." The faults could be anything from a seat belt or fire extinguisher missing, a removed glad hand, etc. "They don't do anything major," Rice says, "but it's things a driver should spot."

The driving tests on Saturday were the main event and brought out a small but enthusiastic group of supporters. Organizers kicked off the hostilities with the smallest trucks, working their way up from there to the longer vehicles.

Also on-hand at the competition were a number of displays, including a miniature tractor-trailer that was used for photo-ops and simulators (driving and rollover) from Bison Transport and the Sheriff's department.

As it turned out, the competition ended up going a few hours longer than expected, which caused some angst among organizers and

participants.

"Looking back on it we could have used a second truck," Rice says. "We figured we'd be done by 2:30 but they didn't finish until about 5:30."

According to Don Wilson, executive director of the host AMTA, the late finish meant a bit of discomfort for some of those involved.

"I did hear from our judges – the enforcement guys – that it was a very, very long day out on the pavement," he says. "It wasn't so much a complaint but that they wished they'd been told up front so could have brought in some relief and maybe worked in shifts. It was hot out there in their black uniforms."

The most pressure, of course, was on the people behind the steering wheels. Drivers had to start from a standing stop and navigate such challenges as an offset, an alley stop, a serpentine section that basically put them through a figure eight, a right angle turn, etc. Points were deducted for mistakes – for example, in the right angle turn, drivers had to stop within six inches of a fixed point, or else.

A total of 34 contestants vied for the various trophies, five from each

province except for Atlantic Canada, which brought four. Rice says the results (the top score of the day was 470 points out of a potential 500) were comparable to those in other years, and a testament to the quality of drivers who get that far in the competition.

"You have to have a pretty good day, especially at the nationals," he says, "because the tendency is to make things even tighter than they were in the provincials, so you just about need a shoehorn to get through some of those events."

It was an interesting cross-section of drivers who found their way to the Stampede city as well, including a female from Quebec and, from the Atlantic provinces, an 81-year-old man who's been driving for 63 years. And driving well, obviously.

Not everyone was happy with the turnout of spectators who populated the bleachers to encourage the drivers, but not for the reason one might expect. Lane Kranenburg, who emceed the Saturday driving event, said he was disappointed with the lack of trucking company executives on-hand. "I've been involved with the truck Roadeos



**CHAMP:** Grand Champion Claude Tessier, pictured with girlfriend Marjolaine Allard.

## And the winners are...:

*Straight Truck:* Stewart Jutzi, Erb Transport, Ontario

*Single Single:* Evan Hurst, Canadian Freightways, B.C.

*Single Tandem:* Claude Tessier, Groupe Robert, Quebec

*Tandem Tandem:* Rod Harrison, Canadian Freightways, Alberta

*B-train:* Adam Besse, Canadian Freightways, B.C.

*Grand Champion:* Claude Tessier, Groupe Robert, Quebec

*Rookie of the year:* Claude Tessier, Groupe Robert, Quebec

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1st: Team Ontario  
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– provincial and national – since 1972,” he says, “and the only executive I can remember who was constantly there was Darshan Kailly with Canadian Freightways.”

Kranenburg, a longtime advocate of paying drivers the respect he says they’re due, says “We have the executive of this industry sitting in their corner offices, driving the fancy cars and they’re not here supporting their drivers. The reason they drive those fancy cars and they’re in those offices is because of these drivers.”

Kranenburg realizes the executives have busy schedules, but “What we need to do is put a higher emphasis on that highly skilled occupation of professional truck driver and with the executive not here, I think it’s a stain.”

Wilson agrees, noting that it isn’t just a problem at the nationals. “That’s been a disappointment with

the provincial championships, too,” he says. “And I think we would get some more interest in a number of areas if some of the big guys were showing up. The drivers are there and they know the value of it and we do too.”

Wilson would like to see more interest from the general public as well. “I want to get this out to more people so they come and see what this is all about,” he says. “What the trucks are about, what they can do, how professional the drivers can be.”

Wilson points out that the championships are extremely positive for the industry and he doesn’t think enough is done to promote them. “It’s such a good news, a positive event and nobody comes except the ones who are participating and their families. People might think it’s a neat thing to go and see – and it’s free!”

As for Grand Champion Tessier, he’s understandably thrilled with how the 2011 National Truck Driving Championships worked out, including the affair itself.

“I liked how I was greeted,” he says. “I liked the courtesy of the people, how the event was organized.”

Tessier says people were really friendly regardless of where they were from and described the whole experience as “A beautiful weekend, a dream vacation.”

And now that he’s cut his competitive teeth with such success, he’ll be back to defend his title. “It’s a nice challenge,” he says. “It was a pleasure to do the provincials and the nationals, to compete at that level.”

Tessier has a bit of advice for up and coming truckers, whether they’re planning to drive in competitions or not.

“The first thing is to never be impatient,” he says. “Be calm, and be courteous toward other people on the road. Those qualities give you a better chance to have less aggression against truck drivers and give people a better view of truck drivers in general.”

Though organizer Rice was happy with how the 2011 National Truck Driving Championships turned out, he’d like to see more drivers participating in the provincials that lead up to them.

“Don’t be afraid to get into this thing,” the former contestant says. “The guys get a lot out of it, and they get to travel to wherever the competition is for the nationals – and it doesn’t cost the driver anything. The company and the trucking association pays for it all.”

Next year, it’s Moncton’s turn to host. □

## Spousal benefits included

**CALGARY, Alta.** – One thing that made the 2011 National Truck Driving Championship different from most others was its added focus on the spouses of the entrants. The host AMTA, taking a lesson from its own annual conference in Banff, decided to give the “better halves” something to do while the participants were, well, participating.

According to Lorri Christensen, who organized the spousal amusements and whose “day job” is director of the AMTA’s Partners In Compliance program, it seemed like a logical development.

“When I went to Winnipeg last year for the nationals, I saw all of the competitors come together as a team immediately,” she says, “but the wives always remained ‘So and so’s wife from whatever team’ – they went wherever their husbands went and were made to feel part of everything that the competition had to offer, but they never got to do their own thing or be their own person. So I thought that with the success (the AMTA) has had with the spousal program (at the conference) in Banff, I figured we should be able to do something here.”

She pitched the idea to the Rodeo committee, who she says had no issues with it as long as she came up with her own funding – which she did. Christensen says she ended up with a budget of about \$2,500 she could use to put together a program that not only offered such stuff as makeovers and handmade jewelry, but also a Tarot card reader who she says was “Amazing! The participants were very impressed with her and what she did.”

And that was only part of it.

“We decided that, since this was a national program, we should show them Calgary hospitality,” Christensen says, “so I hooked up with the host Radisson hotel and they added two things to the glam.” The first was a Stampede-style breakfast, with the usual pancake, sausage, bacon, scrambled egg and corn meal muffin offerings that spring up over the entire city of Calgary during its annual western-themed bash.

The second bit of “local colour” came thanks to a bar at the hotel having closed earlier in the year, leaving them a nice, and coincidentally vacant, venue for some western-style enter-

tainment. “It had a dance floor and the perfect western style ambiance,” Christensen says. “And so we hired a line dance instructor who very patiently taught us three different dances.”

Christensen says that, despite jet lag afflicting some of the long distance travellers, the event was well-received.

“We took a head count the night before, asking how many people were coming,” she says, “and we counted about 20 people – but we actually had 35 to 40 show up. The participating spouses were just ecstatic and a good time was had by all; I heard about it all weekend, from spouses and participants as well.”

Another thing Christensen says helped differentiate the Bash on the Bow River from most others was the Rodeo committee’s decision to embrace bilingualism.

“The committee had two goals,” she says. “One, that everyone have a good time and, two, that we had proper interpreters throughout the entire event. We went to great lengths – I even made sure we had a female interpreter for the spousal program. It went over very well.”

One thing Christensen was adamant about was to offer gift bags instead of door prizes. “I’m one of these people that goes somewhere and I never win the door prize,” she says. “There can be four door prizes and five people and I’m the one that doesn’t win, so I said I’d rather take that same money and buy gift bags for everybody.” She filled the bags with a combination of donated items and stuff she managed to purchase at a discount.

The extra inclusiveness – linguistic and “giftic” – gave Christensen a sense of pride, not only for having pulled it off, but for what it meant to the spouses of the drivers involved in the weekend event.

