



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

*...from the
director's chair*

City Bylaws: Part Two

Ever had these thoughts: Did I explore and take advantage of every option available to me?

Did I get maximum value for my efforts? Can I do more to improve my situation?

Well, in the real world this phenomenon may well drive you crazy trying to stay ahead of lost opportunity known as “water under the bridge.”

But sometimes we miss obvious opportunities to make an impact on issues that profoundly affect our businesses every day of the week, either because we label them “more trouble than they’re worth,” or they simply seem beyond our reach.

More often than not, the frustration associated with truckers’ feelings of helplessness to affect change at the municipal level – or indeed any level of government – leaves them no sounding board except maybe others experiencing similar frustrations.

In Part I of this column, which appeared in the March 2005 issue, we looked at city bylaws from the driver’s perspective. As a working driver myself, it was easy for me to collect data directly from the steering wheel crowd.

My conversations with them revealed a distinct pattern. Mostly, they feel victimized by a system they believe is beyond their control. One woman’s remark: “Restrictive bylaws ought to be replaced with a more co-operative initiative between industry and government,” was echoed by many.

Through countless hours of research, including interviews with city bylaw officials country-wide, OBAC has penetrated the not-so-thick outer skin of the municipal commercial vehicle bylaw framework and what it has revealed is, for the most part, not unexpected.

Standing committees on public works that involve research and participation of industry stakeholders and the community are an inte-

gral part of how cities arrive at suitable bylaw formulation. None of the cities we talked to had trucking industry specialists on their committees, although one or two had “consulted” a trucking expert on occasion.

More troublesome was discovering that most of the folks we talked to were not familiar with the trucking industry’s hours of service regulations, or the problems truckers face trying to find suitable parking for HOS compliance within or near municipalities. Some thought perhaps “someone else” in the system might be aware of regulations truckers face; generally, the larger the city, the less the senior bylaw people knew about what was happening on the streets. This could be simply because there are more layers of bureaucracy to wade through, but it makes you wonder.

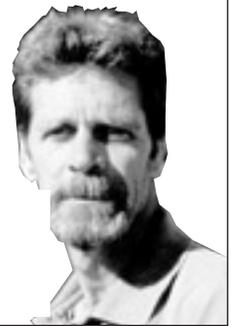
With the emphasis on (but not limited to) HOS, the parking issue in particular drew mixed responses from different-size cities in different areas of the country.

The good news is that some city officials are very co-operative and willing to better understand the negative impact that reduced options for truck parking in the city is having on the trucking community. The bad news is there are still some who are neither concerned nor interested in what they feel doesn’t concern them.

One senior official, who dismissed HOS because they are “governed by provincial regulations,” works for a city with a commercial vehicle division that enforces those very regulations. Pretty scary indeed.

We also asked what kind of research or evaluation cities did, when planning for future industrial growth, to ensure they can accommodate the increased commercial traffic needed to service this growth. The short answer was, by and large, “none, really...” apart from what they would normally do to plan for safe and efficient

**Don
Robertson:
OBAC
Vice-President**



movement of traffic.

In general terms, there’s evidence of a willingness on the part of the municipalities to open dialogue with the owner/operator community in Canada. This willingness is little comfort to the trucker when the bylaw enforcement officer wakes him or her at 3 a.m. and asks them to move their truck because they’re breaking some city bylaw.

But cities are asking that we, too, try to understand that parking trucks on city streets overnight – even within the boundaries of industrial parks for rest purposes – presents problems for most municipalities. The two most serious factors they identified as “compromising” a roadway were trucks parked so as to impede the safe and efficient movement of traffic, including access, and winter snow removal.

So what’s the answer? In essence, if we’re not prepared to legitimize our claim as an industry stakeholder and come to the table, our concerns will continue to be overlooked and we’re stuck with accepting the agendas of those who choose to stand up and be counted.

Opening dialogue with municipalities to review commercial vehicle transportation policies, either directly, or through other stakeholder organizations such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities or CCMTA, may be the most effective way of developing joint strategies on municipal issues concerning owner/operators. This is a priority objective of OBAC; with your support in helping us build a strong organization, we can provide a voice that’s long overdue.