

June 2014

Spring Issue



Canadian Association
Paraplegic Canadienne des
Association Paraplegiques
(Manitoba) Inc.

MPF MANITOBA
PARAPLEGIA
FOUNDATION INC.

PARATRACKS



Newsletter of the Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) Inc.



**Manitoba Government
Invests \$3,000,000 in
Services, Support for
Manitobans with Spinal
Cord Injuries pg. 10**

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** Greg Winmill is on leave*



Canadian Paraplegic Association
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ParaTracks is a publication of:

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Website: www.cpamanitoba.ca

Supported by Manitoba Paraplegia Foundation Inc.

Circulation: 850 copies
Estimated Readership: 5,000

Editor: Ron Burky

Layout: Mike Nickle

Advertising Rates:

Advertising rates for photo ready copy:

Full Page - \$160

Half Page - \$87

One Third Page - \$70

Quarter Page - \$55

Business Card Size - \$33

Classified ads free to CPA members

ParaTracks publishes three times a year

Canada Post Publication Agreement #40050723

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MANITOBA PARAPLEGIA FOUNDATION INC. (MPF) NEWS

MPF funds go to work in four main areas that are not supported by any other sources in Manitoba: special projects, product testing, research and direct aid to persons with spinal cord injuries who do not have the necessary financial resources for equipment and/or services. All requests for direct aid are initiated through CPA. Individuals must provide information on their financial status, explain why they cannot meet the expense within their own budget, and identify any other potential sources to support the request including potential for contribution from family.

CPA thanks MPF for its continued support to improving the quality of life of persons with spinal cord injuries.

MPF has approved several requests for financial support during the past few months.

Some of the highlights are as follows:

During the month of January 2013:

☞ Funding was provided for the purchase of a custom backrest for a CPA member. This backrest will provide the member with protection for chronic pressure issues and help prevent any new pressure damage in areas that need to be weight-bearing for postural support.

During the February 2013:

☞ Financial support was granted to a CPA member for assistance with modifications to the member's home. These modifications will allow the member to enter their bedroom with their power chair and to enter and exit their home independently.

Visit MPF's website at: www.cpamanitoba.ca/mpf

Applications for assistance are available by contacting the CPA office.

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During the month of March 2013:

☞ Funding was provided for the purchase of a used scooter for a CPA member. This scooter will greatly improve the member's quality of life by allowing them to regain their independence and return to the activities they once did before their injury.

Travel Assistance Program

Through the Travel Assistance Program, a person with a permanent disability, who cannot travel without an attendant, can be approved for reduced fares at participating Motor Coach Companies and Via Rail.

Only people with a permanent disability who require an attendant when travelling can apply, regardless of the person's age. An attendant is defined as "an individual who accompanies a person with a permanent disability who cannot travel independently. An attendant will provide that person with required services that are not normally provided by a vehicle operator. These services include assisting the person with eating, administering medication and using the facilities in an on-board washroom or a washroom at a stop."

The Travel Assistance Program is a national program of Easter Seals™ Canada. SMD Foundation/Easter Seals™ Manitoba administers the Travel Assistance Program in Manitoba and is authorized to provide a Disability Travel Card™ to people who meet the program's eligibility requirements.

For a list of eligibility requirements and to apply for a Disability Travel Card™, please visit www.smd.mb.ca and click on the SMD Services tab and then Travel Assistance Program on the left side menu.

If you don't have access to the SMD website, you can call them at 204-975-3108 or Toll Free at 1-866-282-8041.



*Canadian Association
Paraplegic Canadienne des
Association Paraplegiques
(Manitoba) Inc.*

2014 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of the
Canadian Paraplegic Association (Manitoba) Inc.
cordially invites you to attend its
Annual General Meeting

TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2014
5:00 p.m. Hors d'oeuvres
5:30 p.m. Business Meeting
Merv Thomson Room, 1010 Sinclair Street, Winnipeg

Meeting Agenda:

Reports from the President/Executive Director and Treasurer.
Elections will be held for positions on the 2014/2015 Board of Directors.

Presentation of 2014 CPA Merit Award
Guest Speaker: Susana Scott, Brematson & Associates
Topic: Unraveling the Complexity of Applying for
Disability Benefits

Reception (Coffee & Dainties)
to follow the Annual General Meeting

Exoskeletons, SMARTwheels and the Free-Wheel:

Examples of recent devices and equipment innovations intended to increase function after spinal cord injury

~ by Kristine Cowley PhD. ~

The March 26, 2014 issue of the National Post described a woman from Halifax taking her first steps using a battery-powered exoskeleton for paralyzed persons (the EKSO bionic). This ParaTracks article will focus on this and some other new devices that may be of interest to those living with SCI in Manitoba. A handful of Rehabilitation Centres in North America have recently introduced the use of commercially available battery-powered exoskeletons [Figure 1: Re-Walk (left) and EKSO (right)] into their rehabilitation and/or research programs. The exoskeletons can be used by those with either incomplete or motor complete spinal cord injuries. The other devices that will be described are the Smart Drive rear-wheel power assist for manual wheelchairs (Figure 2) and the Free-Wheel detachable front wheel for manual wheelchairs (Figure 3).

Although each of these devices are vastly different, both in terms of their price tags (around \$80,000 for the exoskeleton to \$599 US for the FreeWheel), what links them all together is that they have each become more 'accessible' for persons living with spinal cord injury and each has the potential to increase the function of its user.

The exoskeleton or mechanical stepper is targeted for use by those with paraplegia and good use of their arms and hands for the needed crutches. The owner of the company that developed the 'ReWalk' is himself a quadriplegic and indicates his company will be developing a version in the near future for those with quadriplegia. In 2013 a paraplegic used it to complete the Tel Aviv marathon. Claire Lomas used it to complete the London marathon in 2012. The only downside was that it took her 17 days to finish.



