



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

Green is pricey, and heavy too

There isn't a government in this country – federal, provincial, or territorial – that doesn't have some kind of climate change “plan” in place, and we've even seen some modest reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in some sectors because of public education and incentives.

But in the transportation sector, which remains a major contributor to greenhouse gas growth, governments have been slow to react with any strategies to address the problem. While they're quick to say that emissions have grown by about 32% in the sector since 1990, they're not so quick to point out that this includes all transportation – air, marine, rail, pipeline – in addition to all on-road and off-road vehicles.

And when they're pointing fingers at road transportation, they conveniently forget that growing emissions from diesel engines aren't because the engines are “dirty,” but because there are simply more of them on the roads since they started measuring.

And there's the rub. As the economy improves, demand for trucking services increases, more trucks on the road, more GHG emissions. We can't have it both ways.

The industry has been making huge investments to meet EPA emissions standards and to implement fuel economy strategies to keep trucking a safe and affordable mode of transportation, and it's about time governments came to the table with some help.

In November, Ontario became the first province with an incentive program that owner/operators can take advantage of. The province earmarked \$2.9 million for anti-idle devices as part of larger \$15 million, four-year program. The balance of the cash will be used to fund investment in hybrid and alternative-fuel technologies for light- and medium-duty commercial vehicles.

The money won't last long – the big fleets will grab some of it too – but it's a start. Another scary thing is how dangerously close we came

to getting nothing at all out of the program for Class 8 vehicles.

When OBAC attended a preliminary stakeholder meeting for the program, we were the only ones in the room presenting an over-the-hood view of the world.

We shared the room with numerous suppliers of various green technologies, as well as reps from light- and medium-duty truck makers – Class 2 through Class 7 – who were looking for a pot of money for the advancement of hybrid and alternative-fueled vehicle technologies.

Indeed, at the outset, the lighter vehicles were the only ones initially on the radar screen of the Ontario government. The program designers figured these vehicles were less likely to travel outside the province, and they wanted to ensure Ontario program dollars were spent reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario's air.

I mean, really. This is air we're talking about. Attempting to put geographic borders around GHG emissions is like designating a no peeing area in a swimming pool.

Like Ontario, other jurisdictions which are looking at incentive programs want to ensure that they get cleaner air in their own backyards for their investment.

I think this is where our federal government should show a little leadership and get energy ministers across the country to agree: an idle-free truck parked anywhere, regardless of where it comes from, is a good thing.

And there's another message we're sending loud and clear to governments. While the cash incentives are nice – indeed welcome – we could use an adjustment to our weights and dimensions regs too.

Since EPA's emission reduction rules rolled out in October 2002, roughly 500 lbs of air cleaning equipment has been added to the weight of a truck. EPA2010 will be upon us in just 12 months, and with that will come another 400-500 lbs worth of hardware we'll have to



**Joanne
Ritchie:
OBAC
executive
director**

hang on our tractor frames – somewhere. Space will be an issue for some, but that's another story for another day.

If you want to add disc brakes to your next truck, you'll be faced with adding another 400 lbs. You can spec' aluminum hubs to save 300 lbs, but you'd pay dearly for it. APUs, or battery-powered climate control systems some of the OEMs are offering, add another 400-500 lbs. A moose bumper? Aerodynamic devices? Again, more weight.

Since 2002, we've lost close to 2,000 lbs of potential payload to various bits of mandated hardware. Put another way, there is some darned useful equipment that many of you will have turned down because it either weighs too much or costs too much.

Most of these extra pounds will hang on the tractor, spread between the steer axle and the drive axles. We'd like to see a 1,000-lb tolerance on the steer axle and 1,000 lbs on the drive axles for trucks equipped with the above-mentioned hardware.

In the grand scheme of things, this won't have a negative impact on our roads either – a pretty small percentage of trucks actually run at or close to maximum gross weight all the time. In this case, we're asking for little more than a stroke of the regulatory pen and a little common sense.

And wouldn't it be nice, whether it be weight tolerances or green technology incentive programs, if our governments could talk to each other and bring some cross-country harmonization to the schemes as well?