

Introduction and Background

The trucking industry plays a vital economic role in Canada, generating an estimated \$54.7 billion in expenditures and employing over 400,000 workers. Over ninety percent of all consumer products and foodstuffs in Canada and sixty two percent of cross-border trade with the United States are moved by truck. One of the most significant issues facing the industry is ensuring sufficient qualified drivers are available to carriers. An additional 37,000 drivers are needed per year.

To discuss this requirement, together with other issues facing the trucking industry in Canada, the Canadian Trucking Human Resources Council (CTHRC) is holding a national meeting in February 2006 for provincial, territorial and federal government representatives, along with trucking stakeholders.

CTHRC has developed four papers on key issues to provide background information for meeting participants and assist in focusing discussion at the meeting. Their content is summarized in this document.

Key Issues

Driver Licensing

The trucking industry is concerned with the commercial driver licensing programs currently in place within the provinces and territories across Canada. It is believed the industry would be better served by having comprehensive, more stringent, nationally consistent standards for commercial driver licensing.

Commercial driver productivity and retention are expected to improve with the development and introduction of a professional designation for the driver occupation, which would go beyond simple driving capability and cover most aspects of carrier operations. This could be implemented by the creation of a new license class or an endorsement to the current commercial classes. There have been several options identified for the designation, with one of the main issues being the defining of government and industry roles in such a program.

Both the introduction of national standards and a professional designation are thought to be advantageous to improving road safety; however, concern has been raised over the likely increased costs to government, industry and new drivers. Industry, government and stakeholders need to discuss and take a position on licensing with the resultant training implications for the good of our drivers, businesses and society.

Training Schools –Accreditation

The lack of accreditation standards for commercial driver training schools and the certification of trainers is a problem for carriers, schools and students. As a result, prospective employers cannot completely rely on the quality of training provided. Training schools generally favour the development of a national accreditation for schools and certification program for graduates as the most advantageous option.

The depth of training provided is also an issue. Carriers confirm that most new drivers receive limited training for their new occupation. They are trained to drive a truck or tractor, but often know little about the other aspects of their work, such as regulations, safety programs and administrative requirements.

Increased training, along with new accreditation and certification programs, will incur additional costs, which will probably fall on the new drivers undergoing the training. Many of these potential commercial drivers have low income and the increase in training costs will become a bigger factor in their decision to make a career in the trucking industry. Industry, government and stakeholders need to discuss and take a position on licensing with the resultant training implications for the good of our drivers, businesses and society..

Funding

Attending good quality commercial driver training school programs currently costs the participant anywhere between \$6,000 and \$12,000. Increased training requirements will only increase these fees. While private financial institutions offer loans, many prospective students cannot qualify for this form of funding. Consequently, government programs provide the funding necessary for many individuals to obtain their training. About thirty eight percent of students graduating from commercial driver training schools are funded under programs such as student loans, skills development programs and social assistance recipient programs.

These programs are reported to be quite successful, with seventy five percent or more of these individuals obtaining and keeping a job in trucking. However, not everyone is eligible for these programs. Changes are required to increase the number of people who can take advantage of these programs, thereby improving the quality of the training obtained and increasing long-term retention rates within the industry.

In addition, employers have access to government funding programs including Employment Assistance Services, Targeted Wage Subsidies and Job Creation Partnerships. To be eligible for these programs, the applicant has to be receiving EI, or have recently received it, and still be unemployed. The trucking industry makes little use of these programs as they are not generally directed to industry needs that mainly relate to in-cab training of new drivers. However, there would be greater participation in these programs if they were promoted more within the industry.

Immigration

Immigration is generally accepted as part of the solution to alleviate the shortage of commercial drivers within this country. Statistics indicate the numbers coming to Canada have almost doubled over the past year to six hundred drivers. They are mostly employed on international and long distance hauling for for-hire trucking fleets.

Five provinces are using a similar approach to bring foreign drivers into their jurisdictions, based on a combination of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and the Provincial Nominee Program.

Trucking is designated under the National Occupational Classification (NOC) as a low skill trade for immigration purposes. It is therefore awarded fewer points to gain entry into Canada than jobs rated at a higher skill level. A general review of NOC is scheduled for 2007, which could provide the trucking industry the opportunity to seek a higher skill rating for their drivers.

Upon entry into Canada, the foreign commercial driver is subject to the licensing laws within the jurisdiction of residency. These can vary dependent on the reciprocal licensing agreements in place between the jurisdiction and other countries. With the exception of one province, foreign drivers are required to pass written and road tests before obtaining their commercial driving license. The recognition of foreign credentials can also be a barrier to attracting quality drivers. There is general consensus that foreign drivers should have some level of formal training on equipment, regulations, rules of the road and business practices before operating on our roads.