Figure 1: Re-Walk (left) and the EKSO bionic (right) use battery powered motors to swing the person's paralyzed legs forward to take overground steps. Balance support is provided by using crutches.



There are currently only a few exoskeletons in Canadian Rehab/Research Centres (e.g. one EKSO at ICORD in British Columbia and the one mentioned above in Halifax). The University of Edmonton will be getting a Re-Walk soon which will be used for research purposes. I am curious to hear about the level of interest other people living with paralysis would have for using such a device on a daily basis

and/or for being involved in research with such a device. So any feedback you can provide (Kris@scrc.umanitoba.ca) would be appreciated. For example, if it were free, would you use it? If not free to use, what price would you pay for such a device? How much would you think you would use it and under what circumstances?

From my own personal perspective, in terms of

using this as a practical device on a daily basis, I think it would need to be useable from a wheelchair such that one could easily wear the device in his or her chair and then be able to use it to get out of the wheelchair to reach something or to do a particular task that is better to be done while standing. However, in their current form these devices are too wide and bulky to be worn while in a wheelchair, and too slow to be able to get from A to B efficiently. Researchers measured the walking speeds of twelve persons with similar levels of motor-complete paraplegia after they had been trained in using the 'RE-Walk' exoskeleton and found quite a range of achievable speeds, including very very slow (0.1 m/s) which means it would take about 30 seconds to travel ten feet to the fastest walker at 0.5 m/s (10 feet in 6 seconds). For comparison, able-bodied adults tend to walk at around 1.4 m/s, which is three times the speed of the fastest paralyzed person from the study using the exoskeleton. Finally, from a practical standpoint since you have to wear crutches you cannot carry anything while moving around with the device.

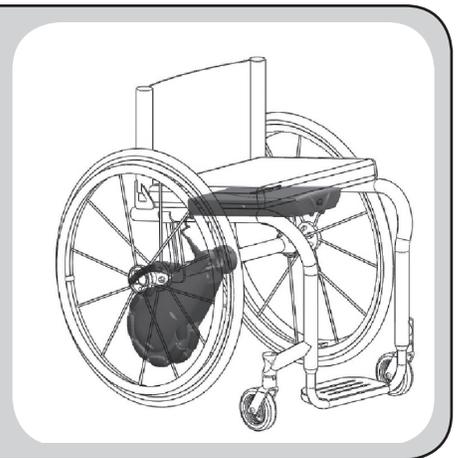
On the other hand, it would provide the opportunity to spend time upright and not sitting which

might reduce the risk of developing a sitting-related pressure sore, and it might be similar to a passive standing frame for reducing declines in bone density in the legs. In relation to the idea of using the device to try to provide weight-bearing loading, researchers at the Veterans Research Centre in the Bronx in New York measured the force under the feet of persons with motor complete paraplegia while using the 'Re-Walk' exoskeleton and reported that the ground reaction forces were similar to height and weight-matched able-bodied persons walking over-ground. Therefore, the passive loading under the feet of people while using the exoskeletons, simply due being upright and putting body weight through the leg bones might be enough to provide a therapeutic mechanical load.

Whether or not long-term use of the device would provide a benefit for maintaining or reducing bone mineral loss in the legs remains to be tested. It will be interesting to watch the developments in this technology over the next few years, especially if designers start to incorporate the use of electrical stimulation and design that incorporates the wheelchair into the exoskeleton.



Figure 2: Woman travelling hands-free (left) while using the Smart Drive power assist device for wheelchair users (both pieces of the unit shown in schematic on right).



The second recent addition to the commercially available mobility equipment is the SmartDrive power assist wheel shown in Figure 2, made by MaxMobility (about \$6,000 US). A battery pack is mounted under the wheelchair seat pan and connected to the rear wheel attachment. The system senses the user's motion such that once powered on, the wheeler's speed is monitored and the SmartDrive will continue rolling in the direction and speed the wheeler sets. So, if you're pushing up a ramp, you can remove your hands from the wheelchair rims and the power assist wheel will keep rolling forward at the speed the wheelchair had been going until the wheeler either changes direction or speed with their hands. The

SmartDrive can travel up ramps with six degrees of incline at speeds up to 4 miles per hour (6.4 km/hr or about 1.8 m/s). For comparison, the fastest walker in the exoskeleton reached 0.5 m/s. On level paths 4.5 mph (7.2 km/hr or 2 m/s) can be maintained.

At the other end of the expense spectrum is the FreeWheel (Figure 3), which quickly clamps on to the footrest of a manual wheelchair and allows the user to wheel through all kinds of terrain without getting bogged down by tiny castors. I know a few people in Winnipeg who have been quite happy with being able to go for a 'walk' outside without having to constantly stare at the ground to avoid being stopped dead or thrown out of their chair as their tiny castors are

unable to deal with the usual sidewalk and road hazards encountered. One of the configurations I think would be interesting to test out would be the use of BOTH the FreeWheel and the SmartDrive together on the same manual wheelchair, especially for traveling over grass and cobblestone.

In summary, these three vastly different devices bring new functional mobility to those paralyzed. Although the exoskeletons may appear the least effi-

cient at this stage, they do allow users to climb stairs and remain upright for extended periods of time and with further development, it is quite likely they will become more functional with more practical application. In the meantime, there are two new devices (FreeWheel, SmartDrive) that can bring freedom of movement to the wider audience of manual wheelchair users today.



Figure 3: The FreeWheel with carrier rack mounted on the footrest of a manual wheelchair (left) and being used in the snow (right).



If you have any questions about this or any other article, feel free to contact Kris Cowley by email (Kris@scrc.umanitoba.ca).



