

# Truck Drivers training program leads to employment

by Heidi Riley

“More than 2,000 Truck Drivers work on PEI, but the need for more Drivers is beyond desperate,” says **Brian Oulton**, Executive Director, PEI Trucking Sector Council.

As a response to the pressing need for more Truck Drivers, the PEI Trucking Sector Council is facilitating a training program called **One Journey**.

The program began several years ago in Nova Scotia, PEI Trucking Sector Council worked with the counterparts in Nova Scotia to bring the program to PEI.

Nova Scotia administers the current PEI pilot program, and takes care of screening, interviewing, and the online application process, and also receives weekly updates about each participant.

“Our first three participants have done really well,” says Brian. “The second group started at the end of January, and another training session may be held in the future. Down the road, we see good potential to target specific groups like youth, women, mature workers or Indigenous people.”

Participants take eight weeks of training with JVI on PEI, followed by four weeks of coaching with an employer.

The program covers 100 percent of training costs, a \$300 allowance to pay for safety gear, and pays a stipend to those not on EI.

“We ask each applicant about their commitments,” says Brian. “If they need to be home every night, we recommend they speak to employers who offer local work. Those interested in long-haul driving can meet with employers that offer that type of work.”

“We screen applicants hard. They can have no driving or medical issues and no criminal record. Their essential skills are assessed and must be strong. They also need a letter of intent from an employer, and must go through an interview process.”

Those who fit the criteria will be accepted into the program only after they meet with an employer who agrees to hire them after the training is completed. “The advantage of this program is that the employers get to know the participants, and get weekly updates during the training period.”

“The program will produce more highly qualified drivers who have been thoroughly screened, trained, and coached. It allows everyone to keep an eye on the participants’ progress in their training. If someone is struggling, companies will come in and help build their skills.”

**Brian Oulton** and **Randy Shaw** of the **PEI Trucking Sector Council** welcome people interested in a career in trucking to contact them at **902-566-5563** or email **info@peitsc.ca** Visit **www.peitsc.ca**



**Chad Dawson** was the first person to enter the One Journey program. He was working as a Delivery Driver in Charlottetown, and was looking for a change to a higher paying position. “Chad was the ideal candidate because he has a young family which makes it difficult to quit a job to take the training,” says Brian Oulton of PEI Trucking Sector Council. “He already had similar truck driving experience, was working below his skill level, and just needed more training. With his new job, he will be earning more money, and will probably have a better work/life balance.”

Chad says it was a big decision to quit his job and go into the unknown. “I didn’t know if I could learn it, if I would like it, or what kind of lifestyle it would be. The program covers 100 percent of the costs of training, which is like winning the lottery! It is a good opportunity to learn a trade instead of being stuck in low-paying jobs.”

“The training was good, and it was challenging. During the eight weeks with JVI, there was airbrake testing and road testing, and I had to study different aspects of the mechanics of the truck.”

“There was a lot more to it than I thought. Driving a big truck is not like driving a car. My biggest struggle at first was to learn so much information and learn to drive a standard transmission.”

“The first couple of weeks I felt a bit overwhelmed, but you have to be patient. My advice is to take one day at a time.”

Chad finished the coaching component on January 17, and by the following Tuesday took his first solo trip to Dartmouth. The next evening, he took a load of carrots to the Sobeys Distribution Centre in Nova Scotia. “There are lots of opportunities for drivers. You just need to be willing to work and put in your time, and something will come your way.”

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# Turning a passion into self-employment in the forestry industry

by Stella Shepard

**Tyson Regular** is well-versed in the forestry industry. His father **Marvin** and grandfather **Clarence** were self-employed Forestry Processors, earning a living from natural resources.

“It started with my grandfather Clarence, and every generation after followed in his footsteps,” says Tyson. He grew up shadowing Marvin and Clarence as they worked in woodlots. Now he is following in their entrepreneurial footsteps.

In 2015, Tyson started **Regular’s Firewood & Logging** located on the Cape Bear Road near Murray Harbour. His wife **Chermaine** is the bookkeeper.

The company delivers firewood year-round to customers in central and eastern PEI and provides commercial and industrial clear-cutting services. He also owns and operates a sawmill in Georgetown.

Tyson worked as a Diesel Mechanic for mining companies in Ontario, British Columbia, and the Yukon for years. A father of young children, he grew tired of working off Island and being away from family for extended periods of time.

“Forestry is my way of life,” says Tyson. “It’s what I know and it’s what I love.”

“Working in the woods is peaceful, unlike commuting to work in slow moving traffic in Ontario. Being self-employed, I can schedule work around family activities.”

## Steps to self-employment

The resources at Community Business Development Corporation (CBDC) help budding entrepreneurs turn a skill and passion into a viable business or expand an existing business.

CBDC provides business loans, counselling advice, entrepreneurship development, and business training. CBDC East is housed at the Rural Action Centre in Montague, and is staffed by **Martina MacDonald**, Executive Director, **Helen Antle**, Loans Officer, and **Terri Taylor**, Accounts Officer.

“I started my business by chain sawing and blocking fire wood for sale,” says Tyson. “I needed forestry equipment to expand the business to clear-cut land for agricultural and blueberry use.”

He approached a lending institution for a loan to purchase forestry equipment. Although he had an excellent credit rating, the loan was refused. “I didn’t meet the criteria of being in business for two years before being eligible for a business loan,” he says.

“I heard about CBDC through a friend. Chermaine prepared a business plan.

“I took the plan to Martina and Helen at CBDC and the loan was approved. I would not have been able to expand the business to meet customer demand without the assistance of CBDC.”

Martina says when considering the approval of business loans, an eight-member Board of Directors puts emphasis on the vision, passion, skill, and background of the clients.

“CBDC was very cooperative and understanding of my request to adjust the payments during the slow work season,” says Tyson. “They were phenomenal.”

## Advice to anyone considering a business

“It’s important to do your research and know the costs involved in all aspects of the business,” says Tyson.



Tyson Regular is the Owner and Operator of Regulars Firewood & Logging located on the Cape Bear Road near Murray Harbour. Submitted photo

“You need to have a detailed business plan and know who the competitors are.

“Word-of-mouth is powerful in small places. Satisfied customers will recommend your services.

“I keep the business close to home. It’s convenient and it keeps costs down. Without the support of my wife, I would not be self-employed.”

For more information about **Regulars Firewood & Logging**, contact **Tyson Regular** at **902-218-7031**, or email **regular\_tyson@hotmail.com** Search for the company on Facebook.