

# SASKATCHEWAN Road to Prosperity

## The Saskatchewan Trucking Association

Representing the truck-transport sector for 75 years

By Miranda Burski  
L-P Specialty Products

Back in 1937, the truck-transport sector was still a relatively small industry in Canada. But, regardless of the sector's size, carriers felt the need for a group to represent their interests. It was for that reason that D.L. Skingle and a group of carriers formed the Saskatchewan Trucking Association (STA).

Al Rosseker, executive director of the STA, said that it's unclear exactly why and how the association was formed, but that it has been pieced together that the group of businessmen came together because they felt their representation wasn't as strong as it should be. "They formed this kind of alliance and used their strength in numbers to deal with governments, to deal with regulators, to deal with suppliers, things like that, as a way to get their point across directly as opposed to hiring a lawyer or hiring some kind of third party to do their bidding," he explained.

Skingle was the group's first president, followed by 27 others over the course of 75 years. Each of those presidents led the STA to what it is today: an alliance of truck-transport carriers considered to be the "critical mass for truck transport in Saskatchewan," said Rosseker.

Representing approximately 75 per cent of the rolling stock in the province, the STA meets regularly with regulators and government departments, such as SGI and the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure respectively, to discuss issues faced by Saskatchewan's truck-transport carriers. The organization also provides training opportunities and insurance for its members, as well as representation on both national and international scales through the Canadian Trucking Alliance.

"In Saskatchewan, there are basically two types of carriers," said Rosseker, "those that operate exclusively in Saskatchewan and those that operate perhaps in Saskatchewan but as well outside

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Saskatchewan." This includes carrying in neighbouring provinces, across Canada or across the border into neighbouring states.

Because of the variety of the carriers, the STA makes sure to stay in contact with its members to determine which particular issues it should be focusing on. "We canvas our membership as best we can in terms of 'What's on the radar for you guys? What problems are you facing?' And we prioritize where our policies lie and where we want to take them forward," said Rosseker.

For example, one of the biggest issues the STA is trying to tackle — and one

that has been brought up many times by members of the organization — is gaining permission from the Government of Saskatchewan that allows carriers to use wide-base tires. These tires replace the dual tires and rims usually found on semi-trailer transport trucks, providing a range of benefits while doing so.

The wide-based tires, said Rosseker, average a fuel saving of about six per cent, are less likely to blow out than the dual tires and provide a weight saving of 1,400 pounds. This last benefit, in particular, would allow the trucks to carry more product on each run.

**One of the current goals of the Saskatchewan Trucking Association is to bring the Government of Saskatchewan on board with the idea of allowing carriers to use wide-base tires instead of dual tires.**

*Photo by Comstock, Thinkstock*

### Statistics from the truck-transport sector

Statistics provided by Al Rosseker of the Saskatchewan Trucking Association.

- Saskatchewan's truck-transport sector employs approximately 28,000 people, or about five per cent of the total workforce.
- Approximately 92 per cent of the product in Saskatchewan is moved by truck-transport.
- Canada-wide, the truck-transport sector uses approximately seven billion litres of fuel per year.
- A tractor trailer unit (truck and trailer) raises approximately \$60,000 per year in federal and provincial taxes and fees, excluding the driver's income tax.
- Approximately 200,000 trucks cross the Saskatchewan-U.S. border each year.
- Approximately 70 per cent of Saskatchewan's merchandise trade with the U.S. is shipped by truck.

"Obviously, the more freight you can carry, the more beneficial it is to your bottom line [and] the more beneficial it is to the consumer, whether we're carrying TV sets or cabbages or water or fuel," Rosseker added.

"What we're finding right now is a fair amount of commonality on a lot of the semi-trailers and tractors and trailers wanting to run with wide-base tires at the same parity as we can with the dual tires. But governments are not allowing us to do it yet."

This doesn't mean that the STA hasn't found common ground with the government in other areas, however. The New West Partnership in particular has been very successful for the truck-transport sector.

In 2009, the governments of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia came together in a commitment to strengthen the economy of Western Canada. They signed the New West Partnership Agreement in 2010, and have been successfully working toward their goal ever since.

In regards to the truck-transport sector, the New West Partnership has meant

the harmonization of several regulations, including the weights and dimensions of rolling stock, highway speeds and safety issues. Rosseker said that the Government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Trucking Association have also each participated in the harmonization of the "rules of the road" regarding the truck-transport sector.

"While it's good to improve trucking in Saskatchewan, we feel that, from a big-picture standpoint, if we can improve the industry as a whole that will benefit truck transport in Saskatchewan and in each of the provinces," he said. "We can't really say enough about the harmonization initiatives that the four governments and the four associations are working with, and we just made great strides. We've got a long way to go yet, but, boy, it's really positives."

These positive changes mean a great deal not only to the truck-transport sector, but also to Saskatchewan's economy as a whole. "We're an essential service ... when the trucks stop, the economy stops," said Rosseker. "Without us, you're not going to have any fuel at the pumps, you're not going to have any food in the store, you're not going to have any medicine at the hospital."

## Saskatchewan's retail industry gaining strength

By Miranda Burski  
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Perhaps one of the best indicators of how a population feels about its economy is how much that population is willing to put into its retail industry. If that's true, then the recent strength of Saskatchewan's retail industry shows that the population has great confidence in the economy.

"We're seeing a larger population in Saskatchewan, we're seeing a very strong weekly earnings growth here in the province, we're seeing very, very good job numbers in the province, and as a result of that people are, I think, feeling pretty good about the economy in Saskatchewan," said Bill Boyd, Minister of the Economy. "And when they do feel good about that, they go and they spend dollars on their home or their family or other retail activities that they would be involved in."

There are plenty of retail businesses for people in Saskatchewan to choose from. According to the Ministry of the Economy, there were more than 6,700 retail business

establishments in Saskatchewan as of December 2011. The totals for 2012 aren't yet available, but the growing strength of the industry will likely result in a larger number of businesses.

According to a report released by Statistics Canada in November, Saskatchewan's retail sales grew by 6.4 per cent in September 2012 over September 2011, the second-highest growth percentage in the country (Alberta came first at 8.5 per cent). Nationally, retail sales grew by only 1.8 per cent.

A strong retail industry means good things for Saskatchewan's economy — retail sales in 2011 made up \$2.4 billion of the real GDP, or about five per cent. This total is expected to only get higher as Saskatchewan's retail industry continues to grow.

"It looks like the conference board is indicating that the economy of Saskatchewan will remain strong [and] probably lead the nation in the next year. As a result of that, we expect retail sales to remain strong," said Boyd.

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