“I’ve been married to a truck driver for 24 years, so I understand that quite often with something like (the Rodeo) you are very much on the back burner,” Christensen says. “And while I’m very, very proud of my husband and everything he does – and I’m sure the spouse of anybody who makes it to the provincial level and the nationals wouldn’t be anything but exceedingly proud – it’s nice to have something that (the partner) can take home from the experience as well.” □

## Putting on a show

By Jim Bray

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Planning and pulling off the 2011 National Truck Driving Championships appears to have been a bit like herding cats, according to those responsible.

“It’s a huge logistical problem,” says Bud Rice of the host Alberta Motor Transport Association. “We started officially back in January, but I’d been talking just after we got back from the nationals in Winnipeg last year and started trying to find a location – the number one thing to do – and it’s a battle.”

The AMTA managed to get permission to use the City of Calgary Fire Training Academy in the Southeast quadrant of the city, a location that has a large paved area that proved to be ideal for the intricate driving challenges.

Once the location was set in, well, asphalt, the next challenge was to get the key people – such as judges – in place. “I chose to go with a lot of enforcement guys,” Rice says, noting that it was important to get judges who don’t have a bias going in.

Getting sponsorship turned out to be a difficult challenge as well. “Companies are still struggling,” Rice notes, “so we didn’t get nearly as much as we were hoping to get, but that goes with how the economy is going.”

Other pieces of the puzzle included accommodations, and transportation to and from events.

Lethbridge hosted the last nationals held in Alberta, but Rice says Calgary was chosen for this year’s extravaganza for reasons both financial and logistical. “To have everybody fly in from all over the country and then have to bus them to another city, rent space there, hotels, it would have been a huge expense,” he says.

It didn’t hurt that Calgary has easy access to a major transportation hub, via its international airport. “It was easier to fly into Calgary,” Rice says, adding that the city’s proximity to the Rocky Mountains provided a nice bonus. “I had the idea right from the get-go of taking them all to Banff,” he says, “and everyone I talked to here was in agreement because when people come out here for holidays, they want to go to Banff.”

The organizers were also sensitive to the language issues involved in mounting a national event. “Usually there’s a problem with Quebec at the nationals, because there aren’t enough people translating the language,” Rice says. “So one of the goals we had was to have translators everywhere they went, so they could talk to everyone.”

They also ensured the trophies were bilingual. “The only other time that has happened is when the nationals were in Quebec,” Rice claims. “Those guys (from Quebec) weren’t even in the banquet room for two minutes and they came over to their team rep and pointed it out. They were amazed.”

AMTA executive director Don Wilson says the event proved to be quite the learning experience for the organization.

“There were a lot of things done right and some other things we’ll learn from,” he says.

Wilson says he’s happy with the positive feedback the Alberta event garnered. “They thought the course was good, they liked that the fact that – unlike at the provincials – the drivers got sequestered (during the driving event) so everyone’s on the same level playing field.”

The event saw competitors and their families given an official welcome to Alberta by the AMTA’s directors, Calgary’s Deputy Mayor Jim Stevenson and provincial Minister of Employment and Immigration Thomas Lukaszuk. Stevenson greeted visitors with Calgary’s traditional and legendary white hat ceremony, topping each guest’s lid with a white cowboy hat. □

## CANADA

# Raising the bar

*Funding is scarce for industry, government programs that could produce better-trained drivers*

By Jim Bray

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Is today's crop of new drivers up to the task of moving the transportation industry into the future? If not, why not – and what can be done about it?

We all know the horror stories: the big tractor-trailer tight on some consumer's rear bumper, intimidating the civilian in front and risking a rear-end collision; the truck driver who blasts through stop or yield signs as if they aren't there; or drivers whose behaviour on the road makes it look as if they're possessed by demons. They're out there, on display every day.

Of course, there is certainly an abundance of civilian drivers who aren't fit to Armor All the tires of most professional drivers' trucks – undoubtedly many more than there are rogue or unqualified truckers. But it's the big trucks' tribulations that make the nightly news, and that doesn't help to change the perception that professional drivers these days are a bunch of irresponsible cowboys.

Heck, even some longtime professional drivers look at some of their compatriots that way, as if they'd gotten their licences in a Cracker Jack box or from a lottery booth.

What's going on? Have today's driving standards been dumbed down so much that under-qualified drivers are being allowed to wreak havoc on the nation's highways?

Not if you ask Mayne Root, executive director of Alberta's Transportation Training

and Development Association (TT&DA). "The overall quality of drivers out there is pretty good," Root says, and the reason he gives for that perception is simple economics: companies can't afford lousy drivers.

"They're monitored on collisions," he says, "they're monitored on enforcement – like tickets –

"They can't afford to pay for a lot of training, so they qualify to the exam rather than to the profession."

Mayne Root

they're monitored on their weigh scale performances and if they come up poorly, then they have the potential of losing their status as a carrier in the province. So they can't really afford to have poor drivers."

While Root agrees that under-qualified drivers are finding their way into cabs, he says it isn't because they're hoping to scam the system – or even because evil driving schools are acting as virtual "licence mills," luring the public in so they can make a quick buck pumping out paper to those who are unprepared to drive professionally.

Instead, he says, it's more a matter of training and licensing requirements that aren't what they should be, coupled with some basic economic facts of life for young people looking for work. And that "perfect storm" of conditions is leading to the unfortunate fact that some cut-rate train-

ing regimens are sending drivers into the professional world before they're ready.

"A lot of it is the driver himself," Root says. "He doesn't want to pay the money (for full training) because the more time he has to spend in those courses and on that exam, the more money he has to spend." Root says he doesn't think it's a case of these new drivers actually wanting to go into the business without being properly qualified or trained, but "for a lot of them, the reason they want to drive is because they want a job – they need money and can't afford to spend the time and money to do it properly. It's a Catch-22."

Money's only part of it, though. According to Don Wilson, executive director of the Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) and a former driver examiner and

that, with such courses, a student will be taken around and around the test route, probably in an automatic transmission-equipped truck, until "a thousand dollars later, along comes the examiner, you pay him the \$200 bucks, he gets in the same truck and you go around the same route you've learned. That's part of the problem."

Root agrees. "It's required (in Alberta) that a driver get his Class 1 driver's licence via the process that's there," he says. "But all that does is give him his certificate that he can shift the gears, he can drive the truck forward. That doesn't qualify a guy to drive a long-haul truck through the mountains or haul fuel or dangerous goods."

Some of these courses, Root notes, don't even give the student proper instruction on how to back up or hook up a trailer. "They'll go to the companies (for a job) and the guys there wonder if they even took their test," he says, stressing again that, "It's because they can't afford to pay for a lot of training, so they qualify to the exam rather than to the profession."

Root says that, if a company actually does hire and train these inexperienced drivers further, they eventually get out on the road with other drivers and, "That maybe weeds out some of those guys who probably are not going to be good drivers unless there's some really expensive in-company training." Unfortunately, he says, companies often don't have time or resources to do that, "so they shuffle these guys from company to company to company and they don't really get proper remedial training."

acting director of driver programs and licensing standards for Alberta, most districts only require a bare minimum of qualifications before a person can get behind the wheel of a commercial vehicle, so even if they have the lucre there's little incentive for newcomers to go for a "Cadillac" training course.

"If the government has certain minimum standards a person needs to meet to pass the test and that's what the school trains to," Wilson says, "then those schools aren't really doing anything wrong, technically." He says

## Jobs, jobs, jobs!

**CALGARY, Alta.** – With an aging pool of established drivers, safe, qualified replacements are needed more now than ever, and without them the driver shortage will only get worse. How bad has it gotten?

"Some companies are telling me they're going flat out right now and we're not even in the busy times again yet," says Alberta Motor Transport Association executive director, Don Wilson. "So as more freight goes down the road, they need to start recruiting."

Wilson says he knows of no parked trucks yet, but says a number of carriers have no more capacity and need to start planning to fill holes that are coming up in their rosters.

Yet Wilson says that, despite the number of jobs opening up in the biz, there aren't enough people coming forward to answer the trucking companies' ads. This is leading some carriers to look at hiring temporary foreign workers and taking advantage of other programs that can help bring in people to drive their trucks.

Even here, however, there are challenges. "The federal government's changing some rules around that," Wilson says, noting that he's heard some concerns that the feds are proposing changes to the temporary foreign workers program that "aren't very positive for the employers."

Wilson understands some of the federal government's position, he says, because "they're looking at unemployment numbers in Canada and wondering why we'd bring in outside people when there are people here who could be working."

And while that may be true to a point, he says, when an employer runs an ad and doesn't get any resumes or applications, or if the people who do respond aren't even close to what the company needs, what can they do?

