CAVCOE's Comments on the
Final Report of the National Supply Chain Task Force

CAVCOE is pleased to submit to Transport Canada the following comments on the *Final Report of the Transport Minister's National Supply Chain Task Force.*

The future of freight transportation in Canada's supply chain will not be a choice between human or computer drivers, it will be a blend of both. Unfortunately, the report ignores the role of automation in freight transportation and focuses on hiring and retaining human drivers.

This is surprising given Transport Canada's many activities in the Connected and Automated Vehicle (CAV) ecosystem, and the fact that the report's recommendations include *develop, implement, and regularly renew a long-term, future-proof (30- to 50-year) transportation supply chain strategy.* Most stakeholders would agree that there will be large-scale deployment of all types of CAVs in this timeframe.

There is already significant momentum in CAV planning and deployment in Canada:

- Canada has a strong CAV ecosystem with many stakeholders from all levels of government, industry, and academia. The technology from CAV passenger vehicles can be leveraged for freight CAVs.
- Transport Canada's web site contains a wide range of published reports related to CAVs, including understanding CAVs, the vehicles of the future, guidelines for CAV testing, and CAV safety.
- Transport Canada has also been very active in supporting various CAV pilot projects including freight transportation. For example, Transport Canada has conducted truck platooning projects at its own testing centre in Blainville QC.[1] The benefits include improving freight efficiency and reducing the number of truck drivers that are needed.
- Another example is the Alberta Motor Transport Association (AMTA) which has conducted a truck platooning project between Edmonton and Calgary with funding from Transport Canada.
- There has been considerable publicity about the Loblaw/Gatik service in Toronto which evolved from an earlier pilot project. It is now a service on public roads with no human in the driver's seat. Loblaw's CTO explained that *autonomous driving technology enables supply chain efficiency*.
- A speaker at a recent Canadian webinar on *Supply Chain and Freight Automation* identified 14 companies in the US that are developing and testing automated trucks for long-haul applications. Major companies such as Amazon, Walmart and Google are active participants in this sector. They and other

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[1] Platooning is where a human drives one truck and another one or two trucks follow-the-leader via digital connection and without a human driver.

companies have invested billions of dollars in bringing this technology to the market.
- There have also been several Canadian initiatives involving Public Mobile Robots (PMRs) for last-mile deliveries, including the development of an international standard for last-mile deliveries by the Urban Robotics Foundation.

The Supply Chain report correctly identifies the substantial shortage of truck drivers and recommends getting more people as truck drivers. For example, on page 18 of the report: *In collaboration with provinces/territories, implement programs and policies that encourage the attraction and retention of truck drivers.* But that is only half the answer. The shortage of truck drivers has been with us for years and it is unlikely that the report's recommendations on their own will completely solve the issue.

It is likely that CAVs for freight and other non-passenger applications will deploy in far greater numbers in the 2020s than passenger vehicles. The reasons include solid business cases and safety issues that are easier to address, partly because many automated trucks will drive on fixed routes.

I encourage Transport Canada, and especially Minister Alghabra, to:
- State that they agree with and support using CAV technology to help address the labour and efficiency issues in Canada's supply chain;
- Clarify Transport Canada's messaging on this topic, and
- Develop and publish within twelve months a road map for the deployment of CAV technology in Canada's supply chain.

As mentioned above, the future of transportation in the supply chain is not a choice between human or computer drivers, it will be a blend of both. This strategy will help address the key issues identified in the report, including the driver shortage, and improving supply chain efficiency.

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