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# **Employment-Related Geographical Mobility in the PEI Trucking Industry**

Report written for the PEI Trucking Sector Council

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## **Project Background**

The purpose of this study overall is to learn more about how truck drivers and the trucking industry operating out of PEI are affected by employment-related mobility (and how this has changed over time). This will involve a qualitative investigation of the impact of employment-related mobility on truck drivers, employers, families, local communities and the province. The study also seeks to investigate policies that affect recruitment of trucker drivers and the trucking industry generally in PEI. This report documents the initial results from the first phase of data collection for the project.

### ***Focus for this report***

This report details the results from the On the Move Partnership<sup>1</sup> PEI project interviews with both trucking industry employers and truck drivers. The focus of the report is the comparison, between these two groups, of the challenges facing the trucking industry and truck driving, as well as the positives of working in the industry. The report then details the best practices discussed in the interviews and suggested solutions to dealing with current industry and driver challenges. The PEI findings are then put into the context of literature findings from the Canadian trucking industry generally.

### ***Methods***

The qualitative data, informing this report, was collected in 2013-2014, and consists of semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 individual truck drivers and 8 employers of truckers or company representatives. Two driver interviews were conducted during ride alongs, where the drivers took the interviewer out for a day with them during their regular driving routes. Two semi-structured interviews with key informants, who are involved in regulatory capacities, were also conducted. The researcher also conducted participant observation at several industry functions, as well as visiting and speaking with companies and people working within the trucking industry.

## **Findings**

### ***Challenges of Truck Driving***

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<sup>1</sup> The *On the Move Partnership: Employment-Related Geographical Mobility in the Canadian Context* is a project of the SafetyNet Center for Occupational Health and Safety Research at Memorial University. *On the Move* is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through its Partnership Grants funding opportunity, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Research and Development Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University, Dalhousie University and numerous other university and community partners in Canada and elsewhere.

Truck drivers were asked during interviews what they found challenging about their work, below details the most discussed answers.

The most discussed challenge of truck driving was **balancing family responsibilities with work**. This grouping of challenges refers to work-life balance, as well as how family obligations and relationships are maintained while away at work driving a truck.

The balancing of work commitments with that of family was variable depending on the age of the driver and their family dynamics. Those drivers without children were less likely to find this an issue. Drivers with grown children also found this less of an issue, however, they were also likely to have been in the industry for quite some time. In discussion of family and work-life balance time away from home was considered challenging, particularly to those in regional or long-haul trucking, although those in short haul also noted that the long hours worked, regardless of being home at night, were problematic.

A relatively new truck driver working short haul described the challenge: “I’m always on call and I know that. So, like, sometimes I know the evening before, but like, yesterday, they texted me and they wanted me to come in immediately...And I couldn’t because I had my children, so that’s just how it was.” One former long haul driver, who now did short haul, discussed the impact of long haul trucking on his family: “...the challenges for the one left behind...It’s often been said, we both said it, I guess my wife and I. It’s a single parent living without the single parent loss of income.”

This is connected to other concerns and industry challenges (such as pay and flexibility of scheduling- discussed further below). Also, as discussed in the owner interview analysis,

employers are fully aware balancing family responsibilities and time away from home are problematic, particularly in trying to recruit and maintain drivers in the trucking industry.

The second most discussed challenge of truck driving was **hours of service**. This discussion centered around those drivers that worked regional or long-haul and were thus subject to hours of service regulations. Older drivers discussed the historical changes to these regulations. Drivers who worked cross-border routes into the US noted in particular how recent changes to that country's hours of service regulations had become quite strict. Given that routes which make up "the triangle"<sup>2</sup> are major ones for PEI trucking companies and take drivers through the US, this impacts PEI companies considerably. The issues with recent changes to hours of service regulations are the difficulties surrounding a lack of flexibility for drivers in terms of driving windows of time. These stringent regulations were felt to take away from driver agency and not recognize the time management skills of drivers. There was also mention that some companies drivers had worked with did not dispatch their trucks in a manner that was in accordance with hours of service regulations. Drivers for these companies were expected to do runs in the time provided even if illegally, falsifying log books. This created tension for drivers who did not want to risk fines for breaking hours of service regulations and yet felt that the runs they were assigned were not achievable without doing so. As one interviewee noted with the move in the US to mandate electronic log books there will be increasingly less room to run illegally regarding hours of service, "And I think it'd work wonderful as long as the rest of the industry adjusts to it too right? Not just..the truck drivers, truck companies you know." That interviewee felt that the biggest adjustments will need to be made by shippers and receivers, who currently demand service that is not achievable within regulations.