"Could you train them?" Wilson asks. "Maybe, if you had a couple of years, but they need people who at least have an idea, who can recognize a truck, know how to start it up and back it up as a start. But they're not getting quality applications."

Mayne Root of Alberta's Transportation Training and Development Association's agrees that, when it comes to having enough good new drivers in the industry, push is definitely in the process of becoming shove.

"It's a very difficult situation right now," he says, "and the government has withdrawn most funding for driver training, so people aren't jumping into it because they can't afford to. They're going out and getting other jobs." □

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Since drivers are in short supply, this passing of the buck allows some drivers to keep working who shouldn't.

"There always seems to be companies out there that will hire them and unfortunately they do hire them," Root says. "Then they have a few problems and they shuffle them off to another company somewhere. It just seems to go on and on and on."

New drivers can also find themselves between a rock and a hard place when it comes to finding work in the first place. Root says that, when he was with the AMTA (he's a former executive director) he used to get calls from drivers who had gotten their licence and wanted a job, but whom nobody would hire. "What they've done is gone around to the big companies and been told they can't hire them until they have some sort of experience." Another Catch-22.

### Upping the education ante

Provincial standards notwithstanding, it appears the industry desperately needs drivers whose training prepares them not only for the cab of a truck and the myriad challenges of the road, but for the transportation industry life itself and its many nuances.

That's part of the reason why the TT&DA group Root now heads was started in Alberta back in 1997. The TT&DA's Web site says the organization was established to help spur the development and delivery of a driving training program that would increase safety standards and develop career opportunities in the transportation industries by "providing training that covers driving skills, new technologies and complex nature of both the trucking and bussing industries."

What the TT&DA is pushing for is a "full meal deal" program that could train the next generation of drivers properly, offering them experience behind the wheel while they learn about the industry as a whole. Working with Red Deer College, they put on a pilot project (or is that "driver" project?) about three years ago that seemed to prove the concept, but since then, they've run into a series of roadblocks that have prevented the course from moving forward.

"We did have several people complete (the pilot project) and it was very successful," Root says. "There were a lot of ladies and a lot of visible minorities, too, and everybody that completed it is making good money and doing a good job and the companies are glad to have them."

The pilot project gave the organizers a chance to work out some bugs in the concept, too, to help make the program as relevant as possible. "First of all, the parameters they set up initially were difficult because the driver had to have his Class 1 already," Root says, "and if a guy had that back in 2008 and 2009 he was already working." Root says that once the program was tweaked so people could earn their Class 1 through it, however, "it became extremely popular."

On the other hand, earning the Class 1 through the program turned

out to be a double-edged sword. "What happened is guys would get three-quarters of the way through and get their Class 1," Root says, "and they wouldn't complete the course because they got a job."

Then the economy reared its ugly head. "The province said that because of the economy they couldn't fund any new training courses," Root explains, "and Red Deer College didn't have the funding either, so it's kind of the dead in the water right now. But we're still working on it."

The AMTA's Wilson applauds the program and would like to see it brought back. "When you come out of it you have the knowledge," he says. "It's almost like an apprenticeship in that there's a coach/mentoring component, there's driving – you're going to have to do over 200 hours with a company, and you'll get paid while you're doing it."

Such a college-level program would probably be worth about \$12,000 in total but, as with other college or university programs, students would only have to pay something like \$3,000. The rest of the money would have to come from places such as Alberta Transportation, Advanced Education and Employment and Immigration – they've apparently been after Aboriginal Affairs as well. Root says what they need is a commitment of \$250,000 a year from three or four different Ministries to fund the program for the next five years.

The problem with getting the province on-board, Wilson says, is that "the government wants a commitment from the industry, and if that commitment can't be shown, they aren't interested in providing funding."

Industry's commitment would come through in-kind donations of time and equipment that, so far, don't seem to be falling from the trees.

"Some of the companies – who'll have to pay for two people to be in the cab – aren't too much in favour of it, even though they realize it's good for the industry," Wilson says. "So there aren't a lot of companies coming forward to sign letters of commitment to provide the apprenticeship side of it, even though they get a well-trained worker at the end of it."

Despite that industry angst, Root says it appears there's plenty of industry support waiting in the wings to hire these people when they graduate. "The last time I checked, we got probably hundreds of carriers that are willing to say (the program) will work for them – bring these (drivers) and will we will use this as a huge consideration for hiring them and for what they get paid and the job they do."

### Yet another Catch-22

In the meantime, of course, there are other driving schools and courses, but current fiscal realities actually contribute to the "training to the test" scenario outlined above that the TT&DA and others are trying to help change.

"They've eliminated the student loans program and that has affected other driving schools,"

Wilson says, "so you have to have money in your jeans to start one of these programs and a lot of people are looking for work and don't have it."

Wilson says the only place where there's really solid training is Quebec, where he says they have a regimented program. And in Ontario, he says, "if you want to start up a truck school you can almost just buy a business licence and hang out a shingle. They regulate their car schools pretty well, but for some reason on the commercial side they don't." He admits there's been some pressure to change that, "so they may be tightening things up. Hopefully they are."

Right now, the TT&DA is continuing to work with Red Deer College and in conjunction with Advanced Education and Alberta Transportation to get things mov-

ing. Root says Alberta Transportation has been "absolutely right behind us from the word go. They're willing to throw in their part of what it would cost to make this thing work."

Unfortunately, Root says, other ministries are very hesitant. "They're the ones that have told us they don't have money for new training courses and so where we're at right now is trying to convince them that the industry backs this thing, will utilize it and that the drivers coming out of this program will be safer, more qualified, better drivers and better for the economy all across the line."

Root says he understands government priorities, but "I think the government has lost sight of how important the transportation industry is and when it comes down to it a trained, qualified driver is a safe driver." □



**ENFORCEMENT HELPS:** Enforcement officers have a role to play in improving the quality of today's professional drivers.

## 'Copping' out as a way to raise driving standards

**CALGARY, Alta.** – Don Wilson, executive director of the Alberta Motor Transport Association, sees enforcement as a potential way to help raise the quality of drivers on the roads today.

"If everyone drove like they did on the test there wouldn't be any issues," he says. "If you honestly think about it – did that person drive like that the day of his test? Of course not. So I think that while you could raise the standards of the road test right off the scale where next to nobody could pass, would that really make it any better if you drive any way you feel like once you're licensed?"

Manpower issues – and the taxes people pay to support them – aside, such enforcement could help make the roads safer for everyone, by reeling in more than just the professional driver class. Wilson cites as an example a California Highway Patrol experiment of a few years past, which imposed a zero tolerance enforcement regimen on one particular section of highway.

"In the course of three months, they went from their normal rate of accidents on that stretch of road to none, zero," Wilson says. "They'd started whacking people for simple things like driving aggressively, tailgating, not merging properly, and let them know it wasn't acceptable."

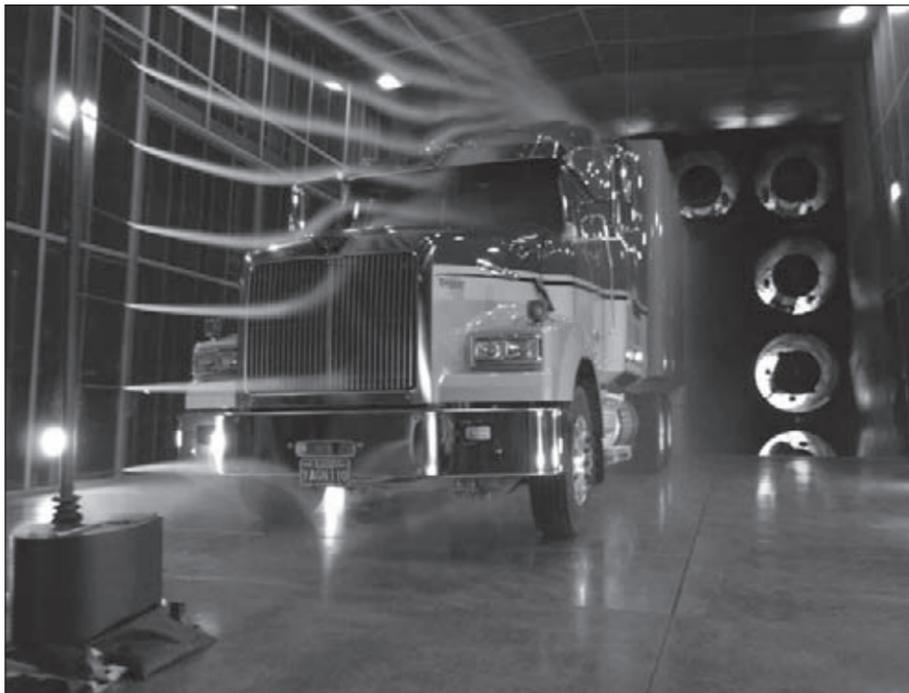
Wilson says they also found people who had no licence or insurance, or for whom there were warrants outstanding. "You wouldn't believe what they cleaned up just by stopping traffic like that," he says, noting that even after they went back to normal enforcement, "People had been trained and were still slowing down on that stretch of road. Then it gradually slipped back to normal but for the experiment it worked out very well."

