



# Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety

## *Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy*

### Minutes

**Date:** November 5 & 6, 2001  
**Location:** Delta Centre-Ville Hotel, Montreal  
**Chair:** John Pearson  
**In Attendance:** (See Attachment 1)

#### **1. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

Mr. Pearson opened the meeting and welcomed participants. He noted that this was the first national level meeting of the Task Force since June 1999, although there had been several regionally based in the interim.

He provided a brief overview of the context and role of the Task Force. He noted that the Task Force reports to the Council of Deputy Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety, and has responsibility for pursuing harmonization of vehicle weight and dimension policies and regulations within Canada, and with the US and Mexico under NAFTA. The Chair of Task Force is currently Mr. Jean-Paul Beaulieu, Deputy Minister of Transports Québec.

He indicated that the meetings of the Task Force are intended to provide a forum for government and industry representatives to discuss issues related to weight and dimension regulations, and an opportunity to identify priorities for resolution of regulatory differences between jurisdictions. He noted that discussions in 1997 had resulted in 16 recommendations for regulatory changes, 9 of which were endorsed by the Council of Ministers in a September 1997 amendment to the MOU on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions.

#### **2. Round-Table Introductions**

Following round table introductions, Mr. Pearson invited comments on the proposed agenda. Mr. Sokil asked that an additional item be added under Other Business on the issue of government responsibilities and accountability.

#### **3. Minutes of Previous National Meeting (June 1999)**

Mr. Pearson drew attention to the minutes from the June 1999 meeting held in Toronto, and invited comments or corrections. There being none, the minutes were accepted as circulated.

#### **4. Dimension Limits for Recreational Vehicles**

As representatives of the recreational vehicle industry, Mr. Hamm and Mr. Mockford were introduced to speak to this item.

##### *Inclusion of Awnings in Measurement of Vehicle Width*

Mr. Hamm noted that the issue of including awnings on the side of RV's as part of the width measurement of a vehicle had been discussed with the committee on several previous occasions. He noted that developments which appeared to have occurred under agenda Item 8(a) may have resolved the problem with awnings as well.

Mr. Mockford noted that, to comply with CSA standards, manufacturers are not permitted to install awnings on RV's if doing so would cause the vehicle to exceed provincial dimension limits. He reported that, for this reason, awnings are often installed by dealers. He reported that 18 states currently allow awnings to extend beyond the 102" width limit, and provided a summary map (Attachment 2).

Mr. Pearson reported that discussions at a western regional meeting in late 2000 had resulted in agreement on a description of equipment and devices that would be eligible for exclusion from width measurement (within a 10 cm envelope on each side of the vehicle). He indicated that the four western provinces had adopted this approach, that the four Atlantic provinces were planning to adopt this interpretation later in the fall as part of the Atlantic agreement on uniform regulations. He noted that awnings would not be included in vehicle width measurement provided they do not extend more than 10 cm on either side of the vehicle under this interpretation.

Mr. Taylor indicated that the exclusion zone applies for load security equipment on commercial vehicles in Ontario, and consequently, awnings on RV's would be included in measurement of overall width. He indicated that Ontario was prepared to consider the changes being introduced in other provinces.

Mr. Vaillancourt reported that Québec is also prepared to consider allowing awnings to be exempted from width measurement as well.

**It was agreed** that each jurisdiction would provide clarification of the status of awnings on RV's through correspondence to Mr. Hamm and Mr. Mockford.

**Action: Government Representatives**

*Increasing the Maximum Allowable Length of RV's to 14 metres*

Mr. Hamm reported that 45 ft (14 m) RV's are becoming quite popular in the United States, many of which are conversions of 45 ft intercity motor coach shells. He noted that there are 4 conversion plants in Canada, and many more in the US. He reported that 37 states presently allow 45 ft long RV's (Attachment 3), and that these vehicles are also travelling throughout Canada.

Mr. Pearson noted that 45' RV's which are converted from intercity motor coach shells would likely conform to the dimension standards contained in the MOU, but questioned whether there are 45' RV's which are not based on bus shells and which might not comply with regulated limits on overhangs etc. Mr. Mockford reported that there are a number of 45'RV's which are built from the ground up, and that these vehicles would also have to comply with provincial weight and dimension standards in order to be eligible to receive the CSA certification sticker.