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<sup>2</sup> "The triangle" is a terms used to describe the major transportation and trade corridors connecting Atlantic Canada, the American northeast and Ontario/Quebec.

The third most discussed challenge of truck driving was **rates of pay**. The discussion surrounding rates of pay was quite different regarding local (hourly paid work) versus that of regional or long haul work (paid by the kilometer). For local work, or that paid hourly, the pay was considered low and there was suggestion by some drivers who had worked local routes that employers were not paying overtime. Some drivers seemed surprised that they may have qualified for overtime pay. The regulations surrounding the payment of overtime in the trucking industry on PEI changed in 2012 and it is unclear if these regulations are abided by. Older drivers noted that pay has not changed significantly in quite some time for drivers and examples were given of pay not increasing at all in the last 5 years. This was linked by some to undercutting and stagnant rates for movement of freight and general suppression of pay, for both freight and drivers, in the Maritimes. For example a driver with decades worth of experience stated “I know for a fact, or pretty near know for a fact, that we’re hauling, there’s outfits on the highway today hauling for the same rate we got, say, 5 years ago.”

There were long haul drivers who felt that there needed to be further transparency in how companies they worked for were calculating their pay and what was being deducted. Others felt they were not being paid what their labour was worth, particularly when contrasted with those in other provinces. One driver felt they had to go to unnecessary lengths to get paid what they felt were regional norms, stating “we had an argument over the wage and I actually had to quit to get a raise.” This driver felt this was disrespectful and created an antagonistic relationship with his employer. For those workers coming into the country specifically as TFW<sup>3</sup> there were concerns about inflated wages being told to them, which then were not achievable unless they were willing to have no home lives.

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<sup>3</sup> Temporary Foreign Workers, a national immigration program.

There were those drivers and owners interviewed who thought drivers, particularly long haul and regional, could make a “good” or “decent” living. This seems contingent on what is considered a “good” yearly income and the amount of work needed to achieve this income, that is, the time spent away from home. The positive considerations of income in truck driving will be specifically discussed in the section Positives of Truck Driving.

The next topics discussed most frequently were **flexibility of scheduling** and **driver training**.

**Flexibility of scheduling** was discussed as a challenge in terms of scheduling home time, as well as routes, and, less so, scheduling of pick-ups and drop-offs. Many drivers emphasized the importance of companies being flexible in scheduling the home time they would prefer (for some this was more often, but others preferred longer times away), as well as routes they preferred (some enjoyed dedicated routes, other preferred to have a mixed schedule). One driver was warned away by others about working for a certain local company “Simply for the fact that if they know you got a Class 1 driver’s license, the minute you walk in the door they throw a set of keys at you and you’re gone. And you’re never home. They say, “Well ya,” “Do here, do here, do here and then you can come home for a couple of days.” Or whatever, and the couple of days might be a couple of hours. So, no. I just, I love my job. But I’m not, I’m not living to work.” This driver would not work for a company that was not flexible with their scheduling. This was also related to issues with dispatch. Owners also discussed aspects of scheduling and recognized the need for flexibility.

**Driver training** was discussed as a challenge by experienced drivers in terms of younger people coming into the industry without previous experience such as those with agricultural heavy equipment experience. Also, young drivers discussed the challenges of entering the industry and

trying to obtain the two years experience many companies were demanding, particularly to do long haul trucking. The other aspect of driver training discussed was that, despite having specialized training this, was not officially recognized by government in terms of being skilled work or the general public. This topic was one that owners discussed as well as a challenge for the industry.

### ***Drivers- Challenges for Industry***

When asked about broader challenges to the entire industry (not just the work of truck driving), the majority of drivers brought up the topic of **pay for drivers and freight costs**. Several drivers linked issues of pay of drivers to the difficulties the industry faces in recruiting and retaining drivers. There was also recognition by some (particularly older drivers) that there had been stagnation not just of driver pay but also of freight rates as noted in the section “rates of pay”. This stagnation of freight rates was viewed to be directly related to that of driver pay. Drivers felt there was a considerable difference between short and long hauling, with short haul hourly rates of pay unable to compete with those of Alberta. As noted above in the Challenges of Truck Driving, the issue of overtime pay was also mentioned. Regarding long haul driving one interviewee noted that being paid by kilometers trucked amounted to piece work, of which he was critical.

