

Readers respond: How do we fix Canada's trucking industry?; A collection of today's reader comments and letters following The Globe's investigation of victimization in Canada's trucking industry

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ABSTRACT

A collection of today's **reader** comments and letters following The Globe's investigation of victimization in Canada's trucking industry

FULL TEXT

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Today, **readers** are **responding** to The Globe's investigation of immigrant victimization in Canada's trucking industry. Investigative reporter Kathy Tomlinson <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/>. In response, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ottawa-to-probe-possible-abuse-of-foreign-workers-as-bc-reviews/>, while British Columbia will look to review trucking regulations in that province. Ms. Tomlinson's investigation began after a previous look into the immigration-consulting industry, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-trucking-visas-investigation-behind-the-story/>.

Here what **readers** and letter-writers had to say:

Industry voices

The Globe has exposed the underbelly of a great industry: trucking. The highlighted behaviour of some companies are an embarrassment to my sector. So what can Canada do to address these abuses? The answer is not to stop immigration programs.

When it comes to future immigration policy, the Canadian government should create trusted-employer programs that ensure participating companies have all the required standards in place before they can employ immigrant drivers. Government agencies should also begin serious investigations of drivers or operators who allegedly employ the so-called Drive Inc. model, a potential tax-evading practice that seems to fuel many of these non-compliant carriers.

As for the fleets exhibiting grossly unsafe operating behaviour, the Canadian Trucking Alliance is finalizing a plan for improved regulatory oversight of trucking firms both new and existing. My members have been frustrated that

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such behaviour has not received the enforcement attention required to stop it. Change cannot come fast enough. - Stephen Laskowski President, Canadian Trucking Alliance; Toronto

The fraud described in this Globe investigation sadly seems like the tip of the iceberg.

I have seen that only a small percentage of victims make formal complaints against immigration consultants who promise to sell jobs in various industries such as trucking, facilitate marriage fraud or counsel submission of false refugee claims to Canada's overburdened system. That there are nevertheless hundreds of existing complaints, which the immigration-consulting industry's self-regulatory body has not been able to keep up with, reveals the possible extent of fraud and negligence.

There have already been two attempts at industry self-regulation; after intense lobbying by immigration consultants, the federal government most recently announced \$100-million for a third try, with some tougher penalties. But punishment only works when people come forward.

Immigration lawyers have undergone rigorous formal and ethical training. The practice of immigration law should be restricted to lawyers to ensure public protection and prevent victimization of newcomers. - Ravi Jain National chair, Canadian Bar Association - Immigration Section; Toronto

An awful lot has changed since I got behind the wheel of a semi back in 1974. Back then, trucking was a coveted and respected occupation. Unfortunately, deregulation, which I was one of the largest proponents of in Canada, has created some huge downsides along with its tremendous efficiencies.

As described in the Globe investigation, the Canadian for-hire trucking sector has been the victim of a small batch of fraudsters masquerading as real companies, and the result of their actions has hurt the entire industry. At the same time, trucking as a whole in North America looks to be suffering from the worst insurance crunch in our history, as a result of careless operators who seem to be more interested in putting any warm body in a cold truck seat.

It is very important for me, as one of the founding fathers of today's deregulated industry, to highlight two positive points: The vast majority of truck operators in North America do business in a totally professional and compliant manner; as well, insurance providers are now drilling deeper into every aspect of their insureds' operations - the ones that refuse to operate under the industry's best practices will simply just not be able to insure their trucks. - Chuck Snow CEO, Traffix Group of Companies; Milton, Ont.

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<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ottawa-to-probe-possible-abuse-of-foreign-workers-as-bc-reviews/>
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Whose responsibility?

The question that needs to be asked is: Why do we allow a system where a consultant can charge someone who wants to come to Canada \$30,000 to \$50,000 as a "fee," splitting half with the trucking company? I believe that this is called fraud. This is a federal responsibility and needs to be addressed. There are two sets of victims: the poor dupes who pay, desperate to get into Canada, and the Canadian public who are victims of the trucking industry that allows this. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=639edfc8-e94d-4f34-9ef2-7f7e61a7006f>

Curious what the Minister of Transport is going to do about this? It took Humboldt for this to be brought to the forefront, even though people knew this has been going on for years. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=0bbbbbe57-0f57-44e6-8d6f-7968ab8dde85>

The operators

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The roots of the problem are the trucking companies and their practices. The lack of government regulation and inspection are also huge factors. The drivers should be way down the list. If the other factors were properly addressed, then they would not have a chance to make those choices. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=d316d2cf-f6cd-435c-ab39-7c7da3277457>

There is an immigration issue here, but the much bigger problem is why are these companies allowed to operate in the first place? Why isn't the RCMP deep into this problem, and what can be done about the lack of overlap between federal and provincial government responsibilities? Even if there were no Temporary Foreign Worker Program, the owners of these companies are so unscrupulous they would likely continue to exploit untrained Canadian workers without safety certificates or regard for industry standards.

