



Owner-Operator's Business  
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des  
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the  
director's chair*

## No parking? No kidding!

I've heard about it happening dozens of times, but I finally saw it with my own eyes.

On a bitter December night a few weeks ago, I watched an Ontario Provincial Police officer wake four sleeping drivers and kick them out of a service plaza on Ontario's Highway 401 at West Lorne.

Granted, when trucks are parked in a fire lane, they could cause problems for emergency vehicles trying to pass through the plaza.

But in the episode I witnessed, I think the greater danger was in waking the drivers and moving them out into the night.

The east-bound service plaza at West Lorne is about 140 km from the Ambassador Bridge at Windsor/Detroit – a 90-minute drive over some of the most boring roadway in Canada.

When I pulled in that night, well after midnight, the place was packed.

As I fuelled up my car, I watched several trucks drive around back, find the lot full, then head back out on the highway just as tired as they were when they pulled in.

Meanwhile, out in the area off to the side of the lane that passes through the plaza, adjacent to the highway, an OPP officer was going door-to-door waking drivers who had been napping there.

It was cold and windy and the sky was clear in West Lorne, but just 40 kilometers east, at London, a blizzard was raging, and I mean raging.

More than 40 centimeters of snow had fallen on the 401, and the snowplows hadn't done a very good job of clearing it away. I tried to wade through it in the car, but gave up and doubled back to a motel near Highway 4 to wait out the storm.

I had a sleepless night, wondering what happened to those tired drivers the OPP sent packing – right into the teeth of the storm. Being told to keep driving when you're tired is bad enough, but having to contend with a storm on top of it is unconscionable.

The OPP officer had to be aware of the storm that was pounding London that night, and that there are no other parking areas between West Lorne and the truck stops that lie just east of London – which were inaccessible that night anyway. That a law enforcement officer, sworn to protect public safety, was unable to distinguish the greater possible threat stuns me.

And there's something else. The reason I was in East Lorne at that time of night is the several hours that had been added to my trip coming up from Indianapolis that day.

There was weather in northern Ohio and Indiana, a section of I-69 shut down by an accident, a line-up at the border – in other words, an accumulation of delays truckers face every day.

So I'd be very surprised if a couple of the drivers hustled out of the service plaza that night weren't out of hours long before they were able to find the next safe haven.

For years, truckers have been banging their heads against the proverbial wall complaining about the appalling lack of safe places to park.

And when our new Hours-of-Service rule kicked in this month, the problem just got a whole lot worse.

We can talk all we want about safety and tighter enforcement of the new HoS – more trucks spending more time parked – but when in hell is someone going to get serious about answering the question: where are we going to park some 250,000 trucks for 10 hours out of every 24?

Not once in the dozen or more years that Canada grappled with Hours-of-Service did the policy makers and regulators – federal or provincial – ever consider where drivers might hole up during their required down time. I can't find evidence of research or studies of any kind done during that time on the availability of suitable truck parking in Canada.

This is a just one more example of what OBAC is trying to achieve by bringing the voice of the professional driver to the table – to make sure the interests of the people behind the wheel are taken into consideration before the rules that affect their lives every day are signed, sealed, and delivered.

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

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

So whose responsibility is it, anyway?

I've had bureaucrats tell me it's just a question of better planning on industry's part. More efficient

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scheduling, technology to speed up processes, and so on, to ensure drivers can get to designated rest areas without running out of hours.

And they're supposed to anticipate and plan for bad weather, accidents, congestion, border line-ups, loading and unloading delays, breakdowns.

Right.

Not only are these folks just plain out-to-lunch, they're in denial.

The point is, there simply aren't enough places to park the friggin' trucks.

Our federal-provincial system allows politicians to keep serious issues in the spin-cycle for years and I fear that's where the truck parking problem is.

While governments at all levels bicker over questions of authority and funding, drivers remain in a spin-cycle of sorts too – going 'round and 'round looking for a place to park.

OBAC continues to lobby at the national level, but we need every driver out there to write to their elected officials – both federal and provincial – to heighten awareness of the seriousness of this issue.

Identify yourself not only as a truck driver but as a voter in their constituency and urge them to take this issue seriously. If you don't have time to write a letter, send a short note and attach this column.

Contact information for politicians is relatively easy to find on the Internet, but if you need help, call OBAC.

You can also visit our Web site ([www.obac.ca](http://www.obac.ca)) for tips on making your letters more effective.

Let's take a pointer from the cops and keep knocking on doors until we see some movement. It's time the powers that be put some resources toward finding a solution for this problem.

And it's got to be a better one than that OPP officer came up with. ■