Mr. Hamm reported that California has instituted a policy whereby drivers of longer RV's must obtain a special license, involving both written and operating tests, along with regular medical fitness checks. In discussion, Mr. Taylor suggested that driver licensing issues were beyond the purview of the Task Force. Mr. Hamm noted that his industry had already made representation to CCMTA's Drivers and Vehicles Committee, but had been referred to the Task Force on VW&D Policy for the 45' RV issue.

Mr. Pearson noted that the issue had been bounced around between committees for some time, and suggested that, in fairness to all, establishing a process which would ultimately render a clear decision would be helpful. Mr. Beckett offered to lead a joint effort, with the participation of officials responsible for driver licensing and representatives of the RV industry, to deal with the proposed increase in length limit.

**It was agreed** that this approach would be supported, and that Mr. Beckett would Chair a joint committee and would invite participation from appropriate agencies and organizations.

**Action: Tom Beckett**

## **5. Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations in Canada - Developments**

### **a) Presentation on Ontario/Quebec Agreement (August 2000)**

Mr. Ron Madill from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation was introduced to speak to the agreement, which had been reached between Ontario and Quebec in August 2000. Mr. Madill provided a brief presentation on the key provisions of the agreement (Attachment 4), noting that the initial changes had been introduced on January 1, 2001, and that additional provisions are scheduled to come into effect in the future.

Following a short discussion with questions and answers, Mr. Madill was thanked for his presentation.

### **b) Presentation on Introduction of Uniform Weight and Dimension Regulations in Atlantic Canada**

Mr. Pearson provided a brief presentation (Attachment 5) of the process which had been followed over the past two years in pursuit of establishing uniform weight and dimension regulations within Atlantic Canada. He noted that agreement had been reached between all four governments in June 2001, with implementation expected to occur later in the fall.

In discussion, several questions were posed on the grandfather and transition provisions of the proposed agreement. Mr. Pearson noted that there was a common implementation and transition framework for the period through December 2009, and that each province would be providing further details on the specific changes which are being introduced. In discussion it was noted that the quad axle trailer had not been included in the agreement because it was not currently used in three of the four provinces.

### **c) Presentation on Ontario weight review initiative**

Mr. Madill provided a presentation (Attachment 6) on the process and objectives being pursuing within Ontario related to reform of vehicle weight and dimension limits.

### **d) Round Table Updates Developments and Initiatives**

B.C - Mr. Oldridge reported that BC has been involved in field testing of tridem drive tractors, and has introduced tridem drive logging truck configurations through amendments to the Commercial Transport Regulations. He reported that the testing program was very successful and has been used to develop the safety parameters for weight and dimension requirements included in the regulations. He reported that a heavy haul permit route had been established from the lower mainland to Kamloops, but could not yet be extended further east because of restrictions on the capacity of one bridge between Kamloops and the Alberta border. He reported that the LCV pilot project in northern BC had originally been established as a one year trial, and had been very successful. He noted that permits authorities were currently being renewed on a month to month basis while a review of the program is being undertaken.

Alberta - Mr. Pearson reported that Mr. Moroz was not able to attend the meeting due to budget restrictions in Alberta. Mr. Sokil reported that the length limit on LCV's operating from Edmonton

to Coutts was now 38 metres, and that Alberta had increased the weight limit on medium spread tridem to 24,000 kg earlier in the year.

Saskatchewan - Mr. Gilks reported that a Trucking Advisory Forum had been established in Saskatchewan to consider the larger picture issues related to trucking in the province. He noted that the forum had included active participation of carriers, shippers, the automobile clubs and CRASH, and had resulted in very productive discussions. He noted that the final report of the forum was completed in June. He indicated that participation in the forum was restricted to residents of Saskatchewan. He also reported that several housekeeping amendments to regulations affecting weights and dimensions were being developed.

