

Speaking from Experience

I am very pleased and proud to announce that we have done what many so-called experts suggested couldn't be done. We now have an apprenticeship program for truck drivers in Ontario. The official name is "Tractor-Trailer Commercial Driver". Program advisors, media and interested parties converged in Guelph on June 15th at the MacKinnon Transport terminal to congratulate each other on our accomplishment and to share the enrollment of the first applicant to our new program with both industry and non-industry media. At approximately 11:30 on the morning of Thursday, June 15th, Mr. Timothy Atkinson penned his signature to the very first apprenticeship application for truck drivers in Canada.

After over two years of meetings with stakeholders comprised of carriers, insurance brokers/companies, the Teamsters, OBAC, The Ontario Trucking Association, driver training associations and any other group who might have wanted to give us feedback or contribute to our effort, we are finally where we need to be. Thanks to all of the above for their support and dedication to this effort.

I will admit to choking up a little when Tim's signature went on that piece of paper. It's been a long road and it's great to see our efforts actually come to a good end. When I say end I mean, of course, an end to Phase 1, which is actually getting the program designed supported and approved. Phase 2 is to tidy up a few loose ends, after which we will begin promoting the opportunity to new drivers and registering companies with the Ministry to administer the programs throughout Ontario.

So what changes now? Nothing for awhile. Rather, I believe you will see a

migration of entry-level drivers who will naturally gravitate to those forward-thinking companies who get involved with the program. Why wouldn't they, the companies and the new drivers, both win? Companies who don't already have finishing programs will be encouraged to create and implement them in order to mentor the new grads before they strike out on their own. This will cost money, right? Yes, but there are monies available for companies who support apprenticeships through various government programs... enough money to cover the cost and then some. So the company gets a new driver trained to meet their needs and the training is paid for...that sounds like a good deal to me. Why will the drivers be attracted to those companies who are supporting the program? Because, for the most part, these will be the companies who have chosen to invest in the industry's future. In fact, I would bet that the first registering companies to the program will be the "who's who" of the industry. These companies may pay better, also. Better training, better pay, well-respected, solid company... that sounds like a good deal to me.

So who might not like this idea? One group would be training schools. As drivers start screening where they might want to spend their training dollars, one of the new questions they might ask could be "what carriers are you aligned with where I might enter the apprenticeship program?" Some less-reputable schools will have a hard time answering that question. At the end of the day the carrier will still screen what a student has learned



Drive for Apprenticeship a Success

while obtaining their AZ license. My hope is that drivers who come from sub-standard schools will cost carriers too much to make them proficient and therefore in the future those schools will be left out of this process. The only other nay sayers might be organizations who chose not to support the effort when they could/should have when we were battling in the trenches. Some of these organizations survive on government funding and will likely resent the fact that we have accomplished what they thought couldn't be done with only a great deal of drive and no funding.

I would like to express a very heartfelt note of congratulations and thanks to all who helped make the Tractor-Trailer Commercial Driver apprenticeship a reality.

Well done. Now lets get out there and make it work!

What do you think?

Please feel free to drop me a line on this idea.

Safe driving!

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For more information on the Tractor-Trailer Commercial Driver Apprenticeship program see the press release on page 60 and visit www.drive4apprenticeship.com 🍁

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