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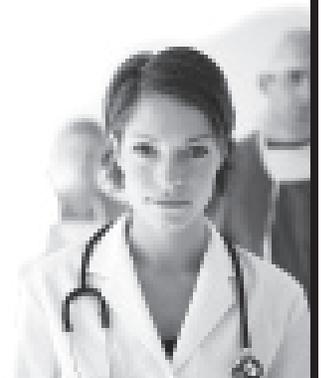
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Options for Employment

~ By Lynda Walker ~

Volunteering is an excellent way to enlarge your social network and develop your interpersonal skills. For those individuals who are in the vocational planning process, it can provide the opportunity to explore new interests and develop new skills for employment. Through volunteering you can develop such skills as time management, organization, team work, problem solving and communication skills; skills that will enhance your employment options. Although unpaid, this is still work, and it can help you develop employment contacts and expand on your resume.

Volunteer work can prevent social isolation for those not seeking competitive employment. By getting out and volunteering, you can take pride in contributing to your community and gain satisfaction from helping others.

There are many organizations in Winnipeg that welcome volunteers. Churches and schools in your community, as well as youth and seniors centres, are places to consider. The Assiniboine Park has an extensive volunteer component with a need for volunteers on a number of areas throughout the park. To find out more about their volunteer program you can go to www.assiniboinepark.ca/volunteers.

Employment within the Provincial Government

The Provincial Government is one of the largest employers in the province and was named one of Canada's best diversity employers in 2012 and 2013. This means that it has a good representation of people with disabilities, Aboriginal people and people from visible minorities within its workforce. To find out more about jobs available within the provincial government you can go to www.Manitoba.ca/govjobs.

The Career Options for Students with Disabilities

This is a program designed to provide post-secondary students with the opportunity to develop new skills in career related jobs and to provide high school students the opportunity to experience their first jobs. To find out more about student employment opportunities go to www.studentjobs.gov.mb.ca.

Manitoba Diversity Internship Program (MDIP)

This is a one year internship program for individuals who are not currently employed with the Provincial Government and are in one of the following employment equity groups: Aboriginal, visible minority or a person with a disability. The program focuses on position/occupation specific placements with an option for limited rotational assignments within the department or similar occupational groups. It provides developmental training with a commitment to appoint successful participants to a government position at the end of their program. The coordinator for this program is Darlene Hedgecock. She can be reached at 204-945-2332.

The Career Gateway Program

This is a placement and referral program for people in the employment equity group (Aboriginal, Visible Minority and Persons with Disabilities) who are not currently employed by the province. Participants need to have relevant skills and abilities to perform jobs available within the Manitoba government. The program is promoted through advertising on the Job Opportunities website. The coordinator for the program is Karon Chester. She can be reached at 204-390-2694.

To be considered as a candidate for employment equity you need to register. Self declaration forms are found at www.gov.mb.ca/csc/pdf/declare_en.pdf.

The Federal Student Work Experience Program

This program provides full time students with valuable work experience related to their field of study. Students do not have to have previous work experience to apply. Students are paid an hourly rate based on their educational level and their years of experience. To be eligible for this program you must be a full time secondary or post secondary student and be returning to full time studies for your next academic term. Students in their final year of studies are only eligible to work part time until completion of their final full time term. For more information see jobs.gc.ca and click on student employment.

For those of you who are looking for employment or considering retraining but feel that you need additional support and guidance, I would encourage you to contact your counsellor at the Canadian Paraplegic Association.

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Researchers at the University of Manitoba are studying physical activity levels in spinal cord injured individuals.

Participants will:

- ◆ Learn about their own activity levels and how they compare to current guidelines.
 - ◆ Learn about ways to exercise safely and effectively.
 - ◆ Help researchers improve activity guidelines and better understand causes of shoulder pain in manual wheelchair users.
-
- ◆ The Study will require participants to wear a small device on the wrist and chest and log activity over 7 days.
 - ◆ If you are a manual wheelchair user with a spinal cord injury (quadriplegic or paraplegic) you may be eligible to participate.

To take part or to get more information, please contact:

Kevin Stewart
kstew@live.ca
(204) 294-7761



Dean Kriellaars
kriel@umanitoba.ca
(204) 688-0151

Did you know that the Access 2 Entertainment card provides free admission for support persons accompanying a person with a disability at member movie theatres and selected attractions across Canada. The person with the disability pays regular admission.



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Simply present the Access 2 Entertainment card when purchasing tickets with your support person at participating movie theatres. A support person is an individual who accompanies a person with a disability to provide those services that are not provided by theatre employees, such as assisting the person with eating, administering medication, communication and use of the facilities. This must be verified by a registered health care provider or a recognized service provider such as your CPA Rehabilitation Counsellor.

**There is a \$20.00 fee for obtaining the card
and the card is valid for a period of 5 years from the date of issue.**

Application forms are available at www.access2card.ca
or call the CPA office and an application form will be sent out to you.

March 27, 2014

**MANITOBA OLYMPIC, PARALYMPIC CURLING GOLD MEDALLISTS
INDUCTED INTO ORDER OF THE BUFFALO HUNT**

Premier Greg Selinger today inducted Manitoba 2014 Olympic and Paralympic curling gold medallists into the Order of the Buffalo Hunt.

Olympic champions Jennifer Jones, Kaitlyn Lawes, Jill Officer, Dawn McEwen, Kirsten Wall and their coach Janet Arnott, and Paralympic champion Dennis Thiessen were awarded the honour in a ceremony at the Legislative Building.

"We know that winning a gold medal at the Olympics is the result of countless hours of training, of early mornings and long days on the road," said Premier Selinger. "The achievement of these athletes is an inspiration to all the young athletes and their families who are now making those sacrifices in order to one day realize their Olympic dreams."

The Jones rink won the Olympic gold medal in women's curling with a 6-3 victory over Team Sweden while Thiessen won gold as part as Team Canada in an 8-3 victory over Russia in the Paralympic men's curling final.

"We are immensely proud of our athletes and all that they have accomplished," said Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection Minister Ron Lemieux. "Bringing home these gold medals shows that Manitoba is a force to be reckoned with in curling."