Manitoba - Mr. Cateeuw reported that efforts were underway in Manitoba to develop regulatory changes which would eliminate the need for special permits currently used to accommodate MOU vehicles. He reported that a proposal to apply user pay principles to overweight permits had been developed and would be used as the basis for consultation with stakeholders in the months ahead.

Ontario - Mr. Taylor reported that Ontario continues to work on the weight reform strategy, as outlined in the presentation by Mr. Madill.

Quebec - Mr. Vaillancourt reported that Quebec is working with industry on issues related to oversize/overweight special permits, including the use of jeep dollies. He reported that, at the direction of their respective Premiers, discussions had been initiated with New Brunswick in pursuit of establishing an agreement on harmonization of weight and dimension regulations. He reported that Quebec was also examining its spring weight restriction policies, with two studies underway; one focussed on economic impact, and another on infrastructure.

New Brunswick - Mr. Goguen reported that New Brunswick had recently completed implementation of the Atlantic agreement, and that the regulatory changes had been introduced in October. He reported that the next priority was to reach a regional agreement within Atlantic Canada on harmonization of policies for oversize and overweight special permits. He also reported on the harmonization discussions which had been initiated with Quebec.

Nova Scotia - Mr. Stonehouse reported that Nova Scotia's regulatory changes stemming from the Atlantic agreement would likely be introduced within a week. He also indicated that harmonization of policies on oversize and overweight loads held a high priority and was part of the Trucking Strategy recently released by the Council of Atlantic Premiers.

Newfoundland - Mr. Beckett reported that Newfoundland had struggled with staffing issues in this area for the past few months with the departure of several key individuals. He reported that he had assumed the position as Deputy Registrar in September, and that efforts were being directed to harmonization of regulations and special permit policies within Atlantic Canada. He noted that the spring weight restrictions in Quebec remained problematic for Newfoundland. He reported that Newfoundland is also reviewing Saskatchewan's experience with the partnership program, and the use of ITS technologies for monitoring activity (e.g. GPS)

e) **Status of 1997 Recommendations for MOU Amendments**

At the request of Mr. Boyd, Mr. Pearson provided a brief overview of the remaining seven recommendations that had been developed in 1997 but which had not yet been adopted. These included:

1. *The major interprovincial routes within the designated highway system of the national agreement should not be subject to scheduled weight limit reductions in the spring thaw period.*
2. *The box length limit for A Train Doubles should be increased to 20 metres (from 18.5m)*
3. *The gross weight limit for eight (or nine) axle B Trains should be increased to 63,500 kg.*
4. *The national standard for the weight limit of all tandem axle configurations with spreads between 1.2 and 1.85 metres should be increased from 17,000 kg to 18,000 kg.*
5. *The national standard for the weight limit of tridem axle groups with spreads from 3.0m to < 3.6m should be increased from 23,000 kg to 24,000 kg.*
6. *The national standard for the gross vehicle weight limit of 8 axle C Trains should be increased to 60,500 kg.*
7. *The national standard for the weight limit of tridem axle groups with spreads from 3.6m to 3.7m should be increased from 24,000 kg to 26,000 kg.*

In review, **it was agreed** that Recommendation 6 was no longer a priority, given the declining interest in, and usage of, C Train double combinations.

**It was agreed** that the remaining six recommendations remained relevant and should be advanced by the Task Force in its report to the Council of Deputy Ministers. **It was further** agreed that the top three priorities within this group were:

- No. 5 (24,000 kg limit for medium spread tridems),
- No. 4 (18,000 kg limit for tandems), and
- No. 3 (63.5 tonne GVW limit for B trains).

In discussion, Mr. Oldridge indicated that infrastructure engineers in BC do not support increased tandem axle weights because of the additional maintenance cost implications. He noted that a large proportion of truck traffic travels into the United States, where weight limits are lower. Mr. Gilks offered similar comments, noting that increasing north-south trade and highway maintenance costs were problematic for potential weight increases on tandem and tridem axle groups. Mr. Catteeuw expressed similar concerns, noting that the department's budget has been steadily shrinking in recent years. Mr. Pearson noted that Mr. Moroz had indicated that Alberta would be prepared to support adoption of an 18,000 kg limit for tandems if it were to become a true national standard.

