



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

OBAC/OOIDA partnership: Still wondering what you'll get?

"So I hear you finally got married," someone said to me at a truck show last month. I was about to tell her she'd heard wrong until I realized she was referring to news of OBAC's recent affiliation with OOIDA. "Actually, we'll just be living together," I told her.

Since we announced our intention to establish formal ties with the OOIDA, our US sister organization, I've been flooded with calls and e-mails giving me the thumbs up, commenting that a formal partnership between OBAC and OOIDA just makes so much sense. Think about it: a truck crosses the Canada/US border every 2.5 seconds, 24/7, carrying \$30 million worth of imports/exports every hour. So do we have a vested interest in the health and safety of the industry in each other's country? You bettcha!

We're working on the pre-nuptial agreement now. Each organization will maintain its autonomy in name and membership; we both represent the interests of small-business truck owners and drivers, and although many of the issues and concerns are common, we each have our own political and regulatory systems to work within. But two strong associations with a common purpose will benefit truckers North America-wide.

One of our first steps will be to find a way to make it simple and cost-effective for truckers who travel between Canada and the US to be members of both associations. Supporting the association that represents your interests with your own country's policy makers and regulators is essential, but when you're working in another country, and subject to that country's rules and regulations, you'll want your voice heard there too.

We share a common goal to provide prod-

ucts and services that help members reduce costs and operate more safely and efficiently. OOIDA already offers an excellent array of benefit programs, and rather than reinvent the wheel, we'll take a look at those programs to determine what we might be able to modify or adapt for OBAC members, or perhaps use as models on which to build our own.

OOIDA has built an impressive communications network over the years and they've been generous and supportive in letting us share that network – particularly through their magazine and radio show – as we build and strengthen our own. That's another goal we have in common: to provide accurate and timely information to truckers about the things that affect their everyday lives; current legislation, regulations, new products and services, and industry news.

OOIDA has a 30-odd year head start on us, so there's no doubt we'll benefit from its years of insight and experience in making an association work.

I had more than one of those 'moments' during the week I spent as a guest of OOIDA and its board at their national headquarters in Grain Valley, MO, an impressive building just off I-70 east of Kansas City, where members are welcomed by a knowledgeable, friendly staff of over 340 and encouraged to stop by and discuss the price of tomatoes with their executive committee.

You know the old saying about never getting two truck drivers in a group to agree on anything? These folks certainly blow that myth out of the water. OOIDA is guided by a 22-member board of directors and six board alternates, and all the directors and officers are currently or have been professional truckers.



Joanne
Ritchie:
OBAC
executive
director

With close to 700 years of stick time among them, there was no doubt in my mind there'd be nothing these folks didn't know about trucking. But what I wasn't prepared for was how knowledgeable and well-informed these men and women are about their political system and legislative processes at both the federal and state levels, how rules are made – and changed – and how they can effectively participate in that process.

And how they participate! OOIDA is involved in virtually every aspect of rulemaking, highway safety, and transportation policy affecting professional truckers. The board defines OOIDA's position on issues and it was a marvelous thing to watch how all those years of knowledge and experience were brought to bear on discussion and decision-making.

Their voice is taken very seriously – because a director from Texas or Nebraska or Ohio can call their state representative to voice a position or ask for support on a particular issue and can tell the elected official that there are 15,000 or 1,750 or 7,800 OOIDA members – voters – in the state. That's clout.

And that's what I mean by those 'moments.' I kept imagining how so many of you would be right in there, sharing your wisdom and your vision, working to make the industry a whole lot better – safer, happier, more profitable – place to live and work. There is absolutely no reason why we can't do the same thing in Canada. In fact, if we want to ensure that transportation policy and rules are made taking the views and interests of professional truckers into account, it's the only effective way to do it.