Manitoba's Order of the Buffalo Hunt was established in 1957. The honour is bestowed by the province on individuals who demonstrate outstanding skills in the areas of leadership, service and community commitment.



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The First Day of Being Motionless 2008

To walk is a blessing, and so is the ability to “achieve skills from what the world’s career schools can offer”. This is what I realized from being motionless in this Hospital bed: “take time out to see what you can do now”.

The morning of Friday June 6, 2008, I got up, got ready and went off to work at the Gypsumville Conservation Station. My morning was to attend Waterhen and Skownan Schools in the Frontier School Division to do presentations on fire prevention which I totally enjoyed. The afternoon was to help clean up and get the equipment used in a previous forest fire ready for its next use. We worked hard that day getting things ready. When 4:00 p.m. came around I was ready for a rest. I left wishing everyone well and saying I’d see them early the next morning.

On coming home I just got ready for bed and lay down for a nap. I slept well and woke up at 3:00 a.m. Saturday morning with a sore lower back in the Lumbar area.

The pain got worse and on Saturday morning, June 7th I called in to the Conservation Office and told them that I would be going to see a Doctor in Ashern for a sore back and that I could hardly move. I attended the hospital and was seen by a doctor who indicated that I had muscle spasm. I was given a needle and a prescription for the muscle spasm and sent home.

On Wednesday, June 11th I was back at Ashern Hospital for more blood work and other tests to try and isolate my condition. I was kept overnight in hospital for observation. I was scared, only thinking of will I be able to walk again.

On Thursday, June 12th I was taken to Dauphin Hospital for a CT scan and more blood test and returned to Ashern Hospital. At this point the Doctor couldn’t understand why I was so shaky and why I couldn’t walk. It was then that I was transferred by ambulance from Ashern Hospital to the Health Sciences Centre (HSC) in Winnipeg. The ride was long and after a brief misunderstanding about which hospital I was to be taken to, we arrived at HSC.

On Friday, June 13th I was again sent for a CT scan

and they again did a number of blood tests. They were particularly interested on why my left index finger was swollen and hot. I was later put in isolation and given medication. During this time my family members were interviewed by Infectious Disease Doctors on my daily habits, behaviours, and basically my life.

On Saturday June 14th they told my wife that I had a spinal epidural abscess and that my spine and blood were infected. An emergency operation was performed to relieve the pressure on my spine.

Prior to the operation the doctors told my wife that because my spine and blood were infected, I could become a quadriplegic, be in a coma or die. On speaking with the Doctor he told me that my infection was caused by an insect entering my left index finger and

making its way to my spine, causing the paralysis.

The road ahead was to become a lot of hard work in physiotherapy and more time spent in hospital. I did what I needed to do and on the afternoon of September 14th, after my last physio session, I was released from hospital. I was able to walk out. I will always have memories of my

hospital stay and one of them will be the trip to Grand Beach which was wonderful and too short.

Since leaving the hospital I have returned to work and have also attained other certification like Computer certificate, Class 2 air brakes, basic Accounting and 14 module Alberta Construction Course certificate. I am presently waiting for job openings and maybe will move on.

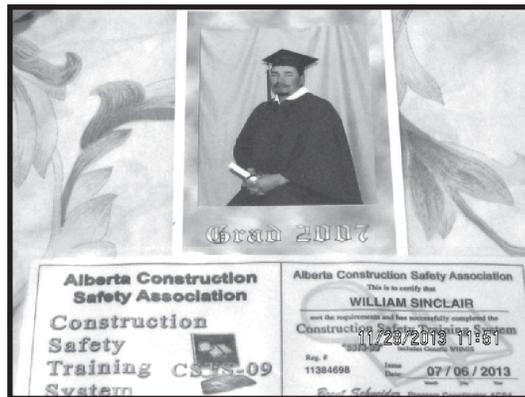
I would like to salute the Doctors, Nurses, Physio personnel and everyone that I was involved with at the Health Sciences Centre. I was treated with respect and understanding. I believe that I have made friends during my stay who I always will be friends with, but most of all I believe in praying to my God.

Thank you again Maria and the staff of HSC, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

My statement today,

“NEVER GIVE UP, TRY UNTIL YOU SUCCEED”

~ By CPA Member William Sinclair ~



March 4, 2014

MANITOBA GOVERNMENT INVESTS \$3 MILLION IN SERVICES, SUPPORT FOR MANITOBANS WITH SPINAL CORD INJURIES

Investment Helping Improve Quality of Life, Transition Back to Homes, Jobs: Ministers Selby, Oswald

The Manitoba government is investing \$3 million over five years with the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Manitoba chapter of the Canadian Paraplegic Association to help Manitobans with spinal cord injuries to successfully transition back into their homes and jobs and further advance health care and research initiatives in the province, Health Minister Erin Selby and Jobs and the Economy Minister Theresa Oswald announced today.

“People living with spinal cord injuries often need specialized services and supports to address their health-care needs and help them adjust to their daily lives,” said Minister Selby. “These investments will help us further improve the health and quality of life of individuals with spinal cord injuries and ensure innovative research translates into direct benefits for Manitobans.”

Funding is being provided by both the province and Manitoba Public Insurance to support:

- transitional services to help people successfully transition back to their home and job/training program;
- rehabilitation and vocational counselling, with specialized support for the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal Manitobans with spinal cord injuries;
- the continuation of a successful program to prevent pressure ulcers, a major complication of spinal cord injuries, which affects the health and quality of life of patients; and
- research including a local study of how to best help Manitobans with spinal cord injuries as they undergo treatment and rehabilitation.

“The Government of Manitoba has been an important partner in our journey towards a healthier and more inclusive world,” said Rick Hansen. “Today’s announcement is both a testament to the incredible work that has been done by Manitobans to make a difference in the lives of those with spinal cord injury and other disabilities in the province, and recognition for what we all will be able to achieve in the future as we continue to work together.”



