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MAKING YOUR MILES COUNT Robert D. Scheper



The Problem with Income Taxes

Traveling coast to coast can produce a problem for understanding income taxes in Canada. Many drivers have friends and acquaintances that live and work sometimes thousands of miles away. When the topic of income taxes comes up there can be significant differences in perception and therefore results.

Canada is a big country, over three thousand miles from coast to coast. There are pockets of unique civilization sprinkled all across this vast and beautiful country. At times (and locations) there are incredibly different understandings of what is legal and what is not.

A few years ago there was a small city that somehow began believing a legitimate business expense could be "recalculated and multiplied". For an approximate 100 mile radius it seemed most people used this "recalculated" figure. It had a significant effect on individual returns. Canada Revenue Agency began auditing the returns and found all of them to be "in error". Since many of the local population used the "recalculated and multiplied" figure CRA tried to retrain the citizens by clamping down hard on all filers who erroneously used the legitimate expense. The net effect was that the local citizens got scared and stopped using the expense entirely (believing they couldn't). Though

this overreaction was a local phenomenon, truck drivers began spreading their misunderstanding wherever they traveled. Examples of this type can be seen all across our country. I have talked with thousands of drivers coast to coast and have found several "misunderstandings" that continue to bounce around our nations coffee shops.

Sometimes, Canada Revenue Agency doesn't help the matter.

Around (or before) December 2006, twentyfive Lease/Owner operators from Moncton, New Brunswick were audited. They all used the simplified method (from the TL2) to calculate their meal expenses on the road (\$33.00 per day at that time, now its \$52.00). It has been legitimately used for over 20 years prior to these audits. The auditors presented IC73-21R9, a circulation that required both employers and employees to sign the TL2 (in order to use the simplified method). All 25 operators paid about \$5,000 each (representing 2 years each). Soon all across Canada accountants and drivers were in turmoil. Some accountants demanded operators produce meal receipts while others did not.

CRA however, still doesn't consistently apply the IC73-21R9 across Canada. In fact, I have witnessed auditors still training operators how to calculate a qualifying "day". So, in some parts of Canada you're allowed (and trained) to do one thing while in another, citizens are penalized. In the trucking industry sooner or later everyone talks to everyone, therefore Confusion and Controversy prevails.

The most controversial issue around taxes must still be the non-taxable benefit system. It is so because it is complicated, compared to the self-employed system. Unfortunately both systems share a term or phrase that is applied completely different in each system. It is the term "Per Diem" and is Latin for "per day". The simplified method uses a per diem of \$52.00 that is placed in line 8523 (reduced by 20% for truckers). The income tax calculations further reduce the amount till it ends up as approximately \$13.60 (in the best province) and calls it a "non-refundable tax credit".

The non-taxable benefit system uses a "per diem" figure as well but it is not restricted by the self-employed guidelines. The amount is 100% tax free to the recipient. Therefore, anything above \$13.60 would produce a better result than the simplified method.

This may be complicated to explain but it produces phenomenal results in tax returns. Savings of \$10-12,000 per year is standard. The difficulty is its application. Not everyone does it properly or is prepared to defend it. Most accountants (CPA's) refuse to use it (if they even know about it).

Prior to the 1980's, basically the entire trucking industry used it. Back then drivers were getting \$20-30 "per day" as a nontaxable meal allowance. Many industries still use it today: airline, oil and gas, forestry and government just to name a few. There are

seven disadvantages to using it (outlined in our free downloadable seminars on our web site). The most critical disadvantage is the need for a qualified firm's defense. If you are not adequately defended don't try and do it, the risks are just too high. It's not for everyone but when applied it can easily make your house payment.

The real problem with income tax is disinformation and misunderstandings. Some people got scared by something they heard and refuse to use a legitimate expense (or system) while others try to use something legitimate but are not properly trained or adequately defended. A strong business person will do the research and make sure their liability is covered. If you are going to do it, do it right!

About the Author:

Robert D. Scheper is a leading Accountant and Consultant to the Lease/Owner operator industry in Canada. His first book in the Making Your Miles Count series "taxes, taxes, taxes" was released in 2007. His firm exclusively serves Lease/Owner Operators across Canada. His second book "Choosing a Trucking company" is the most in-depth analysis of the operator industry available today. He has a Master degree (MBA) in financial management and has been serving the industry since he and his wife came off the road in 1993. His dedication, commitment and strong opinions can be read and heard in many articles and seminars.

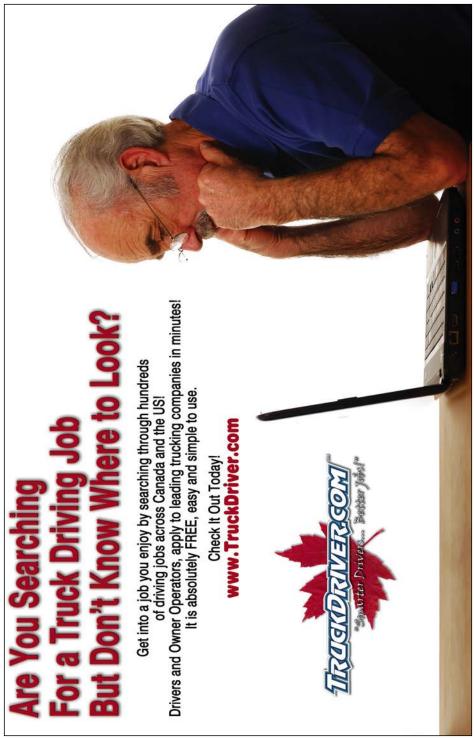
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SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

Ray J. Haight



Driver Turnover: Is Plug and Play the Right Way?