Some similar enforcement strategies are done on commercial vehicles in Alberta, with police and other government enforcement personnel setting up periodic "check stops." A May 2011, initiative in Calgary – one of two each year – flagged down 385 commercial vehicles, out of which 148 were put out of service for issues that ranged from steering component items, air braking systems or improper load securement to such no-no's as driving while suspended, no driver's licence, etc.

Wilson is bullish on these check stops, but doesn't think there are enough of them and would like to see them set up randomly, year round, the way alcohol check stops are done.

Such check stops aren't mandated for private vehicles in Alberta, however, so once again the truckers end up taking the brunt of it – and the resulting negative publicity. □

## OEM/DEALER NEWS



**A MORE SLIPPERY STAR:** Among other developments, Western Star has come out with a more aerodynamic truck that retains its traditional styling. The truck was photographed in DTNA's wind tunnel. *Photo by James Menzies*

# Rebirth of a Star

## Western Star shines brighter as parent company commits to its revitalization

By James Menzies

**PORTLAND, Ore.** – In 2008, as the US and global economies plunged into recession, Daimler Trucks North America (DTNA) made the decision to eliminate the Sterling truck brand. We now know that Western Star was also scrutinized by its discerning parent company at that time, yet it was decided the brand would not only be spared the guillotine, but would be given some autonomy and a cash infusion so it could carve its own path.

“DTNA, about three years ago was at a crossroads as we were going into the most recent downturn,” Western Star general manager Mike Jackson revealed during a recent visit to the company’s Portland truck plant. “They looked at Western Star very carefully and it was quite obvious to senior management all the way to the (Daimler) board in Germany that Western Star was totally unlike anything else in the market, as opposed to Sterling which would sometimes compete with Freightliner and Western Star.”

The higher-ups at Daimler decided not only to maintain the Western Star brand, but to revitalize it with a healthy cash injection which would allow the company to develop its own team of engineers, marketers and the like, who would be free of Freightliner-related obligations and could eat, sleep and breathe Western Star.

“Up until 2009, Western Star, Freightliner and Sterling were managed by the same group of people,” Jackson noted. “It was really difficult to get all the priorities you have when you get down to the one that is the least volume. We decided to have a dedicated organization that is only going to think about Western Star all day long. By splitting ourselves off, we’ve tried to create our own smaller culture within the bigger Daimler organization and I think

we’ve been very successful.”

Another benefit to Western Star was the eventual inheritance of its own plant, as Freightliner production was moved elsewhere.

“As we went through a ramp-up in 2011 and fleets and large leasing companies started buying trucks, sharing line space with big brother would have been a little

## Western Star announces significant product upgrades

**PORTLAND, Ore.** – In 2009, Western Star received a vote of confidence from parent company Daimler Trucks North America (DTNA) in the form of some autonomy, including development of its own engineering division and an organization focused exclusively on the Western Star brand.

The new arrangement is beginning to yield results, including product upgrades and enhancements revealed during a recent press visit to the company’s Portland truck plant.

### Fuel efficiency package

Western Star has introduced a fuel efficiency package for its 4900 set-back truck model.

The new offering includes fuel-efficient components and packaging while staying true to the truck’s traditional look and feel, the company announced. Offered as the 4900FE, the truck features: a 123-inch BBC; an aerodynamic, high-visibility hood; chrome wrap-around bumper; underhood air cleaners; and horizontal or back-of-sleeper exhaust. Other fuel-efficiency options are also available, Western Star announced. The truck can be spec’d with either the Detroit Diesel DD13 or DD15 engine with BlueTec SCR.

“The new 4900FE helps heavy-haul and bulk operators gain aerodynamic benefits without sacrificing many of the suspension and power-train ratings they need for their applications,” said Guy Lemieux, marketing segment manager, Western

Star. “The new package not only enhances fuel efficiency, but provides options without being overly restrictive on component requirements.”

### New auto hauler

Also available from Western Star is a new auto hauler package featuring EPA2010 technology. The new auto hauler is available in 123- and 132-inch BBC configurations. The truck features specialized front and rear suspensions combined with a lower cab mounting system, providing a 101.4-inch cab-to-ground height. The interior features full-height headroom and convenient sleeper access.

“Our custom-built, specialized chassis components provide auto hauler customers with the exacting specifications they require, and combined with the power and reliability of 2010 engine technology, we’re providing our customers with the complete solution for the job,” said Ann Demitruk, director of marketing, Western Star.

The auto hauler comes with the Cummins ISX engine with SCR and power ratings from 400 to 600 hp with up to 2,050 lb.-ft. of torque. It’s available for order as a day cab or with multiple sleeper sizes ranging from 40 to 68 inches.

### Off-road engine options

On the off-highway side of the business, Western Star announced two new options for the Detroit Diesel Series 60 Tier-3-equipped models



**ROO-BAR:** Australia remains a popular export market for Western Star. Several trucks awaiting delivery were fitted with ‘roo-bars.’ *Photo by James Menzies*

market share has been dragged down in the US where the brand doesn’t enjoy the same prestige as it does north of the border with its strong Canadian history and a reputation for manhandling even the most rugged of applications.

Currently, Western Star’s US/Canada Class 8 market share languishes at about 2%, however there is reason for optimism. Jackson pointed out Western Star saw its Class 8 retail sales surge 45% from 2009 to 2010, outpacing the industry-wide growth of 16%. Its production is up 300% from the fourth quarter of 2009 and as the 4700 comes online, Jackson said he feels Western Star can double its market share to 4-5% by 2014. In the meantime, a healthy export business – particularly to Australia – helps bolster Western Star’s production levels.

A walk through the Western **Continued on page 30**

4900 and 6900.

The Allison 4700 with retarder option promises additional braking power while maximizing service brake life. It features a hydraulic brake release system to slow the truck or maintain speed on declines, allowing the driver to maintain control of heavy loads while reducing wear and tear on the braking system.

Also available is a new 1480 Front Engine Power Take-Off for Series 60 Tier 3-equipped 4900 set-back configured applications requiring front-mounted equipment. The new PTO provides higher torque, generating more power and efficient operation, especially ideal for feedlots, the company announced.

### Body-builder options

The entire Western Star product line has also received new body-builder friendly options aimed at easing body upfit, providing a cleaner back of cab and increasing efficiency between the chassis and body. New options include: a 13-gallon diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) tank for increased frame rail space and reduced truck weight; a single-man in-cab three-battery box seat with three absorbed glass mat batteries mounted under the single passenger seat, providing additional in-cab storage space and room for larger controls; and end-of-frame controls and wiring for Allison 4500 and 4700 automatic oil field series (OFS) transmissions. □



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# Star shines brighter

Continued from page 28

Star truck plant reveals this is still very much a handcrafted truck, as it was when it was being built in Kelowna, B.C. Compared to other truck plants, the assembly line was a beehive of human activity with very few robots in sight. Jackson said human contact is necessary, given the high level of customization required of every Western Star truck. A collection of finished trucks awaiting delivery showed just how unique each Western Star is; no two were alike. Many were fitted with 'roo-bars' (kangaroo-sized moose bumpers) for delivery to Australia. Others looked like they would find a home in the Canadian oil patch.

Western Star is in the process of adding a second shift at the plant and it is sold out for the remainder of 2011 and even into 2012.

Despite the addition of the more slippery-styled 4900FE, Jackson emphasized the Western Star truck will retain its distinctive traditional styling. While its sister company Freightliner is geared to the suit-and-tie crowd, Jackson said Western Star relishes its "blue jeans and boots" identity. Sixty-four per cent of its sales go to owner/operators and small fleets consisting of less than three trucks.

Part of Western Star's rebirth includes assessing its dealer network and cutting loose those that are not committed to the brand. The company has added 14 new dealers over the past couple years, but it has eliminated 38. It now has a network of about 240 dealers in the US and Canada. Up here, about 22% of them sell nothing but Western Star trucks.

