**For Immediate Release**

The PMTC was invited to speak to the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure & Communities on the afternoon of October 17th. The committee was put together to explore labour shortage issues in the supply chain and work on solutions to address the issue. The PMTC was one of many stakeholders who were invited to testify in front of the committee. The PMTC raised several key points, as highlighted below, and thanked the committee for the opportunity.

The Canadian Trucking Industry is crucial to Canada’s economy. According to Statistics Canada, Trucks move 70% of the freight value in Canada, employs over 300,000 drivers and generated 39.55 billion in revenue in 2018. These numbers show how vital the sector is to our economy, as well as the supply of the essential needs and services that Canadian’s require. While many people I believe understand that truck drivers deliver essential items such as food, water, clothing and daily supplies for our households, I believe society as a whole do not fully comprehend what truck drivers touch. Trucks deliver blood & medical gases needed by hospitals. Medicines and vaccines to our pharmacies & hospitals. They deliver heating fuels for homes and businesses. They are needed to maintain and repair critical infrastructure such as hydro networks, telecommunications & roads. These are just a few items, but it is safe to say almost everything we need or want at some point in time is on truck and delivered by a professional driver.

The labour shortages we are currently facing endangers our economic recovery, as well as the current and future supply of these goods and services. A recent LMI report by Trucking HR Canada highlights the current deepening shortage. As of the end of June, they are 28,210 driving job vacancies. This means we have over 28,000 trucks sitting idle as a result of no one available to fill the seat. The vacancy rate is 9.2%, well above the national average of 5.2%. Over 50% of the vacant positions have been posted for over 90 days, indicating this is not an issue of seasonal peaks and valleys. <https://truckinghr.com/labour-market-information/>

Compounding issues is that the average age of a driver is over 51, with 32% of drivers over the age of 55. These numbers are a clear indication that the shortage will only become worse going forward.

While there is no silver bullet that can solve the labour shortage issues immediately, there are a number of actions that can be taken to begin addressing the shortage in both the short and near terms, and action must be taken swiftly. While we know the labour shortage is a country wide issue, and the industry is competing with many other fields for labour, we must act to prioritize the position of Truck driver to ensure our fragile supply chain can supply our nation’s essential services and goods while continuing to support the rebuilding of our economy.

Some of the priority items that the PMTC would like to see implemented.

* Funding needs to be opened up for training. As the position of a Truck Driver is not considered a skilled trade, obtaining grants and student loans is not an option for most. With the Introduction of mandatory entry level training across the country, the cost of a training program for a Class 1 driver is in excess of $8,000.00. This is a barrier to many interested individuals who would like to enter the industry. We need increased and consistent funding available to help people enter the industry. One of the solutions that can be acted on quickly, as identified in the National Supply Chain Task Force’s Final report is the expansion of the Trucking HR Canada’s Career Expressway Program. As a signatory in support of this program, we are in complete agreement with the Task Force on this recommendation. In addition to this, we also would like to see work done to elevate the position of Truck Driver as that of a skilled trade.

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/supply-chain-canada>

* Continue to support and increase access to temporary foreign workers for the position of truck driver, with the goal being a pathway to permanent residency. This program is important as immigration is required to fill our labour shortages. Just as crucial however is to ensure the program has proper oversight. We must ensure only companies who have proven safety records, written polices & procedures, formal initial and ongoing training and abide by proper labour standards are allowed to hire and bring workers into the country. We must ensure we properly assess the employer who wishes to bring the worker in if the program is to provide a long term solution to the industry and not endanger road safety at the same time. As a Globe & Mail investigative report showed in 2019, if oversight is not properly done, the consequences can be severe.

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/>

* We need to reopen the Fast Processing Centers on the Canadian Side of the Border. These centers were closed in March of 2020 in response to Covid-19. While the processing centers on the US side of the border have been re-opened, the ones on the Canadian side of the border remain closed with no opening time currently announced. We also need to find a way to expedite current processing times as there is a back log of 10,500 drivers waiting to have their interview completed.
* Work needs to be done to improve the workplace conditions of a driver to make the profession more attractive for new drivers as well as better for current drivers. Government’s role in this is to fund and develop adequate safe parking facilities complete with proper lighting and indoor washroom facilities for drivers to access. There has been a critical shortage of parking in the country for years, and while some work has been done, many more facilities are required, especially in built up urban area’s as well as remote area’s along well travelled routes for CMV’s, such as the Trans-Canada Highway in Northern Ontario to mention one example.

The PMTC is here to work in collaboration with the Federal government, the Provincial and Territorial Jurisdictions, as well as other industry partners to help provide solutions to our industry labour shortages. Our country needs a strong and viable supply chain to remain competitive, and there is no time more crucial than now to ensure we have the skilled drivers required to support this.

Sincerely,



Mike Millian

President

PMTC