Rick Hansen thanks the Government of Manitoba for its renewed support as Manitoba Health Minister Erin Selby and CPA Manitoba Executive Director Ron Burky look on.

There are approximately 3,100 Manitobans with spinal cord injuries, with an average of 60 additional injuries each year. While some spinal cord injuries result from motor vehicle accidents, falls, sports injuries or violence, others are caused by a disease such as cancer, bacterial or viral infections, spinal disc degeneration or multiple sclerosis.

“The support of the Canadian Paraplegic Association, the Rick Hansen Foundation and the Manitoba government has opened the door to a world of possibilities for me and for many others,” said Scott Coates, who lives with a spinal cord injury. “I’m thankful for the opportunities and generous support that have helped me to achieve my career and personal goals.”

Since his injury, Coates has completed two graduate degrees and has returned to coaching AAA level hockey. He also enjoys a successful career in public service providing supports to other people with disabilities.

Minister Selby noted the funding builds on a \$3-million investment made in 2008 to support work over five years. This partnership has helped to improve health outcomes and quality of life for Manitobans with spinal cord injuries by allowing for the acceleration of research at the University of Manitoba Spinal Cord Research Centre, the advancement of new treatment and rehabilitation techniques, and personalized support to assist Manitobans with spinal cord injuries in living independent and productive lives in their communities, she said.

Minister Oswald said this funding also supported the creation of two rehabilitation counsellor positions, which have served hundreds of Manitobans and helped 58 individuals secure employment and 81 participate in further education. Over the past five years, the Canadian Paraplegic Association reports a 43 per cent increase in educational placements and a 56 per cent increase in employment placements.

“Spinal cord injury care is complex and lifelong, and it’s important we continue to support Manitobans who have spinal cord injuries,” said Minister Oswald. “Working together, we can help people live independently, contribute to the economy and help them maintain healthy lives with their families.”

Since its establishment in 1988, the Rick Hansen Foundation has funded research to provide better care and outcomes for those who sustain a spinal cord injury, and contributed to improving accessibility for people with disabilities. For more information, visit www.rickhansen.com.



Minister of Health Erin Selby and Rick Hansen with Scott Coates and members of his Winnipeg Warriors hockey team.



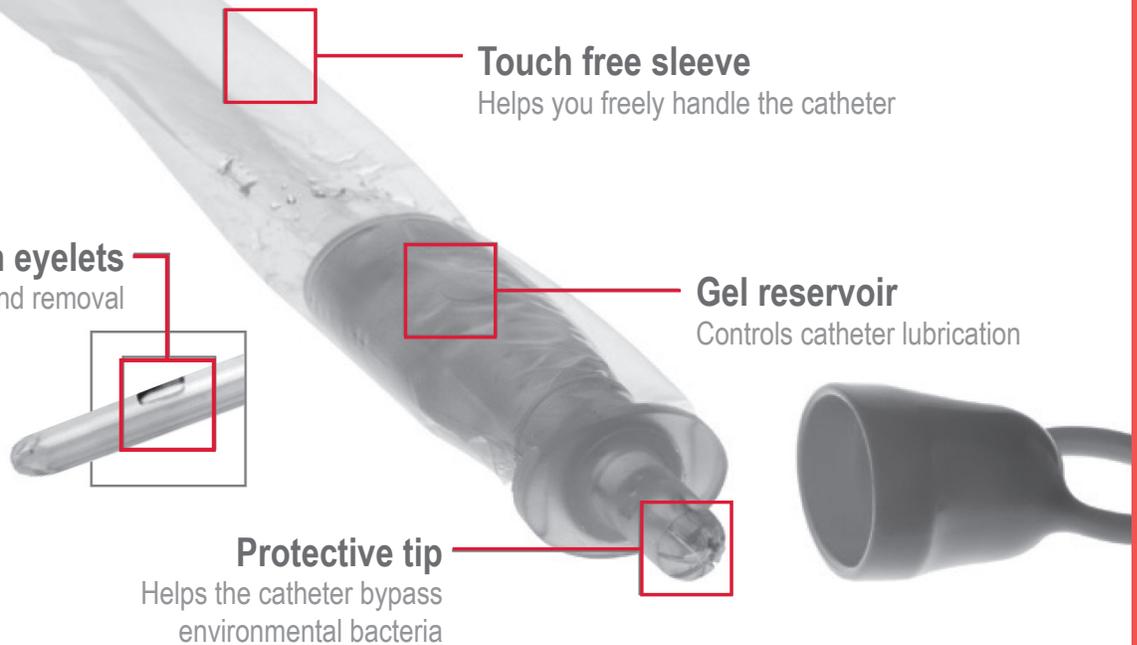
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Spinal-cord injury not the end of world

More cash to support programs for those injured

~ By Larry Kusch ~

Scott Coates was 17 years old when he dove off a dock head first, into what turned out to be a shallow pool, and broke his neck.

Coates, who had been out earlier at a ball tournament in southwestern Manitoba with friends, was taken to hospital in Souris and immediately transferred to Health Sciences Centre, where his neck was immobilized. He was paralysed from the chest down.

An emergency room physician told him something he would never forget. "The first comment out of his mouth was, 'You'll never walk again,'" Coates said Monday.

That was in July 1992.

Turns out the emergency doctor's assessment was premature. Now, 39, Coates is a public servant and a hockey coach. He is able to walk with the aid of only a cane.

"I still have some (mobility) deficits today, but compared with the alternative, I'll take it any day," he said of his present condition.

This morning, new funding will be announced to support people such as Coates, who have suffered spinal-cord injuries. The announcement will be made by the Selinger government and Canadian Paralympian and philanthropist Rick Hansen, famous for his Man in Motion World Tour. It would replace a five-year, \$3-million deal announced in 2008, part of which went to support programs offered by the Manitoba branch of the Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA).