The issue of driver turnover has plagued the industry for over four decades and it seems to me that trucking companies should have made better progress by now in bringing it under control. The fact is that many trucking companies see the published numbers coming from the American Trucking Association and the Canadian Trucking Alliance and as long as they're on the low side of what the estimated average for the industry is at that time, they think they're doing well. It's mass delusion and it makes no sense to me, especially when the numbers usually hover around 100%. There is nothing normal about this situation.

I always find it enlightening to see what new ideas industry suppliers come up with. These are very inventive folks and they try to entice companies to buy an off the shelf solution to their problem. I've seen many come and go over the years. Most are presented by well-meaning folks who look at trucking with its turnover issues and see great opportunity. Where there is pain there is opportunity to provide a solution and to profit. It's a created industry all on its own.

I call these purchase opportunities "plug and plays" because, although they may offer some short-term gain in one area of the contributing factor of driver turnover, they never really get

to the core of the issue. I'm talking about the quick fixes that seem to be designed to attract and retain drivers through a new gimmick or the latest offering designed to have a driver believe that they will be happier at trucking company ABC because of the utility of the gimmick in play. I don't want to identify the companies that provide these items and services because many of these plug and play are guite good - as far as they go. Which in my opinion, is not far enough. There are a great number of these ideas or gimmicks that would work great if they were introduced in addition to the right effort and coordinated with other remedial actions, Because a single plug and play does not attack retention at its core, they are not a solution to driver turnover.

They say there is no magic bullet to this thing called driver turnover but I think they are wrong and that there absolutely is a magic bullet! It's not easy, nor is it a quick fix but there is a cure. But as deep as the problem is, that's how deep you need to get into your company to start attacking driver turnover. You've got to strip it down and build it back up again, focusing on those many, related things that undermine driver retention. You've got to build it up on a firm foundation and unfortunately, many are just not interested in putting in the kind of effort necessary to solve the turnover problem.

I do not hold myself out as any kind of savant on this issue; I have been at the helm of a company that had 120% turnover. It was at a time when the company I was running was growing at an exponential rate and I just lost sight of what was going on with our turnover. Call it greed; call it getting lost in the frenzy of the growth and distracted by the whirlwind; whatever it was the buck stopped with me. I let it get out of hand. Might sound a little cliché, but culture is a delicate thing and once it gets out of hand or off side, you're in trouble. You're on a slippery slope and you don't even know it until it's out of control.

The actions I took to find a solution for driver turnover and make it a priority for our company is what gives me license to offer the advice that I do. We, and I mean we, myself as President, my partner and our senior management team, took our driver turnover numbers from 120% to 20% turnover in under 24 months. We went from needing to hire 300 plus drivers to maintain a fleet of 275 trucks over a one year timeframe to needing to hire less than 60 in twenty four months for a fleet size of 290 trucks.

We did this by starting at the start. No gimmicks, no plugins, no smoke and mirrors; we started by taking a good hard look in the mirror. We took responsibility for our situation. This is big for me. It doesn't matter what situations you or your business are in, change starts with acknowledgement that your own actions put you in the situation you are in right now. We could be talking driver turnover, personal relationships or career status. Whatever it is,

you need to own it. Playing the blame game is for suckers and losers. You have to own it to change it - there is no other way.

We also recognized that we needed some help. We secured the help of a very good consulting firm from outside the industry to ensure we got off to the right start with our efforts. In addition, leadership agreed that we were committed to each other to see this thing through because without that kind of rock solid commitment to the cause, it will falter. So that was our starting point. We were determined to get a handle on our situation and plot a path to rein in our out of control turnover. We had successes: we had failures; we had stumbles; we had heroes and we had stars and we had to cut bait on some folks.

In the end the gains so outpaced the sacrifice it was amazing, and in retrospect, we could have called it a safety initiative. Our accident rate plummeted and so did our insurance cost. We could have called it a profitability initiative because as we streamlined our processes to become driver centric, we also became much more efficient and also much more profitable. Bottom line: if and when you decided that high turnover is within your control and you can get a handle on it, you will see gains that you never expected and wonder why you didn't do this before now....

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Chris Harris



Who Pulled My Fifth Wheel Pin?

