

News

On Queen Street: Railway Association of Canada makes tracks with new president

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As the new president and CEO of the **Railway Association of Canada (RAC)**, **Marc Brazeau** has safety at the top of his mind.

Brazeau, who comes to the RAC with more than two decades of experience in the transportation industry, began his duties on July 3.

He replaces **Gérald Gauthier**, who had been the RAC's interim leader since November 2017. Previously the association was led by **Michael Bourque**, who served in the position from 2012.

One issue facing Brazeau, and other members of the RAC, is the potential impacts of cannabis use on workplace safety, as Canada gets closer to its legalization in October. The lobbyist registry shows Gauthier had been discussing Bill C-45, the Cannabis Act, and Bill C-46, which consists of new rules concerning drug-impaired driving, with the Prime Minister's Office, senators, MPs, and Public Safety Canada.

"We just don't want impairment to become an issue as a result of this act. We have a duty and responsibility as an employer to be able to enforce that our people will always be 100 per cent alert and able to perform their job regardless of if the Cannabis Act comes into play," said Brazeau. "Like anything else, if all of a sudden, you have an ability to consume something and it compromises your ability to do your job competently, we want to make sure that's an issue that's top of mind."

Brazeau emphasized the RAC has always been safety-conscious. Besides safety training for their employees, the RAC also started Operation Lifesaver, a program funded by the



Marc Brazeau, president and CEO of the Railway Association of Canada (RAC).
Photo courtesy of the RAC

RAC and Transport Canada to promote railway safety across the country.

"We're not against legalization [of cannabis]. All we're saying is we want to be sure the legalization of cannabis does not compromise the safety of our employees," he said. "Safety, in general, is something we take seriously. We will continue to make sure the railway industry

is proactive when it comes to improving safety in all facets."

Besides safety, another big RAC focus is on the economy and the contribution the railway industry makes to ensure Canada is fulfilling its responsibilities in exporting its products, according to Brazeau.

The RAC is also interested in encouraging more government investment in transportation

technology, that will allow for rail safety and emissions reductions.

"The growth and sustainability of the railway industry is directly tied to our ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Canada," said Brazeau. "Railways can transport goods from point A to point B, and when you do that, you reduce your greenhouse gas emissions, compared to transporting by road. There are always new technologies being introduced in the railway industry, such as alternative, greener forms of fuel."

Brazeau made his move into the transportation industry in 1990, when he began working for the Transportation Association of Canada. He moved onto the Automotive Industries Association of Canada (AIA) in 1997 and became its president and CEO in 2008.

Lobbying duties for the RAC will be familiar territory for Brazeau since he also lobbied for the AIA.

Most recently, he worked as an automotive paint and products distributor for Uni-Select, where he held the position of vice-president of sales and marketing since May 2015.

Brazeau considers the RAC to be a good fit for him because of his transportation industry experience and his professional focus on safety, the economy, and customer outreach.

"This opportunity to come back to work with a first-class organization like the RAC was a great [one] and it's a privilege to have this opportunity. It is a world-class railway industry in Canada. It's one of the best, globally, in terms of its efficiency," said Brazeau. "I'm coming back to my original calling and I'm really excited about it."

The RAC deals frequently with the Ministry of Transport, so contact with Transport Minister **Marc Garneau** as he begins lobbying seems likely, according to Brazeau, who is registering to lobby for the association.

Brazeau also said the RAC works regularly with the Canadian Transportation Agency and the Transportation Safety Board.