The second most talked about challenge for the industry was **recruitment of young people**. Drivers agreed recruiting young people was important and not occurring enough to replace older drivers. One noted that with the shift to electronic log books it was likely some older drivers would retire rather than make the switch from paper further adding to the issue. There are also

issues surrounding training in trying to recruit young people as discussed in the section “driver training”.

The third most discussed challenges for industry were **shipping, receiving and dispatching** and **immigrants and TFW**.

Regarding **shipping, receiving and dispatching**, drivers had concerns about the tight timeline pressures within the industry. There was mention of issues within the relationship with dispatchers, which could be difficult. Shipping, receiving and dispatching all fall within the context of logistics and some drivers discussed logistics as of key importance and a key challenge to the industry. There was also mention that technology was changing logistics, particularly electronic log books as mentioned in the Challenges of Truck Driving “hours of service” section.

Some drivers expressed concerns about **immigrants and TFW** entering the trucking industry. There were some racist remarks made by a small minority of drivers. Others expressed concerns about the training, experience and language skills of drivers coming into the industry from outside of Canada. Drivers also noted that the government was willing to subsidize TFW truck drivers but would not support local workers in the same way. The government was felt to then be essentially supporting out-migration of local workers to other areas of Canada and the importation of cheaper labour for the region. In interviewing drivers who were immigrants, some of whom had come to PEI as TFW, they had concerns about the over inflation of yearly incomes and work quoted by employers before they arrived. They felt the pay and working conditions had not been explained fully.



Other challenges discussed include **lack of respect by employers for truckers, recognition of driving as skilled labour, media representation of the industry, and transportation infrastructure.**

**Lack of respect by employers for truckers,** was discussed particularly in relation to local short haul work but also as an overall challenge. As one driver who works in Alberta, but had worked extensively in short haul on PEI, stated, “A lot of employers would be a little bit disappointed to hear what I’m going to say but I don’t care. In the west, in the west the employers appreciate the employees. In the east, the employees are dirt on the employers’ feet.” This was linked to issues of recruitment.

**Recognition of driving as skilled labour,** was discussed as a challenge to the industry that was also related to the public perception of the industry, which was thought to need improvement. Many drivers expressed frustration at the lack of respect accorded not only to their work but the industry as a whole, despite our society being dependent on it for the movement of goods.

**Media representation of the industry,** was thought to be a challenge linked to recruitment and the lack of respect for the industry. There was thought to be negative portrayals of the industry by media, which were considered skewed in not showing positive aspects of the industry.

**Transportation Infrastructure,** was discussed as a challenge to the local PEI industry, with road conditions mentioned in particular as well as the issues faced by those working long haul having to contend with roadway traffic around major cities.

### ***Positives of Truck Driving***

The most mentioned positives of truck driving were **flexible scheduling, being your own boss** and **decent pay**. **Flexible scheduling** was also mentioned as a challenge, as discussed above, however, it seems that if drivers are given flexible scheduling this is then viewed as a positive of the work. Drivers mentioned examples such as being able to scale back runs by truck sharing and being able to schedule for family engagements. Drivers also felt a positive of the work was being able to have either variability in their schedule so as to constantly feel challenged or dedicated runs, depending on their preference. All drivers interviewed had a variety of work experiences since being employed as a truck driver, which allowed for them to assess what sort of scheduling they would prefer and often this preference changed over time.

**Being your own boss while on the road** was also discussed as a positive. Many drivers really enjoyed the ability to **be your own boss while on the road**, by which they meant not having someone supervising their work all the time. They also spoke about this in terms of feeling a certain amount of freedom while driving, this was particularly true for long haul drivers.

The other most mentioned positive was discussion of **decent pay** by drivers. Initially this seems problematic given that drivers also state this to be a challenge to drivers and the industry itself. However, those who mentioned this worked regional, long haul and short haul in Alberta. They were satisfied with their pay for the most part and did feel that it was a job in which people could make a decent living (by their individual definitions). However, drivers felt they put considerable effort and time towards earning their pay. One driver also noted that in comparison to other work in PEI (such as working within the trades) truckers made a better income.

The three positives talked about by several drivers were **likes the act of driving, likes the people**, and **good/new equipment**. **Likes the act of driving** was discussed by a few drivers in

relation to the other positive of **being your own boss while on the road**. In feeling the driving part of the job was enjoyable these drivers for the most part were older and had done the job for quite some time.