Interrelationships

While the issues outlined above have been presented as four distinct topics, in reality there are linkages and overlaps among them. Some of these interrelationships are briefly discussed below.

There is a need for better training within the trucking industry. The training should be more comprehensive in nature and extend well beyond the sole confines of driving ability. Licensing authorities will probably need to be involved with industry in recognizing national training standards, issuing accreditation to commercial driving schools and credentials to training instructors.

More training will lead to higher training costs. In turn, this will place higher demands for funding. Not only will there be the need for improved access to funding programs, particularly for the low income worker, but also the ability to increase funding levels to meet the higher fees and other training costs.

A case can be made for immigrant commercial drivers to better understand the operating environment in Canada before being allowed to work 'on the road'. It could be beneficial if licensing authorities reviewed their programs, including reciprocal agreements with foreign countries to ensure greater consistency in the treatment of immigrant drivers across Canada.

The key item in moving ahead with the various options is that they be evaluated and developed through a working partnership between the trucking industry, provincial and territorial governments and the federal government. Defining the partnership and identifying the roles played by each party has been suggested as one of the first steps in moving forward to an improved trucking environment for the future.

Key Questions

The four discussion papers prepared for the meeting in February 2006 also identify a number of key questions that need to be raised during discussions. They include the following:

Driver Licensing

- Are the implementation of national commercial driver licensing programs and a professional designation advantageous and a priority for licensing authorities and the trucking industry?
- Are the operations and maintenance of a professional designation program better handled by government or as a trucking industry initiative?

Training Schools –Accreditation

- Should a national registry to provide information to trucking fleets, government funding agencies and new trainees be established? If so, how?
- Should a training schools accreditation program be established and implemented nationally? If so, how?
- Should the CTHRC standard for the professional driver trainer be implemented across all jurisdictions across Canada?

Funding

- How can the linkages between funding programs and schools training to industry standards be strengthened? How can this be tied to a national accreditation program?
- How can Employer Assistance Services and Wage Subsidy Programs be made more attractive to industry? Is an awareness strategy required?
- How can funding programs for low income workers be developed?

Immigration

- Can the trucking industry agree to develop uniform admission and evaluation criteria for foreign truck drivers and provide them to federal, provincial and territorial government officials?
- Should the NOC classification for truck drivers be reviewed to see whether the skill level coding can be raised?
- Should a review be conducted of the reciprocity agreements between provincial or territorial governments and foreign governments on credentials for driver licensing?

General

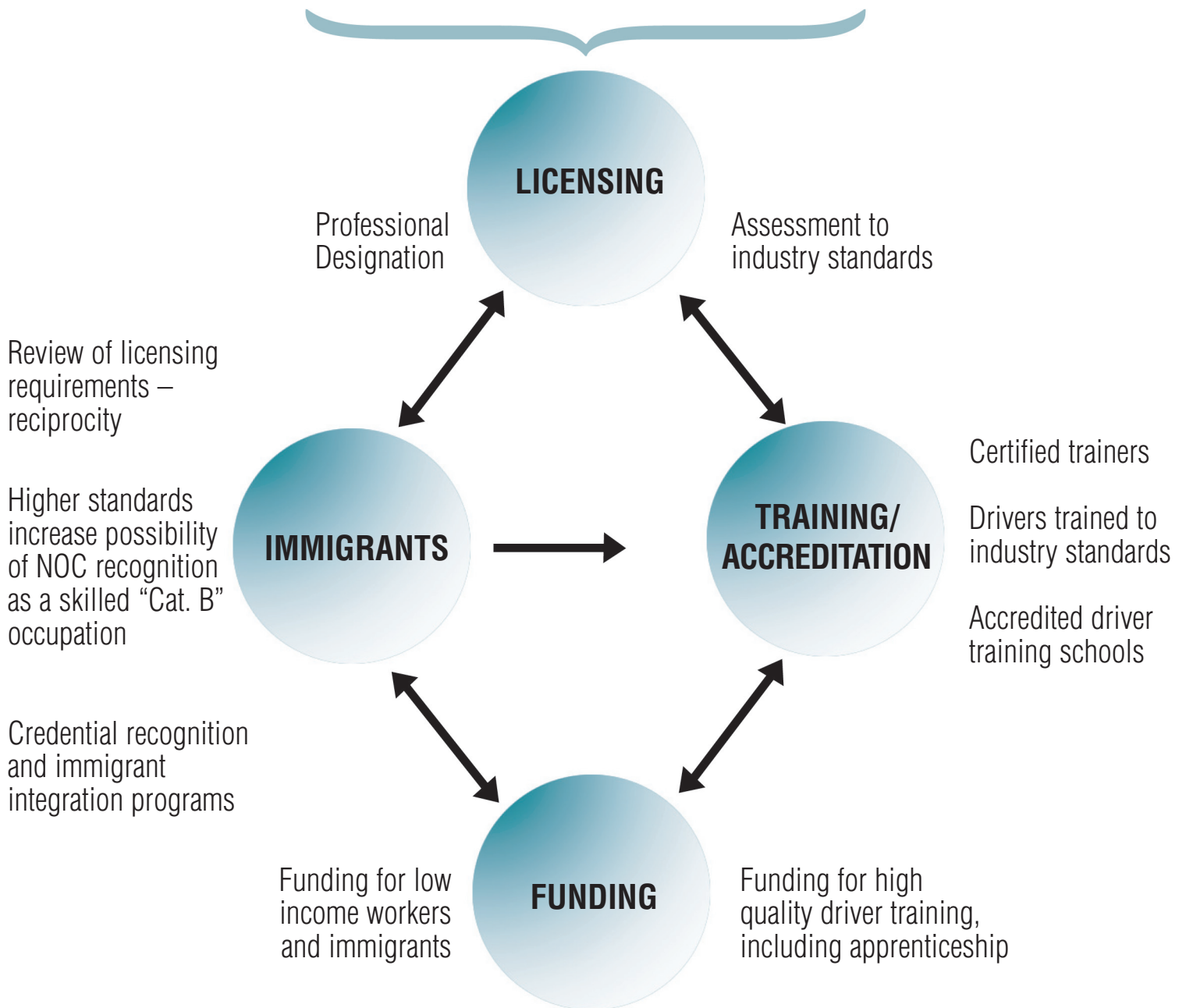
- What are the likely additional costs to be incurred by government and industry in developing and operating the new or amended programs?

