



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

...from the  
director's chair

## A fresh step forward

By the time you read this, Canada will have its first Image Team, a group of talented professional women poised to promote the mission of Women in Trucking (WIT): to encourage the employment of women in the industry, to promote their accomplishments, and to minimize challenges they face working in a male-dominated environment.

And what a team! From coast to coast, these women embody all that is good about the industry – from the driver's seat to the classroom to the boardroom. They're positive and passionate, and holy moly, do they know their stuff when it comes to trucking.

Candidates for the Image Team were put through a rigorous multi-step selection process by a panel of judges, and those who were chosen for the inaugural team will be fresh, enthusiastic voices available for media interviews and to participate at public events and industry trade shows. The drivers among them will take part in ride-along events for regulators, policy makers, and industry leaders, to provide real-time experience and a deeper understanding of life on the road.

But most importantly, these women want to inspire and encourage 'generation next' to join the trucking industry, demonstrating by example, the wide-ranging and diverse careers that are available in trucking.

These goals are shared by many organizations in Canada, not only for the slightly-more-than-half female population in this country, but for men as well. This is why many of us are frustrated when we learn that despite our efforts, the number one theme that emerges in studies examining barriers to women in transportation continues to be lack of information and awareness. And the very

groups and initiatives that seek to close these information gaps and heighten awareness, aren't themselves well known.

Last month, I wrote about the barriers examined in the Asia Pacific Gateway Skills Table report *Women in Transportation Careers: Understanding Participation in Canada*, a study commissioned by Transport Canada to validate the widely accepted assumption that women are underrepresented in transportation careers across Canada.

I like to think of the Image Team as a revitalized and proactive approach to overcoming those barriers we talk so much about, one of them being a stale brand. Trucking is not actively chosen by women because it's not acknowledged as an attractive job. If we want to help women get excited about transportation as a career choice, we have to show them women out there working and succeeding in the industry, and dealing with the lingering perception that transportation jobs are for men.

This perception starts early, which is why I champion organizations like Trucker Buddy, that teams up professional drivers and elementary school classrooms and has introduced over a million children and their families to the best of the trucking industry since its inception 26 years ago.

Or how about WIT's Transportation Patch for Girl Scouts (Girl Guides up here), another initiative we're hoping to see grow in Canada. The curriculum will introduce a new generation of girls to the trucking industry, and to opportunities for careers as drivers, mechanics, engineers, managers, and company owners. How cool is that?

By now, many of you will have met Clare, the doll created by toy-maker HABA for WIT. Sport-



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ing jeans and a T-shirt and telling the story of her own journey into the driver's seat, this toy sends the message to girls that the world is wide open to them, and whatever they want to be, including a professional driver, is just great.

To start breaking down barriers and creating interest or curiosity in trucking careers, we need to challenge ourselves to think creatively, outside the rigidity of the proverbial box. That means embracing new ideas while supporting the best of what we're already doing.

When you start contemplating the possibilities, it's clear that there's more to be done than one group on its own can do. I'm inspired by the words of Angela Splinter, CEO of Trucking HR Canada, when she spoke recently about her battle with cancer and how the various medical teams and others involved with her treatment and well-being "checked their egos at the door" and worked together to put her back on the road to health.

Splinter likened her personal experience toward success to the goal of many of us – getting more women to choose careers in the trucking and logistics industry. It is not a fight or a battle, she said, but a journey that everyone needs to be part of. And the Image Team is ready to roll.

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