For more information on Western Star's latest offerings, you can visit the company's brand new Web site at [www.westernstartrucks.com](http://www.westernstartrucks.com). □

## Nearly 500,000 customers served in first three years of Goodyear's fleetHQ roadside assistance program

By Adam Ledlow

DANVILLE, Va. – Goodyear is thinking beyond its traditional tire products and meeting drivers where the rubber meets the road, literally, with its fleetHQ service. The company invited guests to its Danville, Va., commercial tire manufacturing plant to stage a live simulation of its fleetHQ and business solutions programs on Sept. 27. In addition to producing Goodyear and Dunlop tires, Goodyear's fleetHQ provides 24/7 roadside assistance and a variety of other services and tools designed to address fleet needs.

The simulation took attendees, which included trade media from across Canada and the US, through the process of a fleetHQ road service sequence. Bruce Woodruff, director of business solutions marketing, Goodyear Commercial Tire Systems, acted as host during the simulation, with interjections from other Goodyear staff playing various roles, including a trucker with a broken down rig, call centre staff, and a tow truck driver.

But Woodruff pointed out it was more than just a step-by-step demonstration of the program.

"We wanted to demonstrate all of fleetHQ's many components, which when fully leveraged and working together, can help fleets make better business decisions, improve truck uptime and drive down their cost of operation," he said.

Woodruff said fleetHQ stands to benefit everyone from owner/operators all the way up to the largest fleets. Goodyear solutions highlighted during the simulation include:

- A preferred fleet program that includes nationwide pricing and billing available through the fleet or owner/operator's hometown dealer. "Once you establish your tire and service program with your local participating fleetHQ dealer, you will pay the same price for covered fleetHQ services, regardless of where you get



**BACK ON TRACK:** A grateful driver receives roadside service for a tire failure.

service throughout the fleetHQ network," Woodruff said. "For preferred fleets, billing is handled through your hometown dealer, so you don't need to carry cash."

- The fleetHQ Solution Center, where trained tire professionals work around the clock to help get trucks back up and running by dispatching service technicians from one of more than 2,000 dealer locations to downed trucks' locations. fleetHQ users can contact the Solution Center via a dedicated phone number (866-fleetHQ), online at [fleetHQ.com](http://fleetHQ.com), or through a smartphone Web app. "Your smartphone's built-in GPS can pass your location to the fleetHQ Solution Center, where trained tire professionals will quickly dispatch road service technicians," he said. "The application is available for iPhone, Android and Blackberry users."

- TV Track, an online tire management tool designed to help fleets and owner/operators monitor their tire performance. Officials say TV Track can also capture vehicle information and tire wear conditions, and individual fleet reports are available online.

- Gold Medallion retreaded tires, available in six of the most popular medium truck tire sizes.

- TirePix, a service that provides photos of tires that were replaced during a road service call.

- The fleetHQ Truck Stop Network, a network that includes more than 300 locations. Participants include Wingfoot Truck Care Centers, Travel Centers of America, Petro Truck Stops, PTP Truckstop Network and Boss Truck Shops.

"Many benefits, such as the fleetHQ Solution Center, are offered at no cost to the fleet," said Woodruff. "The fleetHQ program – including its diverse and powerful components – demonstrates Goodyear's ongoing commitment to help our customers save time and money."

But fleetHQ is no rookie service. In fact, Goodyear has been operating fleetHQ in the US for about three years, having helped nearly 500,000 trucks get back on the road – with about half that number coming just in the last year.

"That just shows you how fast the adoption is happening with fleet HQ," Woodruff told media following the presentation. "We've improved nearly 50% from 2009 to 2010."

Canadian drivers would be more familiar with fleetHQ as Goodyear's Truckwise brand, but officials said the company was transitioning to have the fleetHQ name used on both sides of the border to avoid confusion.

One satisfied Canadian carrier already making use of the fleetHQ service is Windsor, Ont.-based Wolverine Freight System, whose automotive customers requiring Just-In-Time (JIT) deliveries make up the largest portion of its business.

Fleet maintenance supervisor Mike Sills noted about 85% of the fleet's business is just-in-time deliveries to automotive customers, so uptime is crucial. The company has 125 company trucks and 85 owner/operators, and uses fleetHQ to get them back on the road in the event of a tire failure.

Previously, the company's dispatchers would seek out assistance in the area of the problem or the fleet would use a service group that charged a fee to dispatch a service vehicle.

Today, a call to fleetHQ is not only free, it gets the service call in motion fast, Wolverine officials claimed. □



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# Volvo introduces 'downspeeding'

## Requiring less engine rpm at the same road speed delivers 3% fuel savings, Volvo claims

By James Menzies

**GREENSBORO, N.C.** – Volvo Trucks has introduced a new concept called 'downspeeding,' which takes the industry-wide shift towards lower engine speeds to a new, well, low. Introduced as the XE13 (exceptional energy) powertrain package, Volvo's latest fuel-saving tactic allows the engine to cruise at just 1,150 rpm at 65 mph – about 200 rpm lower than the average truck sold today.

Ed Saxman, Volvo's powertrain product manager, said that translates to a 3% fuel savings compared to typical overdrive transmissions in a similar operation.

"For every 100 rpm you reduce engine speed while travelling at 65 mph, you are saving 1.5% fuel," Saxman explained. "So lowering it 200 rpm means this is 3% better than an equal overdrive transmission and 1.5% better than a direct drive. These are numbers we stand behind."

That means a truck averaging 7 mpg can achieve 7.2 mpg with the XE13 package.

"It's an easy two-tenths of a mile per gallon and that's \$2,000 per year per truck" in fuel savings, Saxman said.

The XE13 powertrain package requires a very specific set of specifications, including: a Volvo D13 engine with 425 hp and 1,750 lb.-ft. of torque; a Volvo I-Shift overdrive transmission with a 0.78:1 ratio; axle ratios of 2.64 to 2.69; and of course the proprietary software that makes it all work. One of the great enablers is the I-Shift's 28% step, which falls precisely between the 38% step of 10-speeds and the 18% step characteristic of splitter transmissions. The real key, of course, is the high level of integration that exists between engine and transmission, which Volvo officials say makes their latest feat of engineering something that's very difficult for competitors to replicate.

"The 28% step is one of the needs, the high horsepower



**ON THE ROAD:** The new Volvo VN670 with aerodynamic package and SCR achieves 8% better fuel economy than EPA07 versions, the company claims. It is now promising a further 3% improvement with its XE powertrain package.

engine brake, 1,750 lb.-ft. torque is one of the needs and we're alone there in the 13-litre market," Saxman said.

The XE13 is aimed towards linehaul fleets and approved for gross weights of up to 88,000 lbs. (Volvo's marketing materials will tell you it's limited to 80,000 lbs, but 40 tonnes is fine, Saxman told *Truck West*).

"This is for mainstream trucks," he added. The effects of the XE13 package will go unnoticed during stop-and-go city driving, but the software was programmed with US interstate driving in mind, as well as Canadian highways, Saxman hastened to add. It's expected the new package will be particularly attractive to bulk haulers and other truckers who are frequently lightly loaded or empty, since the benefits are enhanced at lower weights.

Another piece of the puzzle is Volvo's impressive engine brake, which achieves strong performance because of an extra bump on the camshaft that allows air to flow back into the engine, producing more mass in the chamber and providing for better retardation.

I recently had the chance to drive a Volvo VN670 with the XE13 package between Hagerstown, Md. and Greensboro, N.C.; a route that alternated between flat terrain, rolling hills and some decent-sized grades. Volvo felt the route was indicative of the variety of terrain that its North American customers will encounter on a daily basis. Virginia is a 70-mph state, and even at 70 the D13 engine cruised along at 1,240 rpm. The same engine in a similarly spec'd VN with a 10-speed manual would be spinning at 1,512 rpm, according to officials. At 65 mph, the XE package ran at about 1,150 rpm while a comparable 10-speed would run at 1,404.

Engine speed remained low even while pulling some steep hills, and downshifts were rarely required. When they were, it was no big deal as the I-Shift took care of everything. The VN670 with XE13 package basically runs in its sweet spot at any given speed.

Driving a truck with the XE13 package was precisely as Volvo reps said it would be. The rpms remained low under all operating conditions. A nice byproduct of the lower engine speed was a quieter cab interior. Like, car quiet. It is easy to see how the new development will benefit customers.

It's such a simple premise: lower engine speeds result in less fuel consumption. The term downspeeding, coined by a Volvo employee, simply means the package produces less engine rpm for the same road speed.

