



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

...from the
director's chair

Wellness news you can use

Truck shows – love'em or hate'em – are a good place to take stock of what's on the minds of the steering wheel crowd. After we shoot the breeze about what's on the show floor, especially the glitzy iron and cool new gear and gadgets, and share stories about some of the weird and wonderful things that have happened since the last show, we settle down for some serious discussion about issues that really matter.

As we celebrate the 10-year anniversary of OBAC's launch at Truck World 2002, I've spent a reflective moment or two recalling some of those conversations. Not surprisingly, some issues make the list every year: costs (ever-escalating), rates (and the struggle to have them cover costs), regulatory burden (and related cost- and hassle-factor of compliance), lack of truck parking (chronic and critical) have never left us. Licensing standards, business smarts, emerging technologies, fuel economy, and of course, green-everything, have also prompted many lively debates and discussions over the decade.

But if there's one top-of-mind issue for drivers today that almost no one was talking about 10 years ago, it's driver wellness.

It's not like we didn't know that the sedentary life of an over-the-road driver is a litany of compromises in diet and sleep routines, and some downright bad habits. It's often tough to eat well, to stay physically active and to get proper rest out on the road. And keeping regular medical appointments is just a pipe dream for many drivers, whose personal priorities are almost always trumped by compliance and operational realities.

Call it age and wisdom, or perhaps just plain fed up-ness, but many drivers are adding healthy lifestyle and good life-work balance to things like a safe workplace and a decent wage when it comes to "must-haves" in their job.

As a result, there's a solid core of truck drivers out there – small, but growing – who are bent on making their own health and wellbeing a priority. They're learning, shar-

ing, and doing whatever it takes to raise awareness and focus attention on the importance of driver health and wellness.

When you visit the OBAC booth at Truck World in Toronto this month, you'll see what I mean. We've got a number of activities going on to highlight some of the wellness issues drivers are talking about.

A big one is diabetes. While it's always been on the radar screen, because diagnosis and treatment of the disease are closely scrutinized by commercial vehicle licensing authorities, drivers themselves are becoming more aware of the lifestyle factors that may trigger Type 2 diabetes, and how many of the risk factors can be controlled or eliminated.

With support from the Canadian Diabetes Association, we'll have nurses on site all three days doing blood sugar testing, checking blood pressure, and measuring BMI. They're also armed with a wealth of practical tips and information on nutrition that show how it's possible to steer away from a long-haul lifestyle of poor food, weight gain and deteriorating health.

We'll also have demonstrations by drivers of their on-road fitness equipment and routines, including Kitchener-based owner/operator (and OBAC life member) Alfy Meyer, a remarkable example of how it's possible to stay fit on the road.

This guy uses his bunk in ways one wouldn't have thought possible, for calisthenics and back exercises. And he's got a portable gym and folding stepper tucked away in his cab, too.

At the other end of the spectrum, you'll see drivers who stay fit with nothing more than a good pair of walking shoes, resolve to get their butt in gear (and in shape), and a pedometer to track their progress.

You'll also be able to load up with a ton of helpful information and cool hand-outs from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Canadi-



**Joanne
Ritchie:**
OBAC
executive
director

an Breast Cancer Foundation and Prostate Cancer Canada, and we'll give you the skinny on a number of online sites where drivers support each other in their shared desire to develop habits that will help them get – and stay – healthy.

And if you're interested in running or cycling (yes, from the road), there are Facebook groups – Truckin' Runners and Ride and Roll – started by drivers to exchange information and encourage each other. I met a couple of the group members during the Health Awareness Walk at the Mid-America Trucking Show in Louisville, and boy, are these guys keen!

OBAC is celebrating another special anniversary at the truck show; it's the fifth birthday of Canada Calling, our twice-weekly gig on the Dave Nemo show. Besides giving ourselves a big thumbs-up for bringing the only regular Canadian content to SiriusXM's trucking channel, I want to give a shout out to a couple of our good Road Dog friends.

Thanks to hosts like Dave Nemo and Evan Lockridge, thousands of drivers across Canada and the US have regular access to health professionals who bring them relevant and practical support and advice.

That's another thing that's changed dramatically in the past decade: social media and satellite radio are playing a significant role in promoting wellness, as we use the technology to keep the conversations going long after we leave the truck shows.

So if you make it to Truck World, stop by our booth to enjoy the wellness activities and help us celebrate our anniversaries. And if you can't make it to the truck show, jump on the radio or the laptop and start talking. □