When discussing the positives of truck driving several drivers noted that they **liked the people** they interacted with in the industry. This group of drivers worked both short haul, regionally and long haul, thus somewhat contradicting the stereotype of the lonesome trucker. Many enjoyed their co-workers and other truckers that they met on the road. For one driver who had been in the industry for a long period on PEI some other drivers became “part of your family”. For these drivers there was a social aspect to the work that they enjoyed, whether that be co-workers, fellow drivers, or customers.

Those drivers who mentioned **good/new equipment** felt positives of the job were driving good trucks and having equipment such as satellite systems and work cell phones (or phones paid for by work).

### ***Employers- Challenges for Industry***

When employers were asked about challenges for the industry, by far the most discussed challenge to the trucking industry discussed by all employers was **recruitment and retention of drivers**. Employers discussed this topic from a range of perspectives, all noted that regardless of whether they were currently in need of drivers, they could foresee in the near future a problem with the number of available drivers on PEI. Almost all pointed out the aging driver population and the need to recruit young people to the industry. The need for further recruitment also led many employers to discuss the training of new drivers and the need for extended training by some carriers. This need for training and the lack of available drivers was linked by some employers to the shrinking pool of people with agricultural experience generally. They noted trucking was an industry traditionally associated with those from agricultural families. The complexity of the recruitment and training of drivers, as well as competition for them was discussed by the majority of employers. Smaller, local companies are the training grounds of most drivers as the larger companies have more extensive experience requirements. One employer characterized the movement of drivers between companies hiring in PEI as robbery which impacted smaller companies the most. Given that most employers noted training drivers was a costly investment this is problematic. While all employers agreed that they felt there was a shortage of drivers overall those short haul only companies seemed to have a considerably harder time attracting qualified, long term drivers. This dearth of short haul drivers was linked by employers to hourly wages deemed to be low by potential drivers and for certain freight hauling, particularly linked to agriculture, the variability of hours and seasonality of work were factors. Conversely employers hiring long haul drivers had issues finding those that wished to cross the US border and many of those hiring long haul drivers had issues finding drivers which they

linked to the time away from home expected of drivers. Some companies increasingly find that they are looking at or are using TFW to truck driving work, particularly long haul routes.

The majority of employers also discussed the challenges of **operating costs and profit margins**, **intensity of work hours**, **movement of workers “out West”**, and **TFW and immigrants**.

**Operating costs and profit margins** was discussed as a major challenge for the industry. In short haul trucking some employers were constrained by contracts, others, particularly in relation to agriculture were in tight local competition where accessibility was key to getting work. One employer discussed how they felt rates were suppressed in the province and regionally due to the lack of volume of freight. This was also noted by some drivers, as discussed, and linked to low pay for drivers (see Challenges of Truck Driving, “rates of pay”). In long haul trucking one employer discussed the negative impact brokers were having on freight rates, this was also in conjunction with the demand of cheap transportation rates from shippers and receivers. Also, most employers noted that fluctuating fuel costs had changed historically how rate agreements were made, with fuel surcharges being introduced.

The majority of employers noted the **intensity of work hours** which were challenging for them. They discussed how the hours they worked were challenging, as they felt being successful in the industry as an employer demanded they be accessible. This was particularly true for those working for or owning small or medium sized companies which generally entailed working multiple roles (such as sales, human resources and dispatch). In fact most employers of small companies, particularly those doing short haul runs, will fill in for drivers if the need arises. Technology has allowed freedom of movement through the use of cell phones, however this also means that most employers are constantly on call in case of any issues. One employer noted the

importance of being accessible to his clients and drivers, “I take my phone everywhere...it’s only a couple times that I don’t have my phone with me. One’s in the shower...”

**Movement of workers “out West”** was a challenge discussed by many employers. This discussion included relating many stories they had heard and people they knew who had either moved out of province or were working in Alberta (in particular). These were people who were qualified to drive trucks or people who may have been interested in working in the trucking industry in some capacity. Employers discussed how this was problematic for recruitment to the industry. Particularly there was discussion of how work “out West”, which generally referred to Alberta, was perceived to be easy money by those in PEI and the rates of pay in Alberta were such that employers here could not compete with them. It was also noted by one employer that people were in fact taking driver training locally to then go work in Alberta and that the trucking school on PEI was advertising their training as a pathway to employment in Alberta.