Coates spent seven months in

hospital, undergoing rehab. Slowly, he regained movement in his limbs. "I started out in a wheelchair and progressed to a standup walker. I was (then) able to use arm crutches. And I left with one cane.

His condition kept progressing and stabilized within a year of his being discharged.

Coates is no stranger to adversity. Both his parents died by the time he was 16, leaving just Coates and a sister four years his senior.

He credits the paraplegic association for providing him the supports he needed to finish his high school education and enter Brandon University. He has taught elementary school in northern Saskatchewan as well as in Brandon and coached hockey at the Manitoba Junior League level.

He's also earned master's degrees in counselling and special education and worked as a vocational counsellor at the CPA in Winnipeg.

Ron Burky, CPA Manitoba's executive director, said the organization provides rehab counselling, links with peer supports and vocational and employment services to those with spinal cord injuries.

"It's incredible what advances have happened in technology and how people can adapt," said Burky, whose organization is expected to receive new funding today. "Sometimes if they don't go back to the exact same job, they might be able to go back to something very close to it."

It's estimated 3,000 Manitobans

live with spinal cord injuries, with 60 new injuries per year.

CPA counsellors begin meeting with injured persons when they're still in hospital. The association also provides information and supports for family members and employers.

Some patients feel when they become injured they will never work again, Burky said. But that's often not the case.

"There's an incredible number of Manitobans who are doing things people would not believe," he said. "We have farmers who are farming. They have high-level injuries but they've been able to modify their tractors."

Reproduced with permission from the March 4, 2014 edition of the Winnipeg Free Press



CPA Member Scott Coates speaks about his spinal cord injury in 1992.

The Future Looks Bright

- By Laurence Haien ~



Scott Banantyne

Scott, who is thirty-two-years old, experienced significant back pain and numbness in the soles of both feet after throwing a ball five years ago. At that time, a CT Scan of his lower spine revealed a disc herniation at L4-5. Scott was subsequently seen by a neurosurgeon but, by this time, his symptoms had improved, and he was prescribed a conservative course of treatment. On January 28, 2013, Scott developed sudden and severe pain in his lower back which radiated to his thighs and quadriceps, and numbness and altered sensation involving the shin of his right leg which extended to the top of his foot. His symptoms progressively worsened, and he was seen by a doctor at Lakehead University where he was attending the Chemical Engineering Program, and he underwent an MRI. By March 30, 2013 Scott developed weakness in his left foot, increased pain, and he

subsequently underwent a discectomy and a decompression at L3-4 and L4-5.

Following his surgery, Scott moved to his parents' home in Winnipeg to recover and attended physiotherapy at the Rehabilitation Hospital. He is diagnosed with an L-02, incomplete spinal cord injury, has experienced good recovery but is left with occasional numbness and tingling in his legs and feet, neurogenic pain, and some limitations with respect to his tolerance for sitting, standing, and walking. Scott had only four final examinations to write before graduating with his Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering. With advocacy from me and his physiatrist, Scott was able to postpone his examinations and, eventually, to arrange to sit these at the University of Manitoba because he was unable to travel comfortably to Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. He wrote his last examination on February 28, 2014. I was able to access funding from the marketAbilities Program to cover the cost of shipping his examinations from Lakehead University to the University of Manitoba and back for marking and the cost of an invigilator (a person hired to monitor him while he wrote his examinations).

Scott is waiting for his examination results and then plans to embark on a job search for a chemical engineering position. Additionally, Scott and his partner of many years, Dana, are expecting their first child. Many pivotal and transformational life events are occurring for Scott and Dana

in short order. Scott has agreed, however, to take time to reflect on his career choice.

How did you come to study chemical engineering?

Chemical engineering was a logical step for me, given the fact that I also have a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of Manitoba. Initially, my career intent was to go from my Bachelor of Science into either medicine or dentistry; however, I realized part way through my Bachelor of Science that I am not someone who enjoys memorization in the slightest. I would much rather learn concepts and apply them to a variety of situations than do the same thing over and over. From that revelation, engineering seemed a much better fit than going into a medical profession. Along with the love of chemistry that I developed at the University of Manitoba, chemical engineering seemed a logical choice.

Where is the program offered?

Chemical Engineering is offered at many locations in Canada, but sadly not in Manitoba. In fact, most major Canadian universities have a Chemical Engineering program, including Waterloo, University of Toronto, University of Calgary, University of Alberta, and the University of Saskatchewan.

Where did you study and why did you decide to attend there?

I ended up studying at Lakehead

University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. I chose Lakehead for a variety of reasons, with two of the main considerations being cost of living and distance from Winnipeg. I am also fortunate to have family in the Thunder Bay area, which helped make my decision to go there easier.

What aptitudes/interests does a person require to pursue this career path?

A love of math and problem solving are two major necessities for anyone interested in pursuing this career path.

What does a chemical engineer do?

Chemical engineers work with chemical systems, from their design to their operation and maintenance or their optimization. Basically, when a chemist comes up with a method of synthesizing a compound, their experimental procedures are typically done on a small scale of a few grams at a time. A chemical engineer takes these bench scale procedures and determines how to make them on a much larger scale, from a few pounds at a time to tonnes a day. I fondly remember one of my Organic Chemistry professors referring to this as “Chemical Engineering Voodoo”. We also have specialized knowledge about things like oil recovery, distillation, waste water treatment and chemical reactors.

Where do chemical engineers work?

Chemical engineers don’t have a specific field that they work in. They can be found working in pharmaceuticals, oil and gas, mineral processing, industrial coating and manufacturing.

You were diagnosed with your spinal cord injury towards the end of your program. How does your spinal cord injury affect you? Are there any physical demands associated with this type of work? What are they? Will you require any job accommodation because of the effects of your spinal cord injury?