It's verifiable from behind the wheel, although the fuel savings would need to be proven over time. There is little reason to doubt them, however, when it is just plain common sense that a slower running engine will consume less fuel. Volvo's Saxman admitted the entire industry is chasing lower engine speeds but in Volvo's case, it is using its advanced I-Shift automated trans-



**QUIETER RIDE:** Editor James Menzies also noticed a quieter interior, thanks to the 200 rpm reduction in engine speed.

mission to essentially drive the engine.

"You used to drive it up to 2,100 rpm in every gear, because that's just how you drove," he said. "We're seeing a paradigm shift."

Because the I-Shift is an essential ingredient to the XE13 package, even drivers who are resistant to a fuel-efficient driving style will have no choice but to run the engine slow and improve their mpg.

Interestingly, Volvo is already succeeding in convincing its customers to spec' a highly integrated vehicle. Eighty per cent of Volvo trucks sold today have Volvo power under the hood and about 40% of those have the I-Shift transmission.

Customers will be pleased to learn the new package is available for next to nothing; the upcharge will be no more than a couple hundred bucks, Saxman said.

"It will be very quickly recouped," he added.

Volvo's engineers and designers have been busy. The XE13 package marks the latest in a string of fuel-saving developments from the company. Its adoption of selective catalytic reduction (SCR) to comply with EPA2010 emissions requirements was not unique, yet it provided a 5% fuel economy improvement over EPA07 models.

A new aerodynamic package introduced earlier this year provided a further 3% improvement in fuel mileage, the company noted. The truck I drove was outfitted with the latest aero package, including a shift to rectangular, hood-mounted mirrors that provide greater visibility than the previous round design while also improving airflow.

The package also included full chassis fairings, cab side fairing extensions and an aerodynamic bumper with full airflow deflector.

The XE package provides up to a 3% further improvement above and beyond all that. The VN670 I drove was also decked out in one of Volvo's new interiors, also introduced earlier this year. The new interior design features a softer colour pallet and a greater selection of materials. The earthy tones take a cue from today's contemporary interior design trends.

All in all, the new Volvo VN670 with aerodynamic package and homey interior is among the slickest looking trucks on the road.

It's also clearly one of the most efficient to operate, when spec'd with the new XE13 powertrain package. □

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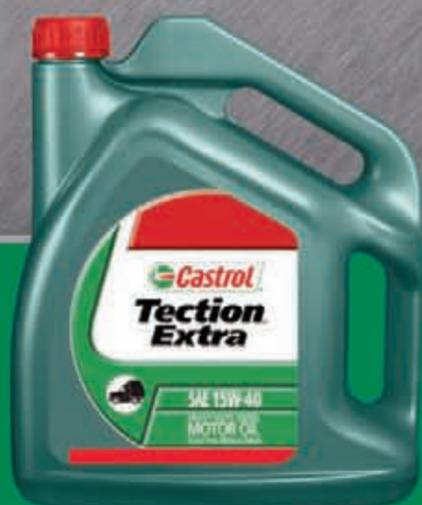


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OEM/DEALER NEWS



First impressions from behind the wheel of the

# Cat CT660

By James Menzies

**PEORIA, Ill.** – Before the smoke had cleared from the unveiling of Caterpillar’s CT660 at its Conexpo-Con/Agg launch, trade press editors – including yours truly – were clamoring for an opportunity to put the new truck through its paces.

That opportunity finally arrived in late September, although Mother Nature did its best to rain on our parade, washing out part of our planned route through Cat’s sprawling Edwards Demonstration and Learning Center in Peoria, Ill.

Driving the CT660, Cat’s first ever truck, on a shortened route at its proving grounds provided the opportunity to assess its maneuverability, ride and creature comforts but it would not be fair to fully evaluate the truck after roughly 20 minutes behind the wheel. That said, the CT660 did impress on several fronts. The first thing you’ll notice when taking in the exterior of the truck is its bold stance and stylish front end, which borrows from other Caterpillar machinery, specifically its 980K wheel loader. Cat designed the truck to be both stylish and functional, and struck a fine balance with a look befitting a premium vocational truck with easy-to-replace components that are frequently damaged.

For instance, individual sections of the three-piece grille surround and bumper can be replaced, reducing inevitable repair costs. The fenders are constructed of a durable flexible rubber composite material, which is damage-resistant and bounces back into shape after contact.

Cat’s attention to detail extends

right down to the halogen headlight bulbs, which are emblazoned with the Caterpillar logo. Indeed much of the challenge facing Cat’s design team was differentiating the CT660 from its so-called “donor truck,” International’s PayStar. While the truck is produced at Navistar International’s Garland, Texas assembly plant, product manager Gary Blood noted pretty much everything above the frame rails has been redesigned. This becomes evident when you climb inside the CT660 and are greeted by an automotive-styled interior. And by automotive, I’m talking Lexus, not Toyota.

The interior of the CT660 is rich by vocational truck standards. On the gray, overcast day of my drive, the backlit gauges shone bright and lit up the dash like a Christmas tree. Blood refers to the dash as a ‘command centre,’ complete with easy-to-reach rocker switches and bright warning indicator lights.

A unique attribute to the CT660’s dash is the marriage of the speedometer and tachometer into a single gauge. This is a feature that may eventually be copied, as it places the two most important gauges in one location and allows the driver to assess both with a quick glance.

A lot of attention went into the placement of the gauges, ensuring they are not blocked from view when a driver is in typical driving position. The heating and air conditioning vents are round, not rectangular, because Caterpillar has learned when developing equipment interiors that round vents provide more efficient heating and cooling. Who

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knew? While some of the enhancements are plain to the eye, others are not. For example, Cat added a second window lift because it wanted to ensure the window travels up and down smoothly, as the window of a premium truck should.

Make no mistake; the interior of the CT660 is purely Caterpillar. It's far from a redesigned International PayStar. Visibility over the sloped hood is superb and the truck can be spec'd with either a one- or two-piece windshield. Cowl-mounted mirrors are designed to remain in position and will not be bothered by the repeated slamming that vocational truck doors are typically subjected to.

Caterpillar is particularly proud of the quietness of the CT660's interior, and for good reason. Outfitted as a dump truck, the CT660 I drove was indeed quiet for its application. Some of this can be attributed to a compacted graphite iron (CGI) cylinder block, which lessens engine noise by about 30%, according to Blood.

However, designers took it a step further and focused an inordinate amount of their attention towards identifying sources of 'BSR' – or buzzes, squeaks and rattles. In its pursuit of a quiet cab, designers weren't afraid to deviate from industry norms, like replacing the glove compartment with a removable bin. That eliminated two hinges and a latch, frequent sources of irritating noise. Another byproduct of their noise eradication efforts is a stationary cup holder (another swivel eliminated) and if you look closely, you'll find other examples as well.

"Sound suppression was one of the key areas we focused on," Blood said. "We really wanted a quiet interior."

The CT660 rode well, particularly for a set-back axle configuration, with the steer axle located almost directly underneath the driver's seat. Blood said Cat's use of trunion-style cab mounts – which double as quarter fender mounts – dampen cab vibration and provide a smoother ride.

Turning radius, of course, is of paramount importance on a job site and the CT660 excelled when given the chance to make a tight turn on the course Cat provided. The company claims to offer "class-leading" curb-to-curb turning radius and while dif-

ficult to measure, there's no reason to doubt the claim. At the very least, it's one of the more interesting specs available on the CT660 is the company's own CX31 torque converter-style automatic transmission. While new to the trucking world, the CX31 has been around the block, designed initially for use in Caterpillar's articulated dump trucks.

The transmission was smooth as silk on my short drive and it impressively held the truck's position on a steep grade while I clumsily moved my foot from brake to accelerator to resume from a complete standstill. Steve Rutherford, marketing manager with Cat Powertrain, suggested the CX31 is 5-8% more fuel-efficient than the "other" torque converter automatic.

That's a bold claim, so I asked Rutherford what it is about the CX31 that makes it that much more efficient to operate than the Allison offerings, which are highly regarded in their own right. He said it all boils down to integration: the efficiency of a fully integrated powertrain package simply cannot be matched by a third-party transmission that's designed to work with a wide variety of engine makes, he explained.

A 5% improvement in fuel mileage, by the way, can provide fuel savings of \$3,000 per year.

About 40% of Caterpillar's initial orders included the CX31 automatic, which is being spec'd mostly for its contribution to good fuel mileage and also because it vastly broadens the pool of prospective drivers from which to hire. This mirrors the heavy machinery world, Rutherford noted, where manual transmissions are practically unheard of. Automatic transmissions can also contribute to a safer work site, Rutherford added, allowing drivers to keep "two hands on the wheel, two feet on the floor and two eyes on the road."