**TFW and immigrants** were discussed as a challenge for those employers hiring them in terms of cost and effort navigating the paperwork needed by government. Employers noted the increase by trucking companies using particularly TFW and questioned whether this was sustainable for the industry. Other employers noted that if they were unable to find drivers they may have to resort to using TFW.

Many employers also specifically discussed the challenge of the **retirement of aging drivers**, in conjunction with the issue of having an aging workforce. Some of the issues surrounding the aging driver workforce were health and adaptation to new technology, which were mentioned by some employers.

Several employers discussed **truck driving as demanding work** noting that drivers were under considerable scrutiny, as well as time pressures for deliveries, particularly for just-in-time long haul deliveries and for short haul driving there were seasonal peak times which demanded considerable time and effort on the part of drivers.

The challenge of the **heavy regulation of industry** was mentioned by several employers. They specifically mentioned the impact of hours of service regulations as being challenging particularly for drivers working in the US. Such regulations impacted employers' abilities to keep customers and drivers happy.

**Public perception** was considered a challenge by some employers, particularly in relation to negative media stories and negative stereotypes of the industry. There was a sense that the industry is not respected and that the negative perceptions of the industry impact recruitment of youth.

**Relationships with customers** were considered challenging by employers in maintaining good business relationships, which for local hauling meant at times being social with customers or doing work for them you would not normally accept, in order to keep ongoing relationships. However, in long haul trucking relationships with customers could also be demanding and at times there was little or no loyalty.

Challenges discussed by a couple of employers each were **relationships with drivers**, and **flexible scheduling**.

**Relationships with drivers** were discussed as challenging at time, particularly in relation to employers having to deal with driver interpersonal issues.

The challenge of **flexible scheduling** was mentioned by employers. One mentioned that with a shortage of drivers it becomes difficult to have flexibility.

### ***Employers- Recruitment***

When asked how they recruit workers, particularly drivers, the majority of employers said they used **word of mouth** as the means to spread the word. Most employers encouraged drivers they currently employed to refer friends for open positions. Employers found that finding drivers or employees by word of mouth the most effective and usually the best candidates. Some employers give their employees bonuses for referrals. It is not surprising this is the most used method of recruitment given the small size of PEI and the tight knit trucking community. However, it does suggest that it would be difficult to find work if a person was not networked into employers or those currently driving trucks.

The second most discussed issue surrounding recruitment was **TFW and immigrants**. Several employers discussed how they recruited immigrants (including TFW), which included going on overseas promotional trips. Other employers said they would avoid recruiting immigrants, due to the cost and paperwork (see above Owners- Challenges for Industry for further discussion). One employer said he may in the future be forced to consider hiring immigrants given the difficulty he has had finding drivers.

The third most discussed issues surrounding recruitment were **recruitment of non-driving workers, advertisement of positions, driver coaching, and recruitment of women.**

**Recruitment of non-driving workers** was a concern for medium and larger companies in particular. In growing their businesses it is necessary to have adequate office staff, such as dispatchers. Also, it was noted by many that heavy equipment mechanics (who service vehicles



for the trucking industry) are also difficult to find and that the labour shortage of these workers is becoming increasingly problematic. One employer noted that the career trajectories of truck drivers often includes a shift to other work areas of the industry and as such this needs to be promoted within and outside of the industry.

Some employers discussed **advertisement of positions** available in their companies. Many posted available positions online at such sites as the Government of Canada Job Bank. However, most noted that they generally received poorly qualified applicants from these postings. Given this most employers preferred to find new employees through word of mouth (see above discussion).

**Driver coaching** was discussed by several employers in relation to recruitment. Several felt that coaching was an important way of training new drivers and having them be confident to do the work. This was compared to what were termed the “old school” methods which did not involve any on the job training or coaching but instead a sink or swim approach, even in driving long haul. Also, coaching drivers was viewed as a way for larger companies to be able to hire new drivers and give them the experience they needed within the company itself. The coaches went through a certification process. As one employer noted this approach avoided companies trying to “steal” away each others experienced, older drivers. However, intensive coaching, which entails a new driver shadowing an experienced one by going on runs with them, is an expensive means of training and thus smaller companies are less likely to have this coaching for long durations.