Executive Summary

AREA	ISSUE	SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION	INTER-CONNECTIONS
Driver Licensing	<p>Commercial driver license qualifications are much below what industry needs as a commercial driver.</p> <p>Licensing standard is variable across the country.</p>	<p>Certification of a “professional driver” endorsement / recognition by government and/or industry</p>	<p>Accredited driver training schools producing drivers trained to occupational (professional) standards.</p> <p>Provides impetus for apprenticeship or internship programs.</p> <p>Seen as making occupation more attractive to individuals considering a career in the industry.</p> <p>Increase recognition that occupation is a skilled trade.</p>
Training Schools - Accreditation	<p>Training is often inadequate for industry needs.</p> <p>Level of training (curriculum) is highly variable across the country.</p> <p>The accreditation of schools is also variable.</p>	<p>National standards for accreditation programs by industry organizations to ensure students are attending training schools providing the training needed.</p> <p>Certification of trainers by industry organizations to ensure quality.</p>	<p>Provides industry with new drivers trained to appropriate standards. May reduce licensing test failure rates.</p> <p>Graduation from accredited school part of qualifications for designation as a “professional driver” Observations show that the process may lead to better retention rates of new graduates.</p> <p>Individuals receiving government funding are directed to qualified schools.</p>
Funding	<p>Driver training is expensive and there are few mechanisms of funding assistance.</p> <p>Certain groups are not eligible for funding, i.e. low income worker.</p>	<p>Funding is combined to appropriate school accreditation and trainer certification programs to ensure that those receiving government funding receive the quality training they need to succeed in industry.</p> <p>Funding assistance for integration training of immigrants</p>	<p>To allow government program officials to direct students to appropriate schools.</p> <p>Employer funding programs could provide funds to assist with apprenticeship training</p> <p>Provides more new drivers trained to industry standards.</p> <p>Funding of integration training to ensure quality of drivers and ensuring safety and service standards are maintained</p>
Immigration	<p>Truck drivers are not an eligible occupation for immigration under current federal immigration regulations.</p>	<p>Increase length of stay under Foreign Worker Visa to recognize integration period and investment made by employers</p> <p>Need to address National Occupational Code.</p> <p>Driver licensing: uniform credentials recognition</p>	<p>Increase supply of quality drivers with conditions suited to the trucking industry.</p> <p>Change to the NOC code recognizing professional truck drivers as a skilled trade and allowing professional drivers to come in as Category B - skilled workers</p> <p>Provide attractive environment for foreign qualified drivers while ensuring safety standards are maintained.</p>

- Higher standards lead to:
- impetus for apprenticeship and internship programs
 - occupation of Professional Driver attracting new entrants

MORE LICENSED DRIVERS WHO ARE QUALIFIED AS PROFESSIONAL COMMERCIAL DRIVERS



LINKAGES AMONG ISSUES