

Bison shrinks its footprint First trucker to sell its carbon credits

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WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS archives Don Streuber: This validates any notional claim (about carbon credits) that may be made.

BISON Transport has become the first transportation company in Canada -- and the only company in Manitoba -- to sell carbon credits.

Bison recently sold about 10,500 carbon credits to a Montreal-based wholesaler called L2I Financial Solutions, which in turn sold them to LivClean, a Mississauga firm that analyzes a company's carbon footprint and offers carbon-offset products to reduce that footprint.

None of the parties would disclose the price Bison received, but large companies in Alberta -- the only North American jurisdiction with regulations requiring greenhouse-gas reductions -- pay \$15 for every tonne of emission that exceeds that province's target.

Winnipeg-based Bison embarked on a detailed fuel-efficiency strategy in 2005 and even though the carbon-credit market remains voluntary, company CEO Don Streuber said it is good business for the trucking company to take the initiative to legitimize its efforts. "This validates any notional claim (about carbon credits) that may be made," Streuber said. "It translates it into something that is tangible." But it still remains to be seen just how tangible those carbon credits will be.

Officials from both L2I and LivClean say they have been involved in the sale of about 400,000 carbon credits this year and both say there is increasing activity in the market.

Except for Alberta, the buying and selling of carbon credits is undertaken mostly out of a sense of corporate responsibility and public relations purposes.

"From our perspective, most of our clients do it (buy and sell carbon credits) for reasons of marketing or public relations," said Christina DeVries, an official with LivClean. "They want to position their brand as environmentally friendly and to attract consumers that care about that."

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) has a greenhouse gas (GHG) CleanProjects Registry. It lists Bison's fuel-efficiency strategies in freight transport as having estimated potential annual emission reductions of 23,470 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Over the decade between 2005 and 2015, it is estimated it will reduce emissions by 368,022 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent.

Each credit is equivalent to one metric tonne of CO₂-equivalent emission, which quantifies all of the harmful pollutants including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride.

"We have a sustainability agenda which is good for business and reduces costs," Streuber said. "We also think it's good for the community and has been appreciated by employees and others in our constituency group, including our suppliers."

Bison's GHG reductions are the result of various fuel-efficiency strategies including aerodynamic improvements such as a tractor-trailer gap fairing, trailer belly skirts and aerodynamic profile tractor; speed and driver management tools such as truck-idling control strategies; intermodal transportation; long combination vehicles; and tire-efficient technology including low-rolling resistance tires.

L2I is a consulting firm that specializes in the carbon-credit market and produced the original work that quantified Bison's fuel-efficiency strategies.

Melina Valero, president of L2I, said, "In North America, carbon credits is a voluntary market. They do not have to be bought and sold. They (Bison) want to be a good corporate citizen."

Since Canada and the United States were not signatories to the Kyoto Accord, the concept of a standardized cap-and-trade system has not taken hold and Alberta is the only place with a legislated market.

The Western Climate Initiative, of which Manitoba is a participant, continues to work toward a 2012 start date for regional emissions trading. California, British Columbia and Quebec are planning to start in 2012. Ontario and Manitoba will join after the program starts.

"The real question is whether there will be a bona fide market for carbon credit," Streuber said. "As an industry leader in fuel efficiency, we realized the opportunity to translate and document our fuel-efficiency gains into carbon credits. Should an effective marketplace occur, we would have them ready for sale."

Even though the cap-and-trade concept may have lost its lustre, Valero said her firm has probably seen a 50 per cent increase in the volume of business.

Driving for efficiency

Bison Transport's fuel-efficiency strategies and their environmental impacts:

Aerodynamic improvement strategies:

- tractor-trailer gap fairing: reduces fuel consumption by two per cent
- aerodynamic profile tractor: reduces GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions by two per cent
- trailer belly skirts: reduces GHG by four to seven per cent

Speed and driver management:

- speed limiters activated at 100 kilometres an hour reduce GHG by 2.7 million kilograms
- drivers' fuel economy course improves fuel economy by two per cent

Truck idling control strategies:

- auxiliary power units reduce GHG by five per cent

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ire efficiency:

- low-rolling resistance tires save 1.5 to 4.5 per cent in fuel consumption