The CX31 is a pricey upgrade (pricing specifics weren't shared), but Rutherford said the investment can be recouped by avoiding the costs associated with the maintenance and repair of manual transmissions, including: clutch replacement (\$3,000), driveline repair (\$1,000), axle breakage (\$4,000), premature brake wear (\$1,500) and so on.

The CT660 is powered by either



**A PEEK INSIDE:** The CT660 boasts a luxurious, well-designed interior.

the CT11 or CT13 Cat engines, which admittedly are International MaxxForce designs programmed to excel in Caterpillar's vocational applications.

Horsepower ranges from 330 to 475 with peak torque ranging from 1,250 lb.-ft. to 1,700 lb.-ft. A 15-litre offering – which will be greeted with some enthusiasm in the Canadian market – is in the works and should be available in early 2012.

Adopting Navistar International's in-cylinder EPA2010 emissions strategy means there's no need for diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) or all the hardware associated with the selective catalytic reduction (SCR) system used by all other engine manufacturers. That eliminates about 400 lbs of weight versus competitors employing SCR, Blood noted. The Cat engines have a dry weight of about 2,400 lbs. Blood said Caterpillar is confident in its emissions strategy, and boasts a B50 life of 1.2 million miles, meaning 50% of its engines will still be running strong at the 1.2 million mile mark without significant repairs.

The Cat CT660 is a pleasure to operate and boasts a stylish interior in which drivers will take a lot of pride.

The theory is that drivers who are given nice equipment to operate will treat it with more care and lower repair costs, providing a lower cost of ownership. That's Caterpillar's sales pitch for a product that will be at the upper end of the price range among vocational trucks. (Cat officials said they will be priced competitively with other premium vocational trucks – namely Paccar siblings Kenworth and Peterbilt).

Cat is hoping it can leverage existing relationships with vocational truck and equipment operators into some strong sales. George Taylor, director of Cat's global on-highway truck group, said about 70% of vocational truck buyers have an existing relationship with Caterpillar, whether from running Cat engines or operating other Cat machinery. The company has paid special attention to how it can enhance the relationship between truck and machine. One such example is Product Link, which comes standard on the CT660 and provides a Web portal into how the truck and other equipment (even non-Caterpillar trucks and machines) are performing in real-time.

Mike Verheyen, connected work site product manager, likened the system to an around-the-clock worker whose sole function is to monitor how a company's assets are performing and who works for free.

Truck owners and fleet managers can be alerted to suspicious activity such as poor fuel mileage, sudden fuel loss, equipment usage outside working hours and anything else that may

be out of the ordinary. The Cat dealer is also informed, so if they notice inefficiencies such as poor equipment utilization, they can bring it to the attention of the customer and offer a solution.

It's clear Caterpillar has the relationships – and now the truck – to succeed in the vocational truck market. Initial interest is high, and Taylor said order boards are full right through October – even before most dealers have taken delivery of any inventory.

"Most of those customers are looking at a pamphlet," Taylor said. "The key thing is getting that truck out there and getting it visible."

One thing became clear at Caterpillar's trade press show-and-tell: the company is not content to be a fringe player in the vocational truck space.

"We expect to be, in the next five years, the number one or number two player," Taylor boldly proclaimed. That's an ambitious goal, but at first glance the truck itself appears up to the challenge. □

## Caterpillar CT660 now in production

**PEORIA, Ill.** – Caterpillar's highly anticipated CT660 vocational truck is now approved for shipment to customers, the company has announced.

Cat's first ever truck has passed the company's new product introduction process and has been in limited production since June. Customer deliveries commenced this month.

"Caterpillar is extremely pleased with the response we have received from our vocational truck customers," said George Taylor, director of the company's Global On-Highway Truck Group. "A number of customers, who saw the CT660 for the first time at Conexpo-Con/Agg, actually ordered trucks before having the opportunity to drive them. I think that speaks highly of their confidence in Cat products and the Cat dealer network."

The company said it will continue ramping up production through the third quarter, with many dealers taking delivery of their first units in the coming weeks. Many dealers are planning to hold open house events to showcase the new truck.

"Most important for Caterpillar at this point is to focus on increasing production and getting customers behind the wheel of the CT660," Taylor said. "Once customers drive the CT660 and take note of how carefully it's designed to meet the demands of vocational service, we think they'll immediately recognize how the truck can benefit them. The CT660 is a significant new product for Caterpillar, and we're excited about supplying a truck that will help with rebuilding our infrastructure in a recovering economy." □

**TRUCK NEWS**

**WE ARE MOVING!**



All phone numbers remain the same

Mark Dalton: Owner/Operator

# The Good Shepherd

By Edo van Belkom

## The story so far...

Mark is at a truck stop near Winnipeg and sees a woman talking to drivers, asking them for a ride. She's attractive, and when Mark learns she's heading to Vancouver, he offers her a ride hoping they might get intimate along the way. She stops that train of thought cold.

Cindy seems like a nice girl with a good head on her shoulders. Mark can't figure out why someone would leave her stranded. But as they talk, Mark discovers she's a hard-core Christian woman and her constant talk of God can get annoying...

They had just crossed the border into Alberta when Mark let out a yawn. It was soon followed by another, and another until it was obvious that he needed some rest.

"Are you feeling up to driving for a while?" he asked Cindy, who had her nose buried deep into a book. It wasn't the Bible – she'd probably read that a dozen times already – but an inspirational book of some kind written by a pastor.

"I was wondering when you were going to stop, or if a telephone pole was going to do it for you."

Another yawn. "I've had enough." A pause. "But to be honest, I'm not crazy about letting someone else – basically a stranger – drive my truck."

"It's understandable," she said. "But, it won't be just me driving."

"Oh?"

"God will be with me every mile of the way."

"Right." The word came out long and drawn out. "Then if God's gonna be your co-pilot, I'd prefer you not talk to him while you're driving. You know, so all of your attention is on the road."

She looked at him as if he were stupid. "I don't talk to God by speaking out loud."

"Uh, of course not," Mark said, slowing down so he could pull over and let her take the driver's seat.

Soon after, as they sat idling by the roadside, Mark checked Cindy out on Mother Load, pointing out all the sweet spots in terms of speed, gearing, temperature, etc. A few minutes in, she turned to him and said, "I have driven trucks before, all kinds of them, including three different 379s."

"Alright, then," Mark said, realizing it would probably be alright to let go of the steering wheel, at least for a little

while. "Just don't crash."

"Good night," she said, strapping herself in and checking out all the gauges on her own.

Minutes later, when she was sure of herself and the truck, she took her hands off the wheel and put them together in prayer.

"Dear God above bless this truck I drive, and help me keep someone alive..." When she was finished praying, Cindy finally looked ready to drive. Without hesitation, she disengaged the parking brake, shifted into first and let the clutch out ever so slowly.

Mother Load glided forward as if she were on rails.

Mark liked how careful she was with his truck, and the prayer was definitely a nice touch. He didn't believe God watched over individual trucks on the road, but if he did it was nice to have Him on your side. Mark closed his eyes and thought it was crazy to let a complete stranger drive Mother Load, but he was infused with peace of mind and there was a feeling of serenity throughout the truck that he'd never felt before. All of it put him at ease. He adjusted his head on his pillow and was sound asleep in minutes.

Mark could feel Mother Load glide to a stop. His eyes fluttered open, but his mind and body were still full of sleep. He'd like another couple of hours if he could get it, but something inside told him that Cindy was stopping for a while. From what he could see out the front window, they weren't in the parking lot of some truck stop, or on the highway shoulder.

'Where the heck are we?' he wondered. Then he watched Cindy set the parking brake and turn off Mother Load's engine. "What are you doing?" he asked.

"We're here."

"Where?"

"Here. We're stopping for a while," she said. That was news to him. As far as he knew, the purpose of having another driver on board was so you didn't have to stop until you were low on fuel or reached your destination. This stop was definitely unscheduled. "For how long?"

"A few hours."

"Hours?" Mark said, incredulously.

"Yeah, five or six."

At that, Mark rose up from the sleeper and took a good look around. They were in a rural area, but there were residential developments around them that looked as if they'd be expanding



Illustration by Glenn McEvoy

outward in the next few years. Cars were parked up and down the side of the road and men and women were walking past them toward – he got up and looked out the passenger-side window – an old farmhouse. Piled up around the house were all kinds of lumber, building material and equipment. If Mark didn't know any better, the house looked like it was being restored.

