

Backgrounder: National Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy

National standards for the weight and dimension limits of heavy vehicles used in interprovincial transportation are contained in a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Memorandum of Understanding on Interprovincial Weights and Dimensions (MOU).

Initially established in 1988, the MOU was founded on the results of a landmark government and industry sponsored cooperative research program which examined the safety performance of large trucks and their impacts on highway infrastructure. Expansions to the scope of the agreement, and amendments to the standards have been developed by the Task Force since that time, and have been endorsed by the Council of Ministers Responsible for Transportation and Highway Safety at its meetings in 1991, 1994, 1997, 2004, 2008, 2009 and 2011.

While significant progress has been made over the past twenty five years, harmonization of vehicle weight and dimension regulation within Canada continues to be accorded a high priority, including in the Agreement on Internal Trade (1994), and by the Council of the Federation (2007).

The Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy was established in the 1988 MOU as the coordination mechanism for identification, cooperative analysis, and development of recommendations for resolution of inconsistencies related to vehicle weight and dimension regulatory policies within Canada.

Under the terms of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial MOU, provinces and territories will permit vehicles which comply with the weights and dimensions described in the MOU to travel on a designated system of highways in their governments. Each jurisdiction continues to retain the authority to regulate vehicle weights and dimensions.

The MOU amendments approved by the Council of Ministers on October 1 include:

1. Addition of the Tridem DriveTractor – Semitrailer Configuration as a new MOU Category

Research and testing in development of appropriate weight and dimension limits for a tridem drive tractor was originally undertaken in western Canada in the early 1990's. The tridem drive tractor is attractive to some sectors of the trucking industry where heavy payloads are common and additional traction is needed.

Inclusion of the tridem drive tractor- semitrailer configuration in the MOU will take advantage of the considerable research, testing and operational experience gained in western Canada and will support national harmonization of standards for this configuration.

2. Increase in the Allowable Size of Aerodynamic Devices on Rear of Trucks and Trailers from 0.9 metres to 1.52 m.

After considerable research on the effectiveness and safety of rear-mounted aerodynamic devices, in December 2013 Transport Canada revised regulations to facilitate the use of larger aerodynamic devices on the rear of trucks and trailers. Dimension limits currently stipulated in provincial and territorial regulations limit the allowable extension at the rear of trailers for aerodynamic devices to 0.9 m.

This amendment will harmonize regulations in Canada with those in the United States and support the trucking industry in improving fuel efficiency and reducing emissions.

3. Increase in the Overall Length Limit for B Train Double Trailer Combinations from 25 m to 27.5 metres

In 2013, the Canadian Trucking Alliance proposed that the overall length limit for B Train Double Trailer combinations be increased to 27.5 metres to:

- accommodate the use of longer tractors which are necessary to fit engine emissions reduction equipment and alternative fuel systems (eg. LNG),
- improve safety in collisions with wildlife (addition of moose bumpers), and
- reduce driver fatigue, improve driver comfort and allow larger sleeper berths.

Further information on the Memorandum of Understanding and the Task Force on Vehicle Weights and Dimensions Policy can be found at www.comt.ca/english/vwd-e.htm