



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada
Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

No rest for the weary truckers

In the 10 years that Canada has been grappling with hours of service, not once during that time did the policy-makers and regulators (Transport Canada and the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators) ever consider where you might hole up during your required down time.

I can't find evidence of any research, or a study or report of any kind on the availability of suitable truck parking in Canada.

This suggests that no one gave any thought to providing a place for you to achieve compliance, never mind getting enough sleep to satisfy the real objectives of the hours of service regulations.

Nor does it appear that any of the millions of dollars spent contemplating the abysmal state of our national highway system has addressed the lack of safe, accessible pull over areas for commercial vehicles.

In those dozens of studies, there are no specific references to rest areas at all.

No one has asked how many we need, or where they are needed.

I don't think governments even know how many rest areas we have in this country, or where they are.

But there are sure a lot of tired, frustrated truckers out there who can tell you where they aren't and where they should be.

Frightening situation

The shortage of rest areas in this country is frightening.

There are nowhere near enough places to park, and I'm not necessarily talking about taking a full eight or 10 hours off, but a 10-minute bathroom break, or a few minutes to check a map, or shake off the mid-afternoon

drowzies. Ever wonder why there are so many urine-filled bottles littering our roadways?

Not that I'm condoning the practice, but there's simply no other way to rid yourself of the normal build-up of bodily waste.

One of our members called the other day to say she'd been chased out of a Tim Hortons lot in Northern Ontario by the local constabulary while parking lawfully to use the facilities and grab a cuppa (and she doesn't even have the bottle option).

Sheesh.

We're long overdue for a serious discussion of the parking and resting needs of truckers in Canada.

Notwithstanding the age-old problems of politics and money, it's simply not acceptable for governments to shrug their shoulders and say "sorry, not our responsibility."

Quebec has done a decent job of providing parking along some of its major highways.

Highway 20, for example, between Montreal and Quebec City has several rest areas with room to park a handful of trucks, but these places fill up pretty quickly at night.

Ontario has service centers along some of its 400-series highways, but no facilities at all on others – the 402, 403 and 416 for example.

Northern Ontario is a writeoff. There's no place at all to even pull over in an emergency.

Try parking in a snowplow turn-around area and see how long the OPP leave you alone.

British Columbia has numerous brake check areas, but don't sit still for more than a few minutes, or you'll be leaving with a ticket.

Ironically, Saskatchewan, with some of the most sub-standard infrastructure in the country, has a fair number of roadside pull-offs, but few are designed to bear the



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weight of a loaded B-train.

So who's going to absorb the cost and headaches associated with shelving some 200,000 trucks for 10 hours out of every 24?

I'm not suggesting that governments throw our tax dollars at the problem, willy-nilly.

But neither is it fair to leave truck stop owners holding the bag to fix the problem.

They'll tell you that paving a 10-acre lot costs a ton of money – with no guarantee that any of the parkers will favour the establishment with more than the price of a cup of coffee in the morning.

Why chain up potential rest areas?

We recognize that solutions are likely to be costly, complex and multi-jurisdictional, but what about starting with some of the obvious possibilities – there are unused scales and maintenance yards in some provinces that could be used for temporary parking, but they remain chained up and inaccessible. Why?

The truck drivers of this country have other questions, and they may just have some of the answers.

OBAC has undertaken to get this issue on the table for discussion, and to work co-operatively with all stakeholders toward solutions.

Response to our mail-back campaign has been great so far – many of you have taken the time to write and call as well "adding your voice" via the mail-back coupon (see the clip out on page 41 of this issue).

Keep the cards and letters coming.

We're not going to take a rest on this one until we're sure someone's listening.