Mr. Vaillancourt indicated that Quebec is studying the feasibility of changing its spring weight restriction policies (Recommendation 1), and would be prepared to propose adoption of a 20 metre box length limit for A trains (Recommendation 2).

On the matter of A train Box Length, Mr. Taylor indicated that Ontario has other priorities at present. He indicated that if industry wants to assign a high priority to this recommendation, Ontario would be prepared to consider it in place of other current priorities.

**6. NAFTA Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee**

Mr. Thomas provided a brief status report on the work of LTSS 2 which has the mandate to pursue harmonization of truck weight and dimension regulations under the NAFTA. He reported that progress

had been quite slow to date, with a primary focus on exchange of information between the three countries. He reported that work on performance criteria had been undertaken by the committee and published in the form of a discussion paper.

He noted that there had also been a commitment to explore the feasibility of pursuing regulatory harmonization on regional bases, through a series of pilot investigations. Mr. Pearson provided a brief report on these efforts, noting that the first regional pilot had been launched in the spring of 2000, involving Ontario, Quebec, Michigan and New York. He reported that discussions between government officials, and subsequently with representatives of the provincial and state trucking associations, had resulted in the identification of several priority issues for regulatory harmonization. (One of which was a request to change regulations in Michigan to allow tridem axle groups to be used on 53 ft trailers). He noted that there had been little interest to date in pursuing similar discussions in western Canada/northwestern US. He reported that similar discussions were being initiated between New England and Atlantic Canada.

## **7. Special Permits for Oversize/Overweight Indivisible Loads**

### **a) Presentation on proposed Western Canada regional agreement**

Mr. Gilks provided a brief overview of the work which has been undertaken in western Canada over the past two years in pursuit of a regional agreement on oversize/overweight permit harmonization. He reported that the heavy haul industry had been closely involved in this work, and that a proposed "Phase 1" agreement had been completed earlier in the year. He noted that this proposed agreement would be considered by the four western governments shortly.

He briefly outlined the intended scope of "Phase 2" noting that identification of special permit heavy haul corridors would be pursued.

### **b) Escort vehicle driver training and certification**

Mr. Gilks reported that development of a training program and accreditation process for drivers of escort vehicles was identified as a high priority in the discussions which had occurred in western Canada. He noted that a training program had been developed by Mullen Transport in Alberta, and was being considered as a model for a broadly available program in the west. He noted that a training/accreditation program had also been implemented in Washington state, which had received good reviews by several participants from western Canada. He reported that a small working group, lead by the BC Pilot Car Association, had been formed to review the available materials and to make recommendations on the best approach to pursue in western Canada.

Mr. Pearson noted that this issue had surfaced on several occasions in the past, both in eastern and western Canada. He posed the question whether there was interest in pursuing this type of program on a national, rather than regional bases. In discussion **it was agreed** that there was broad-based interest in the concept, and that all jurisdictions would review the recommendations of the working group when they are available.

## 8. Dimension Limit Issues

### a) Exemptions from measurement of overall width

Mr. Pearson briefly reviewed the discussions which had occurred on this issue, and in particular on the acceptability of rolling tarp systems, at a western regional meeting held in the fall of 2000. He noted that agreement had been reached among the four western provinces on a definition and interpretation of the overall width limit based on a proposal developed by the Manitoba Trucking Association, and as contained in the documents circulated with the agenda. He indicated that the approach adopted would allow rolling tarp systems to be installed provided they do not extend more than 10 cm on either side of the vehicle, as well as other security or ancillary equipment. He reported that this approach had also been adopted by the four Atlantic provinces in their recent harmonization agreement.

Mr. Casarsa provided a brief update on the status of acceptability of rolling tarp systems in the US, and provided copies of documentation describing the systems sold by Aero-kit Industries.

In review, it was noted that the four western and four eastern provinces had harmonized their definitions and accompanying interpretations in the past year, with the result of allowing rolling tarp systems to be used.

