

Port Transportation Association



Gary Robertson
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
135 Hunter Street East
Hamilton ON Canada L8N 1M5

March 27, 2020

RE: Commercial Transport Drivers Health & Safety during COVID-19

Mr. Robertson,

The Port Transportation Association would like to present this letter on behalf of all local and long-haul Commercial Transport Drivers, specifically those working within Alberta and British Columbia. While many drivers are used to unique challenges and sometimes less than ideal conditions, the recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought many issues to the forefront.

While not as celebrated as some of the frontline workers, Commercial Transport Drivers are providing an essential service and working hard to ensure our supply chain is running smoothly and goods are delivered on time. We would like to bring a few items to your attention in hopes something can be done to help to ease the stress and ensure proper health and safety for these hardworking drivers during this pandemic.

First, we would like to mention that unlike Ontario where chains like Tim Hortons have dedicated parking spots for Commercial Transport Drivers, most within BC and Alberta do not have this. This makes it very difficult for drivers to have the proper space in order to get food, coffee, or even eat. With all restaurants switching to take-out only, or in some cases drive-thru only, getting food and having a safe place to park and eat becomes even more important. In fact, just recently a driver in the Lower Mainland attempting to get food was told to leave as being in a tractor he was unable to access food service by order of the local police.

Secondly, in addition to struggling to get food while on the road, there is a struggle to find washrooms. As COVID-19 brings a sharp reminder to keep clean, we've noticed a significant number of shippers, receivers, fast food restaurants and fast stations shutting their doors and refusing the use of bathrooms. While we respect the fact that each individual business has the right to protect their workers, it leaves

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Commercial Transport Drivers providing an essential service in an unsafe situation where accessing clean bathrooms and soap and water becomes a daily challenge.

This unfortunate bathroom situation becomes even more prominent for Commercial Transport Drivers on long haul trips. A driver on a British Columbia to Alberta run has just shy of a 13-hour drive. There are exactly five brake checks on each side of the highway, each with bathrooms so ill-maintained and dirty that drivers do not feel comfortable using them. Especially now with the increased risk of COVID-19. Drivers don't have the same luxury of proper truck stops either, as almost half in British Columbia and Alberta do not have any washroom facilities, even fewer have showers. Those that do have the proper facilities, often come with the same cleanliness issues.

With the use of Electronic Log Books, which has been a key feature in driver safety, drivers also have to proactively plan out their stops. Unlike the USA where there are driver friendly, clean truck stops, most with food options within 50 miles of one another, British Columbia and Alberta can have 2-3hours drive within truck stops. The added stress of trying to plan routes that include the use of clean well-maintained washroom facilities and eating establishments willing and able to serve drivers while keeping within ELD regulations is becoming an increased stress in an already stressful situation.

Commercial Transport Drivers are working through unprecedented times, and are willingly taking on the increased chance of contracting this deadly virus. While many of the issues drivers face are with corporate owned properties, we are calling on you to bring these unfortunate circumstances to light in hopes that you can improve the quality of life and reduce the risks they may face.

Sincerely,

Port Transportation Association

CC:

Hon. Marc Garneau
Hon. Ric McIver
Hon. Claire Trevena
MP Randeep Srail
MP Sukh Dhaliwal