When I was a kid, and later when going for my own driver's licence, truckers were held up as the safest drivers on the road. Whatever has happened since then, that is far from true now. Speeds are too high, time pressure too unreasonable, courtesy gone. What regulatory or enforcement changes have been made in the last few decades to make what was once an honourable profession so hazardous to us all? - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=a0e6bc15-23c9-4632-950f-1c7645f08568>

The drivers

I must disagree with the portrayal of some of these truck drivers as the unwitting victims of truck-driving companies and immigration consultants. They are all part of the problem. Truck drivers must know or ought to know that what they are doing is illegal in breaking immigration, traffic and labour rules, but they go along with that to get their permanent residency nonetheless. While the trucking companies, immigration consultants and the whole Temporary Foreign Worker Program should be shut down, revocation of fraudulently obtained citizenship or permanent resident status might also be in order to fix that. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=f059d6b8-42ca-40ad-8302-6b49bd03d6ef>

The system is a mess. However, blame should go both ways. If you can't read English, haven't driven in ice or snow and generally are not experienced in driving, why would you decide to become a truck driver? Yes, you really want to immigrate to Canada. I really want to be a millionaire. But I'm not going to participate in what is obviously an illegal or unethical job in order to achieve my dreams while putting other people in danger. These newcomers are not having a gun put to their heads so that they must drive a truck in order to gain entry into Canada. Let's focus on this corrupt system and focus on the real victims: Those who are injured in accidents or are unintentionally put in harm's way. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=6a3766eb-fb20-4cad-ae10-03abdfef487>

How bad is it?

If it was only the trucking industry that had regulatory issues between the federal and provincial governments, it would not be so bad. But after many reports about the real estate sector in British Columbia and other places, the banking sector in regards to money laundering, the impossibility of building anything coast to coast without offending a province, no free trade between provinces, is there any wonder the country is stagnating on productivity? - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=717997fe-22b7-490f-a49d-b3a60014682e>

Public safety

I used to have a lot of respect for professional truck drivers. After the Humboldt crash, and the facts that came out around that, and articles like this, I no longer have that opinion. If you are on the highway in proximity of a large truck, be very cautious. Your life may be on the line. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=1f151137-7c55-41ad-9581-cd12a5ecf1bb>

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All of us drive our highways and see the dangers around transport trucks, and the horrific accidents. All of us need to put pressure on the federal and provincial governments to bring in stricter regulations. After Humboldt, it is shocking that Ottawa did not act to enforce stricter national regulations. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=6aad59c4-17bf-4887-84f2-f5ee554d5a99>

"Any employer found to have violated the rules will face serious consequences," said a statement from Michael O'Shaughnessy at Employment and Social Development Canada. He said the government is very serious about protecting "the safety and welfare of temporary foreign workers, and does not tolerate any abuse."

Fine, but what about the "safety and welfare" of the general public using the roads that have become extremely hazardous due to these unqualified and inexperienced truck drivers? - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-ottawa-to-probe-possible-abuse-of-foreign-workers-as-bc-reviews/?commentId=3c72029c-10bc-44ab-b353-96449c3ef7ba>

Temporary Foreign Workers

Finally, this is just another unintended consequence of what happens when government interferes in the market, in this case applying the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to regular workers, as opposed to unique or scarce specialists, where it makes sense in one-off conditions. If there are no Canadian workers to do a job, it means the industry isn't paying enough to attract them. Industries and firms that can't figure out how to survive without government gaming the market for them don't deserve to survive. In some cases, it feels like politicians not wanting to take the heat for what would happen to costs everywhere when wages are forced higher for the lack of workers.

Consider everything you consume is delivered (last mile) by truck and you get the idea how far reaching the problem becomes. Migrant farm workers are another example: Everybody eats, but what happens when food prices skyrocket? Governments fall. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=62a6e25a-dbbc-4fab-9d26-d69e7f405ae9>

The moral

This is an investigation of the trucking industry. The story, however, is about avarice. I should have been shocked by the results of this investigation. I was saddened, but not even surprised. Preying on the vulnerable might rank as the fastest growing and most profitable global industry. - <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-foreign-truck-drivers-canada-immigration-investigation/?commentId=793e09f8-47a4-49c5-be9d-449feabb68c0>

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