Mr. Vaillancourt reported that Quebec is allowing these systems to exceed the 2.6 m width limit under special permit, and would be prepared to consider adoption of the approach being taken elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Taylor reported that he believed Ontario's present regulations would allow such systems to be used, but acknowledged that further discussion may be required within the Ministry. In this regard, Mr. Provost indicated that he had received correspondence from MTO indicating that the tarping systems would not be legal if they extended beyond the 2.6 metre width limit.

### b) Exemptions from measurement of trailer length

Mr. Boivan from MAKKA Innovation was introduced and provided a presentation on a device which his company has developed to improve the aerodynamic efficiency of van trailers. He reviewed the specifications of the modification, noting that it extends approximately 16 - 18 inches beyond the end of the van. He reported that it also provides improvements in splash and spray impacts because of the change in airflow around the trailer. He noted that demand for the device was quite strong because of fuel savings, but that it is not legal in most provinces if installed on a 53' trailer because of the regulated trailer length limit.

In discussion, **it was generally agreed** that the device has merit from both operational and environmental perspectives. Mr. Pearson reported that the US Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration had issued proposed rulemaking in August 2000 (Docket 2234) which would provide a limited exemption from length limits for devices which improve aerodynamic efficiency.

**It was agreed** that the government representatives would review the issues and possible options to accommodate such devices.

**Action: Government Representatives**

**It was further agreed** that the Secretary would survey jurisdictions on the current policies with respect to devices or equipment which is excluded from measurement of trailer length and/or overall length (eg. bulkheads, forklifts etc).

**Action: Secretary**

**c) Application of effective rear overhang limit on trailers and semitrailers**

Mr. Pearson reported that this issue had been raised by industry in western Canada at a meeting in the fall of 2000. Evidently some provinces were restricting the maximum rear overhang on semitrailers used in double trailer combinations, which was proving to be problematic for the design of tankers. He noted that such restrictions are not contained in the MOU, and questioned whether there were any outstanding issues in this area. There being none raised, no action was taken

**9. Equipment Related Issues**

**a) Tridem Drive Tractors**

Mr. Doug Smith from Manitoulin Transport provided a brief presentation on the operations of his company, and on a proposal to develop common national standards for the operation of tridem drive tractors. He reviewed the proposal which had been circulated with the agenda, noting that tridem drive equipment would be of benefit to his operation from the perspectives of both load balancing, operation in provinces with different weight limits and traction during winter months. He then introduced Mr. John Billing, who provided a presentation on the proposed MOU amendment and on the stability and control characteristics of the proposed vehicle.

A well-rounded discussion of the concept and proposal ensued. Mr. Oldridge provided a brief review of BC's experience with the use of tridem drive tractors, noting that industry was very pleased with the performance of the configuration. He noted that BC stipulates minimum wheelbase and steering axle load for the tractor, based on research and testing which has been done.

In bringing the discussion to a close, Mr. Pearson asked for expressions of support for the proposal to amend the MOU to include tridem drive configurations. While only a few participants expressed support for this approach, there was broader based support for the concept of developing standardized permitting conditions which could be used by those jurisdictions interested in allowing the configuration. This approach was based on the objective of providing guidance to carriers for use in specifying tridem drive tractors which would be acceptable in several jurisdictions.

**It was agreed** that the proposal from Manitoulin would be reviewed by the government representatives and that a response would be provided as quickly as possible.

**Action Government Representatives**

**b) Use of Wide-Based Single Tires**

Mr. Ralph Beaveridge from Michelin Tires was introduced to provide a presentation on new wide based tires being developed by his company, and on the impacts that provincial restrictions on single tire weight limits have for the technology. Mr. Beaveridge provided a brief overview of the new X-One tires, drew attention to the testing and research which had been done on the impacts for vehicle stability and highway infrastructure, and introduced Mr. Ibrahim Janajreh to review the findings. Mr. Janajreh provide a presentation on the technical issues, noting that the change in tire design provided opportunity to improve vehicle stability and control while providing pavement impacts which are similar to those seen with regular dual tire configurations.