**Recruitment of women** was discussed by many employers. There was a recognition by many that recruitment of women into the trucking industry and as drivers would be beneficial,

particularly as it is a relatively untapped part of the labour market. However, for some companies there are structural barriers to hiring women, in that training is difficult to coordinate, whereas there were others known for not hiring women or being open to the possibility. There were also comments by some employers about their doubts as to the fit of women as truck drivers because they perceived women to be primarily responsible for childcare which would be challenging. However, these perceived potential issues were based on a very traditionalist notion of family structure and women's roles, which are problematic and do not reflect current family structures.

The fourth most discussed issues about retention were **networking with driving school, issue of large companies hiring drivers from smaller companies, and driver wages**.

**Networking with driving schools** was discussed by several employers as a good way to recruit new drivers. This was used in conjunction with coaching by many employers (as discussed above).

The **issue of large companies hiring drivers from smaller companies** was considered a problem particularly by smaller companies, although employers from larger ones acknowledged this was not ideal. In part smaller companies are good training grounds for drivers, who may then choose to do different types of driving available through larger companies (such as long haul dedicated routes). There are power dynamics at work in this process, which favour larger companies, as well as the career trajectories of drivers.

In relation to recruitment employers also discussed **driver wages**. Many employers felt that drivers were paid a good wage and that this was necessary in order to recruit drivers. However, as noted in the above section on potential employees working "out West" they recognized that inter-provincial comparisons, particularly with Alberta or ON did not hold up well.

Two employers discussed each of the following recruitment issues, **Perception of industry** and **recruitment from high school**.

**Perception of industry** was considered problematic for recruitment by a few employers. These employers felt there needed to be further communication about the positives of the industry to the general public and youth in particular in order to positively impact recruitment.

A few employers discussed the issue of **recruitment from high school**. One employer mentioned that an apprenticeship system, such as that used by many European countries, would be ideal. Another employer noted that currently it was extremely expensive to insure young workers, particularly for small companies, which put them at a disadvantage.

### ***Employers- Retention***

The most discussed topic in relation to retention by employers was **flexible scheduling**. Employers felt the best way to keep workers was to try to cater to their scheduling preferences. Some noted that there needed to be more creative means of scheduling in order to meet the needs of drivers for such things as quality home time. One employer noted that seniority systems within some companies could be problematic at times for flexible scheduling.

The second most discussed topics were **pleasant work environments, decent wages, provision of equipment, and personal perks**.

**Pleasant work environments** were considered important by several employers. This included having respectful relationships with employees and cultivating a team environment.

Employers also noted that paying **decent wages** was necessary in order to have employee retention. However, what was deemed decent wages, likely varied.

**Provision of equipment** was thought to be an issue in retention. Some employers felt that this was respectful of their employees and they would provide anything that was deemed reasonable.

**Personal perks** were provided by several employers. These were given to employees in order to team build and show support.

Also, a couple of employers discussed **safety and fuel bonuses**. These were given to employees for maintaining certain standards of safety and for reducing fuel consumption.

## Findings Analysis and Best Practices

The above findings show that in consideration of the industry challenges, as described by employers, relating to recruitment and retention of workers and particularly truck drivers there needs to be consideration of the specific challenges drivers face. In order to meaningfully mitigate these challenges employers need to focus on human resources. Those employers who focused on human resource issues and promoted positive team building were more effective in retaining their drivers.

In particular the interrelated challenges of **balancing family responsibilities with work** and **flexibility of scheduling** are issues which can be dealt with by employers cultivating a respectful work environment. Companies who are successfully flexible in their scheduling to suit the needs of drivers have the staff and drivers to be able to do so and are also creative in their routing, entertaining the possibilities of truck sharing and team driving. While this may not be possible in small companies, who are constrained by the number of drivers they have to meet their needs, many who prioritize this have found ways to meet their driver home time needs. The above runs contrary to what has been described by interviewees as the older methods of scheduling, which was predicated on a somewhat antagonistic relationship with drivers. This relationship is likely at the root of the challenge described as **lack of respect by employers for truckers**. Many drivers, with experience, feel they are in demand and will not accept this kind of relationship with employers, as such the onus of retention on employers is increased and they would do well to make human resources a priority.

