

# Speaking from Experience

## Are We There Yet?

**M**y wife Connie I just returned from the Truckload Carriers Association's annual convention, which was held in Orlando, Florida this year and was another very successful event.

The theme of this year's convention was "The Power to Move." The driver shortage was once again a popular topic along with its closest friend, the topic of retention. I'm considering a new session that might raise some eyebrows, ruffle some feathers and stir the pot so to speak. I might call it "Are We There Yet?" and it will dispel the fact that we are currently suffering a driver shortage.

Enough with the driver shortage already. Ten years ago I heard an economist suggest that an over-population of vehicles doesn't mean there is a driver shortage; it means trucking companies have a habit of buying too many trucks and being unable to fill the seats. The results of a true driver shortage would be much more obvious than trucks against a fence at someone's terminal; there would be empty shelves in stores because shippers could not find a truck at any price to deliver the freight.

"Are we There Yet" refers to the average age of our driver workforce, quoted at various numbers usually around 47 years of age for for-hire drivers, and between 53 and 57 for unionized drivers. This average age means that the shortage we have been hearing about for a decade or longer is almost here, but is probably four to six years away. At this point shippers will be forced to compete for capacity, which will mean rate increases. I think a result of this will make drivers earning \$100,000.00 per year very

common. How else will trucking companies entice new participants to enter the industry? I believe in the free market and I believe that when we put the serious money that's out there into the pockets of drivers and owner operators where it should be, we will see a resurgence of interest in the industry by new people. New money along with better-trained drivers coming from a school system that adheres to minimum training standards and provides basic business tools to entrepreneurial Owner Operators will see us into the future.

I'm interested in hearing from you, the drivers who this industry relies on, about what you think would entice new people to enter this industry.

New TCA Chairman Barry Pottle of Pottle's Transportation believes his drivers deserve stability in their lives. Pottle guarantees each of his drivers a weekly salary. He doesn't believe a driver should be penalized if their truck is held up at a shop or if a shipper won't load or unload on time. He believes that uncertainty about your weekly income is wrong and this guaranteed salary solution works well for his company. That's innovation; I love it!

On a side note, congratulations to Bison Transport on winning the grand prize in the prestigious National Fleet Safety contest and Robert Transport for placing first in the Large Carrier division. Does my heart good to see a couple of Canadians scoop the big trophies. Well done! 🍁