Mark turned to Cindy and said, "Where are we?"

"Just outside of Calgary," she said. "There's a big Habitat for Humanity build scheduled here today. I wanted to help out and it'll probably do you some good too."

Mark smiled in disbelief. "You want me to work on this house today?"

"Yes."

"With a bunch of people I don't know?"

"That's right."

And if he remembered correctly about Habitat for Humanity, it was all made possible through donations... including donations of people's time. "And I'll be working for free?"

"Of course."

"For the people who are going to live in this house, who I don't know and I'll probably never see again after today?"

"I'm so relieved you understand."

Mark was getting annoyed. "I understand it, but what makes you think I want to do this today?"

"From what I've gathered, you spend all of your time working. And from what you've told me, you help people out when you can, but you don't always see people at their best. It'll do you good to spend some time with some good people and give your life some balance."

Life balance. Mark thought about that. He was always working and rarely took time off, but even if that were true, this was work, not time off. It would leave him tired and sore by the end of the day and that didn't seem like much fun, no matter how good a cause it was for. He shook his head.

"I don't think this is for me."

"Don't be silly, of course it is."

"Don't tell me," he said. "God wants me to do it?"

"No, he wants you to want to do it. Just a bit of your time, to help give a less fortunate family a home to live in. It's..."

He cut her off. "The Christian thing to do?"

"No, just the right thing. You make a good living, few expenses, with me driving you've got plenty of extra time, so why not?"

Mark looked out the window at the people heading toward the build. They looked to be from all walks of life, old and young, rich and poor. "Why not?" he thought. "Okay," he said at last. "I guess we've got a few hours to kill."

She put a hand on his shoulder. "Relax," she said. "This'll be fun. Trust me."

Mark just shook his head. If it were fun, he thought, they wouldn't call it work. □

– Mark Dalton returns next month in the conclusion of *The Good Shepherd*.

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). Both are also available in audio book format.

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FLEET NEWS



**RAISING AWARENESS:** Bison Transport's unique United Way trailer will travel North American highways and raise awareness about the organization.

**Bison Transport deploys United Way trailer**

**WINNIPEG, Man.** – Bison Transport has deployed a new trailer that raises awareness of the United Way and its 'A Better Community Starts With You' campaign.

The trailer was displayed for the first time at the annual United Way Kick-Off and Plane-Pull event at Red River College's Stevenson Campus in September.

More than 1,000 people were on-hand for the event. Bison said the new trailer is part of its fleet of rolling billboards aimed at bringing attention to worthy causes.

"United Way and their many partner agencies are doing ex-

traordinary work in our communities," said Rob Penner, chief operating officer with Bison. "In Winnipeg alone, there are over 100 agencies that receive critical funding from United Way and their work touches over 250,000 people in our city. The employees of Bison Transport are thrilled to be able to use whatever tools we can to help bring more visibility to this wonderful organization, and this was a great fit."

After the ceremony, the trailer was deployed into Bison's fleet, operating throughout Canada and the US. □

**Alberta heavy-hauler acquires two fleets**

**SPRUCE GROVE, Alta.** – Heavy-hauler Entrec Transportation Services has announced it is acquiring Alberta trucking firms Trak Equipment Haulers and Jay Reid Trucking.

Trak is based in Edmonton and specializes in the transportation of oversized and overweight equipment for the oil and gas and construction industries. The fleet operates in Alberta, B.C. and Saskatchewan and will be integrated into Entrec's existing Spruce Grove division, the company announced.

"Serving the heavy-haul transportation industry for over 25 years, this business will complement the strong presence we are developing in Western Canada," said Rod Marlin, Entrec's chairman and CEO. "We are experiencing a high demand for our services and this acquisition will help provide the additional equipment and manpower resources we need to meet this demand."

Jay Reid Trucking is based in Bonnyville, Alta., and is also a transporter of oversized and overweight equipment, operating in Alberta and Saskatchewan. Entrec will combine Jay Reid Trucking with its existing Bonnyville division.

"This acquisition will be a great fit with our existing service offerings and will build on our previous acquisition of Max Oilfield Services Inc., completed earlier this year," said Marlin. "This growth is significantly expanding our heavy haul transportation capabilities and is allowing us to meet the growing demand for these services."

The Trak acquisition is expected to close Nov. 1 while the Jay Reid deal will close Oct. 24, the company announced. The two acquisitions add two pilot trucks, 12 specialized tractor units, more than 40 specialized trailers and other equipment to Entrec's fleet. □

**Manitoba livestock haulers merge**

**BLUMENORT, Man.** – Steve's Livestock Transport has announced an acquisition of Funk's Livestock Transport. Steve's claims to be North America's largest commercial livestock transporter, even before the acquisition. Funk will operate as part of Steve's Livestock Transport out of its Blumenort, Man. facility, *Portage On-*

*line* reported in early October.

"It's been a challenging last few years for the livestock and transport industries," Bill Rempel, director of marketing and projects with Steve's told *Portage Online*.

The two companies collectively move the majority of the hogs produced in Manitoba. □

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TSQ

**MILTON, Ont.** – When posed with the question, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” most young children tend to stick to a fairly conventional list of occupations. Doctors, astronauts, fire fighters and athletes tend to dominate, but trucker? Not likely.

There was a time where the profession of truck driver was not only sought after by (mostly) young men, it was downright revered by all who shared the highways. Today, the interest in the occupation is dwindling among younger careerists, and the sector is aging rapidly.

Our own Transportation Media Research Group places the average age of truck drivers at 49, among the oldest of any sector, and with groups like the Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council predicting significant driver shortages in the months to come, some say the industry is nearing crisis mode. But why does the industry struggle to recruit and retain young talent?

We asked drivers at the Fifth Wheel Truck Stop in Milton, Ont. to find out.



**Truck Stop Question** Why is it so difficult to attract younger drivers to trucking?

ADAM LEDLOW

**Josh Parsons**, 32, is as green as they come, with just one month of truck driving under his belt at Stevens Transport in Dallas, Texas. After a 12-year stint in the Navy, Parsons opted for a job behind the wheel, saying it always seemed like a cool job to him.

“I think a lot of people just don’t know what there is to offer. A lot of older drivers have been on the road a long time so they see what’s going on, but young people don’t know,” he told *Truck West*, adding that his military history gave him a window into what it’s like to be away from home for long periods of time.

**Gilles Proulx**, a driver with Penner



Gilles Proulx

International in Winnipeg, Man., has more than 25 years under his belt and says that trucking companies tend to err towards older drivers with more experience when doing their hiring – placing new and younger drivers at a disadvantage.

“They are looking for experienced drivers. The industry, for the last few years, has been that way,” he said. “A lot of young guys are going to school and have a hard time getting a job because they don’t have the training, but they have to start somewhere.”

Proulx also says trucking is more dangerous than it’s given credit for – and not just because of the risk of crashes. “I was in New York a month ago...It was getting late and I thought if I slept overnight in the yard I could leave in the morning. A kid (at the yard) said, ‘You could do that, but you won’t be leaving in the morning.’ You know what I mean?”



Chris Alexander

**Chris Alexander** of Dill’s Trucking in Mississauga, Ont., got his start driving a truck when he was just 18, and knew trucking was going to be his career from the get-go.

“I knew that this is what I wanted to do, even though my Mom and Dad said to stay in school and become a lawyer or something. I knew this was it,” he said.

But things have changed in the many years since Alexander got his start, he admits. From tight-belted insurance companies to over-zealous regulators to the anti-trucker public mentality, “the industry is in a slump,” he says.

“There is no love out here anymore. Everyone is out for themselves and no one helps anyone else. Why would anyone be attracted to it?” he ponders. “And why be gone from home for the same money you can make in an office?”



Sam Clatterbuck

**Sam Clatterbuck**, a driver with Baylor Transport in southern Indiana, chalks up young peoples’ indifference towards trucking to a simple lack of gumption.

“They don’t want to work because their Mommy and Daddy hand them everything. I know a lot of people that had the chance to get a job, but why should they when their parents take care of them?”

Clatterbuck also says most people would rather stay home than court the romance of the open road – which is what drew in so many truckers decades ago.

“Some of them want to be home with their families and girlfriends. A lot of them have kids and want to be home with them, too. If they can get jobs (that let them go) home every day, it won’t be bad, but a lot of them can’t and family comes first.” □



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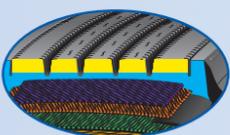
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