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John's Story

WCB Provides Brain-Injured Worker with Support to Return to Work

John Sochan wakes up every morning and is thankful to be alive.

Three years ago, while obtaining a routine sewage sample as part of his job with the City of Dauphin's Water and Waste Department, John slipped on an icy lagoon surface, falling and hitting his head.

He suffered a skull fracture which left his brain partially paralyzed. He recalls almost nothing of the incident.

“It was like I had whiplash in my head; the pain was unbearable,” he says. “The doctors told me it's a medical miracle that I survived.”

Because of the physical damage to his brain, John's cognitive processes were affected, leaving him unable to remember simple tasks like how to get dressed, dial a phone number or drive his car.

After meeting with WCB Case Manager Chris Poot, John slowly began to learn how to retrain his brain and keep it active.

“Chris was very knowledgeable about head injuries, and his encouragement gave me the confidence and hope I needed to get going in the right direction,” says John.

Six months after his injury, John returned to a part-time retail job he'd previously had, working a few hours a day and gradually building up to full days.

“It was a scary step for John, but important for him to start small and get back into a routine,” says Chris. “His progress was excellent, which is a testament to his strong will and determination.”

Just over a year after his injury, John was back to a modified version of his original job, based on a tailored plan that the WCB developed with the City of Dauphin.

“John led a new water meter project, which was ideal because it got him interacting with the public and performing a variety of tasks,” says Lyle Stokotelný, General Foreman with the City of Dauphin's Public Works Department. “After a few months, you could see his eyes light up. It was great for his confidence.”

Now, after getting up to speed on some new technology upgrades, John is nearly 90 per cent back to his previous duties – all of which demand a high level of skill and responsibility.

“At the age of 63, it would've been easy for John's employer to turn their back on him, but they didn't,” says Chris. “It's their joint commitment and the support structure around John that has made his recovery so successful.”

John wholeheartedly agrees. “The WCB saw me at my worst, and went above and beyond to help me out. The confidence-building and support that I received from them are what helped me get my life back.”