However, the issues of **rates of pay, pay for drivers and freight costs, operating costs and profit margins**, and **decent wages** which were considered an important challenge for truck drivers and employers, are clearly all linked. Although there are localized differences in rates of

pay for drivers, particularly in relation to the type of trucking, such as short haul, within these types of trucking pay rates are relatively similar. Although the size of company was an issue, in that smaller companies were at a disadvantage often times in being able to afford higher rates of pay. However, as some drivers noted, employers who willingly paid the higher local rates and did not complain about it were considered to be respectful of their workforce. Also, employers would do well to have transparency in the rates of payment and deductions. Overall the rates of pay in relation to freight payments and profit margins are influenced by much larger economic forces than those within the province itself. As such, rates of pay by employers are constrained, which they would do well to communicate to their employees. For those employers paying hourly wages there is a clear need to be cognizant of overtime payment regulations, as well as recognizing the importance of such issues as home time and flexibility of scheduling, given their constraints in pay rates.

Another broader challenge in the trucking industry recognized by both drivers and employers was the issue of training which was discussed as **driver training, recruitment of young people, driver coaching, networking with driving schools, and recruitment from high school**. The training needed to be a truck driver is an issue that all employers, in some respect, felt was challenging. It is clear that the current system is not meeting the needs of the industry and as such needs to be restructured. There were several suggestions as to an apprenticeship system that would be better suited to the needs of industry. Given that training is an overarching industry concern and also under governmental jurisdiction it would be helpful to work with the provincial government to formulate a new training approach. Putting in place a system which transitions young people smoothly into a variety of trucking environments would also help resolve the

current industry **issue of large companies hiring drivers from smaller companies** and potentially help with the **recruitment of women**.

In connection with the issue of recruitment and training is that of **recognition of driving as skilled labour**. This is an issue which industry would do well to discuss with the federal government. Also, the **media presentation of the industry** is currently detrimental to promotion of the industry and an issue for worker morale. Promotion of professionalism within individual companies would be helpful in light of this, as well as community engagement.

### **PEI Findings in Context**

The PEI trucking industry is experiencing similar issues as other areas of Canada. The issues surround the labour shortage, particularly of truck drivers, which is being experienced nationally (Gill and Macdonald, 2013; Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2012; Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council, 2012). Factors discussed as likely to improve truck driver supply and demand match on the national level include: “a significant improvement in industry working conditions, marketing of the truck driving occupation, and driver training/licensing; a significant increase in driver wages; and a change in policy that recognizes the truck driving occupation as a skilled trade” (Gill and Macdonald, 2013, p. 17). These match many of the challenges found in the PEI research.

The working conditions and quality of life for truck drivers is a focus of several reports (Gill and Macdonald, 2013; Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2012). The issues raised match the challenges of PEI truck drivers. The Canadian Trucking Alliance notes the following as best practices carriers need to take on regarding driver quality of life: “Truck drivers should be able plan their lives like

most other employees and predict or anticipate their time away from work; Their time at work should not be wasted--at shipper/consignee premises, waiting for their trucks in the shop, or waiting for a response to a question of their carrier; They should be able to rely on their carrier not to interfere with their personal time by (for example) calling them back to work early; Driver wellness should be a top priority for employers; Driver security while on the road should also be a priority with the rise in cargo crime” (p. ii). It is clear home time and flexible scheduling are priorities for truck drivers across Canada, while issues such as driver security was not a main concern for PEI drivers or employers.

Driver compensation is also mentioned as a top issue nationally (Gill and Macdonald, 2013; Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2012). Driver wages are thought to need a significant increase to improve recruitment and retention, however, given the highly competitive nature of the trucking industry the historical trend has been for productivity gains to be passed on to the consumer as lower prices (Gill and Macdonald, 2013, p. 19). This practice will become increasingly problematic, as focusing on the daily conditions of competition does not allow for strategic long term planning to deal with what will likely be an increasing labour shortage (Gill and Macdonald, 2013, p. 33). The Canadian Trucking Alliance notes that some of the driver pay issues which can be addressed in the short term are increasing the predictability of weekly pay; transparency of compensation packages; and pay for all work, as well as reasonable expenses incurred while working (p. ii). This goes beyond the need for transparency discussed by some PEI drivers, however, they would likely be welcome best practices.

Driver training and recognition as a skilled trade was also considered a key issue nationally (Gill and Macdonald, 2013; Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2012). This was considered necessary in order to attract further youth to the industry, as well as allow for further access to student loans



for training (Gill and Macdonald, 2013, p.18). The recognition of truck driving as a skilled trade would also allow for permanent immigration of drivers. While immigration of drivers is a contentious issue in PEI with the shortage of drivers forecast to get worse having a system in place to attract qualified drivers for permanent immigration would be beneficial.

### **Works Cited**

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