Aside from the obvious effect of postponing my graduation by a year, my spinal cord injury has caused me issues with mobility, sitting, standing and even relax-

ing. As the demands of Chemical Engineering can be as varied as the jobs that they can do, it’s hard to put any specifics on what issues I might face. Chemical Engineers can be needed to scout out perspective sites for new developments, be able to reach awkward locations along a production line to see what exactly is happening, to having to sit in front of a computer all day doing work. At the very least, a well set-up and ergonomic work station will be a must. From there it will remain to be seen.

What is the salary scale for new graduates? What opportunities are there for advancement in the career?

Chemical engineers are amongst the highest paid engineering graduates, with the average starting salary of \$80,000/year in 6 major Canadian cities. As with most engineering jobs, the opportunities for advancement are very high. One possible path would be to receive a professional engineering designation, which requires four years of work as an Engineer in Training. This allows an engineer to practice on their own and take responsibility for their own original work. An alternative is to lead towards a management career, overseeing the operations at a company or division.

What makes chemical engineering a desirable career to consider?

Chemical engineering is a broad field with a large number of opportunities available. The type of work can vary from designing a municipal waste water plant, to developing new ways to extract oil from the oil sands. Chemical engineers work all over the world, in a huge variety of positions, with good wages, a variety of work environments, and a vast choice of career paths.

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Disclaimer: Please note that the opinions expressed in this and other articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of CPA Manitoba.

Snow Tyred

By: Paul A. MacDonald

Winter Mobility Online Focus Group

I am quite impressed with the effort and achievements of all our athletes at the Paralympic games in Sochi. They are all winners just for making it that far. Congratulations to all! The closing ceremony had a very powerful message presented in a clever way. For those of you who didn't see it, the word "Impossible" was suspended high above the crowd with individual letters making up the word in lights. Then in Cirque De Soleil style, acrobats moved an apostrophe between the first two letters to make two words: I'M POSSIBLE!

If any of those folks spent either of the last two winters trying to get around Winnipeg in a wheelchair, they would have left it at "Impossible".

I have no intention of moaning about how terrible our winter was, most of you already know. There has been no shortage of fine Canadian whine pouring from the media as well. I am proud to be a Winnipegger because we survive in conditions that would be considered too harsh & intolerable for even Polar Bears & Penguins; (I heard that at the zoo, even they were kept indoors)! The tougher it gets, the tougher we get. I wish we could say the same for our infrastructure.



Online Focus Group Discussion

In February I participated in an online focus group on Manitoba winter mobility challenges for people using mobility aides. The online discussion group was organized and moderated by a University of Manitoba Faculty of Medicine Occupational Therapy student writing her thesis on the topic of winter mobility challenges & solutions.

Forum involvement provided self, with a more objective viewpoint of how well others are dealing with the same challenges that I am. The demographics encompassed rural as well as city residents, and the challenges faced in their respective communities. In short, no matter how bad it is in Winnipeg, it's worse in the country or smaller cities & towns.

The forum was not just a whine & cheese party. Solutions to problems were also suggested and discussed. The answers to better conditions in the winter are not rocket science, but without the movers & shakers in government committing to make accessibility a priority, the suggestions simply get a lot of patronizing platitudes and seem doomed to an endless discussion loop.

Do you use a wheelchair or scooter in the winter?

Have you encountered problems with getting around in your community?



I am a student occupational therapist running an online focus group to identify barriers users of wheeled mobility devices face when participating in the community in winter, and to explore strategies they recommend to overcome these barriers.

The online focus group will run from February 23 – March 7, 2014. If you have used a wheeled mobility device (manual or power wheelchair, or scooter) for at least 12 months, are 18 years of age or older, reside in Manitoba, have computer and Internet access, the ability to read and write in English, and are willing to spend 15-30 minutes a day reading and posting messages anonymously on an online discussion board, please contact us. You will be able to contribute your valuable ideas and opinions from the comfort of your own home or any location with computer and Internet access.

If you are interested in participating, please contact us!

We want to hear YOUR ideas!

Email: umcolatr@myumanitoba.ca
Phone: (204) 789-3303, Dr. Jacque Ripat



February 2, 2014

Common Problems

The T-Rex of barrier complaints, town & country, is inadequate snow clearing. That is, saying that the snow is even cleared at all. In smaller towns it is even difficult to get into stores from vehicles. Entrances and walks are cleared for able bodied persons, but no attention paid to mobility devices or strollers. In the city, the barriers are formidable and just trying to do a grocery run one must check the status of their life insurance policy before going out. Here are some of the most common complaints in the cities:

- Inaccessible sidewalks. Even if the sidewalk is shovelled, large ridges or snowbanks at the corners make them impossible to get on or off. We are forced to share an already bottle necked road with cars, buses, trucks, and hostile drivers.
- Poorly cleared parking lots & store entrances.
- On streets and sidewalks, the thawing & freezing cycles create very deep ruts and uneven surfaces that can easily tip a wheelchair or scooter

over. On the street this can land you right in front of a truck that does not have the time or traction to prevent a hostile takeover, followed by a merger with its front grill.

- Unable to get to bus stops. Even if the bus stop is cleared, the sidewalk approach isn't.
- Very high snowbanks that block the view of oncoming traffic when trying to cross a street.
- Safety Islands on boulevards are often not cleared at pedestrian crosswalks. There is no way to use the crosswalk or cross the street safely.
- A lot of people cited the Handi Transit system as inadequate, difficult to use and unreliable.
- Power wheelchairs have little to no traction. Snow tires or tire chains would help save us from the spin cycle.
- A point was made that our wheelchairs are not designed to be used in winter climates. As far as we can tell, winter devices must be made to order and are very expensive.

Solutions?

The above are the most common complaints that were tabled. There were many lesser ones that I refuse to bore you with. I write these articles for intelligent, thinking people ... (you) so it should be a no brainer what would make life better, not just for the disabled, but for everyone. Clear the Da gosh darn (I can say that can't I?) snow. Do not assume that someone can easily step over or plow through that toboggan hill on the street corner at the end of the block.