Following a discussion period, Mr. Beaveridge agreed to provide copies of the presentation to participants, and asked that consideration be given to increasing the maximum load acceptable on single tires beyond the 3000 kg cap presently contained in the MOU. He noted that it would be possible to develop a marking system for wide base single tires which would allow enforcement officials to distinguish between the new technology designs, and the older designs which cause higher pavement impacts.

In concluding discussion on this item, it was agreed that the government representatives would review the proposal and research reports within their departments, and that a response would be provided to Michelin once this review is completed (likely early in 2002).

**Action Government Representatives**

**c) Automobile Transporters**

Mr. André Noreau was introduced to speak to this item on behalf of Allied Systems. Mr. Noreau introduced his delegation of representatives, and briefly reviewed the concerns which were outlined in the submission which had been provided to the Task Force. He noted that the transportation of automobiles is a highly specialized activity which is closely linked to operations in, and regulations of, the United States.

He commended the Task Force for its efforts to standardize the regulations for automobile transporters, and indicated that Allied Systems supports the specifications that have been developed. He noted that there are only two manufacturers of automobile transporters, both of which are in the United States, and that not all of the equipment which is available complies with the standards. He indicated that Allied Systems would like to see a grandfather provision for existing equipment in support of making the transition to the new standards.

In discussion, Mr. Pearson noted that the issue of compatibility of Canadian and US standards for automobile transporters had been raised at a recent NAFTA LTSS 2 meeting. He reported that it had been agreed to establish a working group of government officials and industry representatives from both sides of the border to consider means to harmonize standards. Mr. Noreau indicated that Allied Systems would be pleased to participate in such a working group.

Mr. Pearson drew attention to the limit which had been adopted on the rear overhang of the tractor unit used in stinger steer configurations, and asked whether this posed any problems for Allied's current fleet. Mr. Noreau indicated that this was not a problem, and that the primary difficulty was complying with the maximum 42% of wheelbase limit on effective rear overhang on the trailer when loaded.

Mr. Boyd raised the issue of large pickup trucks being used to tow long trailers carrying cars, and suggested that provinces should review their policies in this area. Mr. Dolyniuk asked whether the same rules which apply to tractor semitrailers would also apply to this configuration.

## **10. Intercity Bus Weight and Dimension Issues**

### **a) Use of trailers with intercity coaches**

Mr. Pearson drew attention to the proposed standards for special permits for intercity coaches towing small trailers which had been circulated with the agenda. As no bus industry representatives were present, there was no discussion of this item.

## **11. Other Business**

### **a) Role of Governments**

Mr. Sokil raised concerns with the increasing role of governments in areas such as selling insurance, while also issuing driver and vehicle licenses, enforcing weight and dimension and other regulations and monitoring performance under the National Safety Code.

### **b) Mandate of the Task Force**

Mr. Pearson reported that the current mandate of the Task Force expires in March 2002, and invited perspectives on the value of the forum provided, and on issues which should be included in a new proposed workplan.

In discussion there was general support expressed for the work of the Task Force, and for the national forum which it provides. It was proposed that a more regular meeting schedule be established to allow associations greater opportunity to plan and prepare for discussions and to secure participation by industry representatives. It was suggested that a regular annual meeting in the late spring would be beneficial.

In concluding the discussion, Mr. Pearson invited participants to forward any perspectives on the work of the group, or suggested issues for inclusion in the next workplan to him as quickly as possible.

## **12. Adjournment**

There being no further business, participants were thanked for their contributions to a productive meeting. It was tentatively agreed that the next meeting would be held in May 2002.

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**Secretary:** John Pearson

**Date Distributed:** November 23, 2001

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### **List of Attachments**

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Attachment 1 - List of Participants

Attachment 2 - Map of States Allowing Awnings to Exceed 102"

Attachment 3 - Map of States Allowing RV's Longer than 40 ft

Attachment 4 - Presentation - Ontario - Quebec Agreement on Harmonization

Attachment 5 - Presentation - Uniform Weight and Dimension Limits in Atlantic Canada

Attachment 6 - Presentation - Ontario's Weight Limit Review Process

**Attachment 1:**

**Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy  
Meeting - November 5&6, 2001 Montreal**

**In Attendance:**

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