**Health and Safety Officer Report – January 4, 2024**

 Happy New Year 856! Before you start crying “stranger danger”, it’s me, I’m back in the office, back in my chair, back to business.

I’ve been away for several months taking care of my health, and for my first report back, I am going to share a bit of my personal life, because if you were born with a prostate, it’s extremely important.

In early 2023, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I was sitting in Toronto at National Conference as a delegate for the Prairie Region when my phone rang, a call that would change my life. I answered the call and the voice on the other end calmly stated, “Sorry Reggie, the tests came back positive for cancer, I need to see you in my office right away.” I was not supposed to see my urologist for a month, but the results of the tests that took place before that conference changed all that.

I had been diligent every year with my physicals, and the last one, my PSA (prostate-specific antigen) tripled in one year. ***(The PSA test is a blood test used primarily to screen for prostate cancer. The test measures the amount of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in your blood. PSA is a protein produced by both cancerous and noncancerous tissue in the prostate)*** Two days prior to leaving for Toronto, the “red flag” that popped up in my PSA numbers, triggered a day surgery to acquire biopsies of the prostate. The follow up from that procedure was supposed happen a month later but was quickly rescheduled with the phone call I received, to **ASAP**. The four remaining days in Toronto seemed like an eternity.

The weeks that ensued after were a whirlwind of blood tests, blood scans, bone scans, biopsies, CTI scans, MRI’s...the list goes on. Although this type of cancer is highly curable, prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in American men, behind only lung cancer.

For 2023 it is estimated that in Canada, 25,900 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. That’s 71 cases per day. Of those diagnosed, 4900 will die from prostate cancer, that is 13 deaths every day.

 It’s hard to absorb that I am in those statistics.

Early November, I went for surgery in Saskatoon. I had a choice of radiation, or a prostatectomy (removal of the prostate), I opted for removal. Saskatoon offered robotic laparoscopic which had a quicker recovery, as opposed to having it in Winnipeg which would entail a more invasive hands-on surgery, and a longer stay in the hospital. Everything seemed to go well, and after five days I was back home recovering. My surgeon contacted me a few days later via phone call for a check in and said that she was incredibly pleased with how well the procedure went. She also wanted me to know that during the procedure, they also took biopsies of the lymph nodes in my abdomen, and they were still waiting for the results. If the cancer is detected there, that would mean the cancer has spread.

A few days later when I noticed “Saskatoon” on my call display, my heart stopped. Hearing the cheery voice on the other end resumed the blood flow, when my surgeon said that those tests came back clean, and they believe they got all of it.

Six weeks post op, I met with my urologist again to do follow up blood work to see if my PSA levels decreased. If they didn’t, we would have to talk about other treatment options. He called back a week before Christmas, “Reggie, I just wanted you to know that your levels came back undetectable. Merry Christmas…enjoy your holidays!” I hung up the phone and a huge weight was lifted from my shoulders.

My recovery has been going extremely well, I figure I am sitting at about a 90% fully recovered. The last 10% will go a little slower, it will take work, but it will get there. I’ve been extremely blessed through this journey.

**What does this have to do with CUPW and health and safety?**

Well aside from the usual BS that Canada Post throws at our members. This advice, as personal as it is, will truly help half of you right now. If you were born with a prostate, make sure you go for your yearly physicals and ask to get your PSA checked. For me, I wasn’t symptomatic, this was caught in my blood with a simple blood test.  Early detection saved my life. Don’t get me wrong, there is still a way to go before I am considered “cancer free”. Blood tests will have to happen every 6 months for 5 years, but I’m good with that. I’m off to a good start.

It’s good to be back, there is no shortage of work to do. Thank you to those who’ve reached out with support...not everyone knew of my situation, I was really focusing on me. The connections I made coast to coast during CUPW’s UEP (Union Education Program), and other educationals, was humbling as it garnered me a ton of support from other locals through personal messages and phone calls. The cards that I did receive from some of you came with me to Saskatoon and lined the shelf beside my bed in the hospital as a reminder of what I do for the members. Your kind thoughts and words gave me strength to get through the rough days to typing this report today.

A huge shout out to Sam Owens, Christina McVety, and Amber Rinn for stepping up to assist and to look after my office through a year of appointments and absences. You have all done amazing work, I appreciate all of you, and so do the members you’ve helped. I truly can’t thank you enough!

Keep marching forward 856. Take care of yourselves and each other, we’ve got a tough year ahead of us.

Always in Solidarity,

**Reggie Taman**

Health and Safety Officer Local 856