- In Winnipeg, snow clearing is done by the city and private contractors. The city could set standards on how a sidewalk should be cleared, and contractors should be held accountable if the work isn't properly done.
- Either turn those giant snowbanks into for-pay ski hills or remove them.
- Make it possible to take buses. Clear the bus stops. This would take some of the load off the Handi Transit system and really tick off people with baby strollers! 😊
- Start pestering politicians. Make this a priority issue in upcoming elections. Vote for a candidate who demonstrates a commitment to

addressing our mobility concerns.

- Put more wheelchair taxis on the road. At present, the Winnipeg Taxi Board thinks that there is currently a sufficient number on the road to meet the demand. That would be true if a disabled passenger does not mind waiting up to 3 hours for a cab, that is if they can even get one.
 - o For the whole city, all taxi companies combined have perhaps 10 wheelchair cabs in operation at any one time. When the demand is high, like in winter, that simply isn't enough for a city of almost 34 million people.
 - o They have no spare vehicles, so when one breaks down, there is no other vehicle to put into service. Now the remaining cabs have to handle a bigger work load.
 - o Next year we have the Grey Cup. The demand for accessible cabs will sky rocket.



Will disabled visitors to the city have to miss the game or not go shopping because they could not get a wheelchair cab? They certainly can't use Handi Transit. How will we look in the eyes of the nation?

- o Many large stores operate shuttles for elderly or disabled passengers. Why not make the shuttle buses wheelchair accessible?



Awareness Surprise

I did not expect to discover that many of the people who are served by organizations such as CPA & SMD have no idea what they do on behalf of the service consumers. Many folks expressed frustration about always being asked for donations, but not seeing any services in return. One comment was that SMD should be arranging weekly outings for house bound people in the winter. I found myself having to remind them that the organizations are our voice to government & the corporate community. The organizations work for the greater good of all the people who require supports. They are not social planners. Without organizations like CPA, Manitoba Brain Injury, SMD, CNIB, The MS Society and others, the concerns of the disabled would not be addressed or heard by those who can make the changes & set the policies. We would have no advocates.

My observation is that support & advocacy associations must work harder to better inform the people they support on what is being done for them. Newsletters such as ParaTracks are a good vehicle, but it

needs more wheels. A website & social media is fine for those who have access to the Internet, but it's not a blanket solution. Media attention is highly coveted but very limited. For all our CPA members, the most obvious fix is to correct misconceptions when we hear them. I am proud to be a contributing member and I'm hoping all you readers share that sentiment. If you regularly read ParaTracks, you know what CPA is doing for us!

I don't expect winter to get any easier, so I'm not expecting big changes in our ability to get around by next November. I'm hoping enough noise is made during the summer that if our current mayor wants to still be in office by November, he better address better snow removal, street AND sidewalk repairs. Don't even get me started on frozen pipes! ☹️

Have a safe & happy summer. I am hoping we are rewarded with a nice one as compensation for enduring a tough first half of 2014, but, this IS Winnipeg. 🌲

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Freedom on the Open Road



It was 20 years ago that CPA Member Dan Olafson began to work toward fulfilling his dream of freedom on the open road. He started out by researching the look he wanted in a trike, and spent a lot of time learning as much as he could. Along the way he purchased parts and grew his collection.

A couple of years ago he decided on the shop that would design and build the bike for him. He dropped off his collection of parts, discussed ideas and away they went! Dan informed the builders of his mandate, which was ultimately function, but he also wanted a trike that would look great. He's proud of the fact that the shop accomplished both of these things.

Dan's advice to anyone who wants to take on a project like this is: research, research, research. First determine what look you want, and then find a shop you like to help build it the way you want. Do your research on the shop as well – look at their past work. If you see what you like, go for it, but make sure you trust the shop's skills. Dan chose Cycleboyz in Brandon and he was very impressed with their skills. You can check out their website at www.cycleboyz.com.

Dan says it was a lot of fun building the bike. He would come up with an idea and then the guys from Cycleboyz would put their spin on it and totally surprise him. According to Dan, they're a great company to work with and they're very creative. Although it was their first time building a custom trike like this, they had done some custom work for other people with disabilities, such as installing electric shifters on ATVs.

The whole process took a little over a year to complete. Dan spent a lot of hours in the car driving from Winnipeg to Brandon as he liked to be involved in the build process. He's not quite finished though, as he still has a couple of ideas for the shop to work on in

the future such as a passenger seat, storage compartments and ape hangers (tall handlebars).

The trike that was designed works great for someone who uses a wheelchair. Dan says he's totally comfortable when riding. He has a system that was designed to keep his legs on the floorboards which was a big concern to him. Shifting is accomplished by using a jockey shift, and in the future, just for fun, he's planning on an electric shifter. Dan operates the rear brakes with the right master cylinder which normally operates the front brakes and front brakes are operated with a left thumb brake. The bike has air suspension on the rear so that he can lower the

trike to help get on, a reverse gear to help navigate and two fuel tanks to get the

maximum distance as the trike is heavier than the average bike and has a huge, thirsty engine as well. He has a mount on the rear for his chair. Although his trike was custom built from the ground up, a regular bike can also be converted into a trike, which is a lot cheaper.

Dan put on 5000 km last summer and he's hoping to double or triple it this summer.

He rides it to work and back, to go visiting, to the lake and pretty much anywhere and everywhere he can. Dan laughs that people are always coming up to him and saying, "You're that guy with the trike", as they've seen him riding just about everywhere.

Dan's future plans are heading to the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota. First, he wants to put on more highway miles to finish working out all the bugs and fine tuning it to work best for him. He has a pull-behind trailer to carry all of his necessities for long trips but needs to customize that also.

Dan is more than willing to show others his trike, anywhere, anytime. He can be contacted by email at: rohnjeremy@yahoo.ca.



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