While I was visiting a small trucking company recently, I was reminded of FMCSR 392.9. This regulation specifies what you must do, and when you need to perform cargo securement checks. I had forgotten all about this regulation, but it's important because we have similar laws here in Canada. So what new information might you get out of reading this article? It is going to be a reminder to you about when and how often you must check your load securement. And also it will serve as a reminder why checking your 5th wheel pin is so darned important. This regulation doesn't just apply to flat deck drivers. This rule applies to all forms of truck transport. If the trailer is not sealed, this provision applies to you!

The regulation does not apply if the shipper has sealed your trailer and ordered you not to inspect the cargo. This law is one real reason that you and your company should be insisting that all trailers get a security seal. Thank goodness most loads that are crossing international borders are sealed.

So when do you have to inspect the cargo? Regulation 392.9 specifies that you must check it within the first 50 miles or 80 km. I had forgotten that this rule applies to all modes of transport and not just for flat deck carriers. Next, the law says that you need to stop and inspect your load every three hours or 150 miles or 240 kilometers.

When I audit logbooks, I don't often see drivers stopping every three hours. Oh, I can hear all of you drivers yelling at me, saying that if you stop every three hours, you will not make any money! Well, if you are in the States, you can

only drive eleven hours in your fourteen-hour working day. So you can stop and inspect your load. It will only take a few minutes. Not fifteen, just a few, maybe five?

Here is the part that I had totally forgotten. You must check your load at every change of duty status. I repeat, at every change of duty status.

When I'm speaking to truck drivers, I always preach that they need to inspect the truck every time that they leave the unit out of their sight. A few months ago, an industry paper wrote an article discussing how often people will pull the fifth wheel pin. YES, this is still happening on a regular basis. So you need to check it. And while you are at it, check the load securement or the seal on your trailer.

So the regulations say that you must check your cargo securement within the first fifty miles and then after that every 150 mile or every three hours of work and at each change of duty status. And while you are at it, check that fifth wheel. There are people out there that just like to ruin your day. They have no morals. The prank of pulling your fifth wheel handle is not a joke; it is extremely dangerous and puts people's lives at risk. So please check it with every change of duty status and whenever you leave your truck out of your sight.

Please be safe out there.

Chris Harris

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WOMEN IN TRUCKING Ellen Voie



Women in Trucking Image Team Member Donates Kidney

Women In Trucking Association (WIT) announces Carol Nixon as its March Member of the Month. Carol is a WIT Image Team member and professional driver for Walmart Private Fleet

Carol is being recognized for giving a kidney to a total stranger.

Carol and a fellow Walmart driver, Deb Pollard both attended the first annual WIT Accelerate! Conference & Expo in 2015, where Carol learned Deb's husband, Craig, was on dialysis and in need of a kidney. Carol immediately offered to help.

After a series of tests to find out if they were a match, Carol made the decision to donate a kidney, even if Craig couldn't be the recipient. That way, Craig might make it to the top of the list sooner. However, after three long weeks of waiting, they learned they were a match and could proceed.

"As we found out about this as fellow associates, I don't think any of us were shocked. She (Carol) is someone that is known to put others ahead of herself," said Rick Aurit, Regional Transportation Manager.

In November 2016, they underwent the surgery with no complications. Both Carol and Craig are doing well. In fact, the first night Craig had Carol's kidney, it pulled 10 liters of fluid off of him without even having to be hooked up to

dialysis to get the kidney started, it worked right away.

"Deb and I are extremely grateful and thankful we had the opportunity to go to the first annual WIT convention because that is the week that changed both of our lives," said Carol.

Professional drivers are some of the most compassionate people on the road. We hear numerous stories of Highway Heroes and Highway Angels who go out of their way to help others on a daily basis. These men and women give of themselves, sometimes even literally.

"What can I say? Thank you is not enough. She saved Craig's life. She saved my husband's life," said Deb Pollard.

A video of the story is available here: https://thecontent.wistia.com/medias/2kmwd304h5.

Ellen Voie

President/CEO/Founder of Women In Trucking, Inc. ellen@womenintrucking.org www.womenintrucking.org

Mission: Women In Trucking was established to encourage the employment of women in the trucking industry, promote their accomplishments and minimize obstacles faced by women working in the trucking industry.





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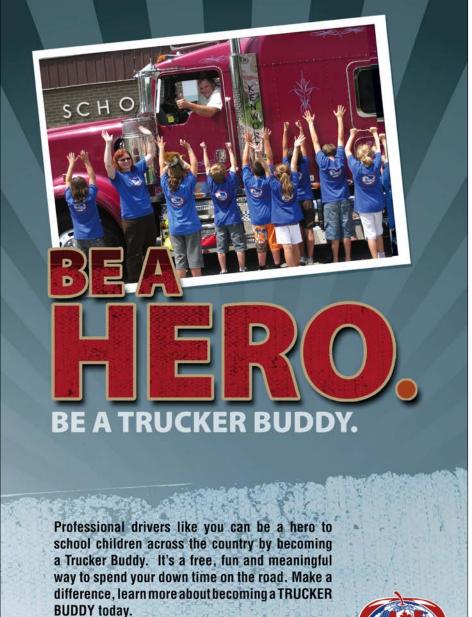
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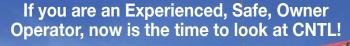
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