

Truck repair company values well-trained and well-paid staff

by Gloria Welton

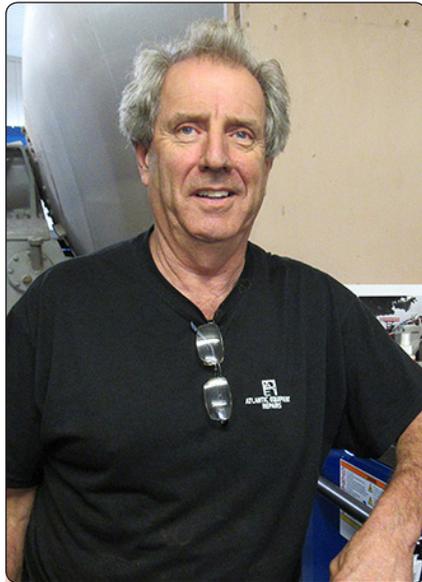
Across Canada, there is a high demand for long-haul truck drivers and heavy equipment mechanics.

“Approximately 1,500 Truck Drivers are employed in this sector on PEI, with another 2,000 or so employees who keep their wheels turning,” says **Brian Oulton**, Executive Director of the PEI Trucking Sector Council.

“Trucking is a growing industry. The only thing stopping companies from further growth is finding the right people to hire. On PEI, industry representatives are working hard to get the message out that a career in this field is solid. They are taking measures to attract youth, newcomers, and women to the sector.”

Joe Rooney, owner of **Atlantic Equipment Repairs Ltd.** in Charlottetown, has taken measures to hire the right people to make sure he has a skilled workforce. “I try to treat people the way I would want to be treated,” says Joe.

“One of my concerns for the industry is the need for a training school on PEI. Block release training is held off-Island.



Joe Rooney, owner of **Atlantic Equipment Repairs Ltd.**

“Apprentices are away for weeks at a time, which is difficult for the staff and for the business.”

Salaries and incentives

“Depending on their level of certification and experience, my mechanics earn \$40,000 to \$80,000 per year,” says Joe. “Someone who starts at the shop doing general duties such as keeping the shop clean and maintained and putting tools away starts at \$14 an hour.

“As new staff progress, the pay increases. We offer medical and dental coverage as well as company incentives. This encourages everyone to do their job and work together.

“I think of my staff as family, and I can talk about the good qualities of each one,” says Joe. “The key is to make sure they get their Red Seal, and then to make sure we keep them.”

Besides Joe, there are eight truck and transport mechanics and an office manager.

Three staff talk about how they got into the trade

Cody Coates is 23 years old and has his Heavy Duty Equipment Technician Red Seal. He grew up with truck drivers in the family but was more interested in mechanics. During high school, he took automotive mechanics, welding, and other trades.

“After high school, I wanted to get into heavy equipment mechanics. I connected with Joe through a friend. Joe got me started and then I started block release training in New Brunswick.

“I wrote and passed my Red Seal in December, 2015. It was the first time I ever really studied and worked hard to pass an exam. This is my career choice, so I was highly motivated to do well.

“I make good money, I get to stay in one place, and work on PEI. I am a big family guy, so staying on PEI suits me.”



Cody Coates

Darlene Arsenault has worked for the company since 2010 and looks after the company’s finances. Joe says he doesn’t make any financial decisions without checking with her.

Darlene had previous experience working with a trucking company. When she was on maternity leave, she started looking for other work. “I applied and started work a few days after the job interview,” says Darlene. “This company is a great fit for me.”

She took an accounting/bookkeeping program on the Island and has worked in other provinces as well as on PEI.

“I wouldn’t change a thing about my career choice or where I work. Joe is an excellent boss and I am very content here.”



Darlene Arsenault

Michaela Laporte is 19 years old and has worked for the company for a little over a year. She heard about the company by visiting the PEI Trucking Sector Council.

“I thought Brian would know who in the trucking industry would potentially hire a girl as a mechanic, because I thought that might be a hurdle for me,” says Michaela. “He mentioned Joe’s name. Joe was considering three other people, but asked me to come in for a talk. I said if he gave me a try I would work hard.”

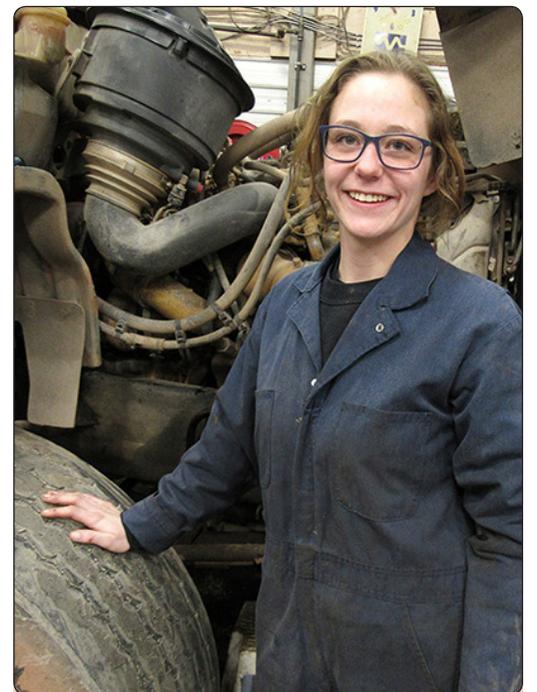
In high school she took the automotive mechanics course, and the teacher told her she had great potential for this trade. “My mom was a potato farmer and I always wondered who fixed the big trucks. Now she works with a truck manufacturing company. She is a great role model for me.”

After high school, Michaela went to university because it seemed everyone was doing the same. But her career plans changed after the first semester.

“I took sciences because I wanted to work on the diesel engines on the Coast Guard ships and that was a requirement. But when I took a look at all the long-term requirements, I thought more about my choices and came back home.”

Soon after being hired, Michaela did her first block release in Nova Scotia. “It’s difficult to travel off-Island for the training. I just want to get it done and write the Red Seal exam.

“My job duties right now include changing oil, brakes maintenance, fluid services, and basic electrical issues. The computer technology is right up my alley. It comes very naturally to me and I love to plug the computer system into the trucks and pull up the codes and get the diagnosis. I often take the truck system books home with me to learn more about what might have been a struggle that day. It is an awesome trade.”



Michaela Laporte

For more information about **Atlantic Equipment Repairs Ltd.**, visit www.atlanticequipmentrepair.com

For more information about careers in trucking, call the **PEI Trucking Sector Council** at **902-566-5563**. Visit www.peitsc.ca

For the full interview, visit www.employmentjourney.com and search **Atlantic Equipment Repairs**.

