

Driver Shortage Escalating across Canada

New studies conducted on behalf of the Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC) have identified an escalating shortage of qualified commercial truck drivers across Canada. Canadian fleets lose 22.1 percent of their drivers per year, according to Canada's Driving Force Phase 2, the follow-up to research conducted in 2002. That compares to an average driver turnover rate of 36 percent recorded at the time of the initial study. Even after the employers recruit new personnel, however, about 12 percent of the industry's job openings remain vacant — representing an immediate need for 12,000 additional Class 1/A drivers.

Almost half of the fleets admitted during surveys in 2006 that a lack of personnel forced them to idle equipment in the previous six months; 60 percent cited the driver shortage as one of the top two concerns facing their organizations.

"There is no 'magic bullet' to solve every human resources challenge, but this is the industry intelligence that fleets can use in their recruiting, training and retention strategies," says CTHRC Executive Director Linda Gauthier. "A high dollar and resulting slowdown in the manufacturing sector may have led some Eastern Canadian fleets to impose a temporary freeze on new hires, but the long-term need for qualified drivers is still a reality."

Independent researchers (RA Malatest and Associates) surveyed 1,432 employers and agencies, 270 newly hired drivers, 591 Class 1/A test participants and 954 licensees who were renewing their Class 1/A licenses. They also analyzed occupation and industry-related data from Human Resources and Social Development Canada.

Even though Canada has 662,400 Class 1/A license holders, a significant share of these individuals have retired or never worked as a commercial driver, the related studies concludes. Almost one-third of inactive licensees left jobs behind the wheel in favor of different careers. At a time when the trucking industry's retirement rates are on the rise, there is also little comfort in the knowledge that 73.3 percent of inactive license holders are over the age of 45. Moreover, the industry's newest drivers tend to consider trucking only after working in other careers, and 60 percent of them are over the age of 30.