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HOW THE ENBRIDGE RIDE TO CONQUER CANCER FOREVER CHANGED MY LIFE

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The decision to embrace a cause is very personal. One of the main causes that CAE supports in Montreal is the Enbridge Ride to conquer cancer, a cycling event from Montreal to Quebec City to help raise funds for cancer research and care. Every year over the past five years, CAE teams have pedalled for two days, raising a total of more than \$1.4 million.

In this blog, see why Andrew embraced the Enbridge Ride, and how it changed his life. You'll see, this is the perfect story to be published on Valentine's day!

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In the fall of 2011, I was feeling the downside of being forty-something and wanting desperately to beat back the clock and perhaps lose a few pounds, so I embarked on a personal renewal. I looked for and found a new and meaningful challenge in the fight against Cancer. I decided to join CAE's fledgling team of riders for the forthcoming 2012 Ride to Conquer Cancer. This would be the first time CAE participated in this fundraising event, and while stopping Cancer is unquestionably an important cause, it wasn't until later that it would become intensely personal for me.

A bunch of CAE employees planned to meet up for a training ride on Ile des Sœurs on a cold and rainy October morning. With near-freezing rain pelting me in the face, I regretted my decision within moments of unloading my bike from my car but followed through nonetheless. I somehow needed this. I needed the challenge.



Among the CAE cadre were people from all parts of the company, including our CEO, Marc Parent, who first embraced the idea of a CAE corporate riding team. With approximately half of CAE's 8,000 employees based locally, it's not surprising that there were many people I would meet that day for the first time. One individual in particular stands out and has stood out ever since. I had the good fortune to meet a vibrant and brilliant mechanical engineer, named Marie-Hélène Laramée. Despite her young appearance, she was a seasoned technical expert, designing systems software for CAE's state-of-the-art flight simulators. I was intrigued, and as the group headed out on a 20km circuit, I rode alongside 'Marie.'

I couldn't help, however, but to complain bitterly about the cold and soggy conditions. It was really brutal outside. Marie listened to my whining patiently, and then explained that she was a melanoma cancer survivor and fearful to leave behind her two young daughters. To make matters worse, she was riding that day with a malignant tumor in her throat. She was confronted with a second and ostensibly unrelated cancer. She was awaiting surgery to have her thyroid gland removed at the Jewish General Hospital and felt that she wanted to get involved and help support the hospital that was providing her with such great care. She 'politely' asked me, in view of her circumstances and her choice to participate as I had, in the rain and in the cold, if I could just shut up and pedal! To say the least, I learned a great deal about perspective that morning. Suddenly, the weather didn't feel so bad. In fact, the driving rain in my face was downright refreshing!

Marie went on to lead Team CAE in the Ride to Conquer Cancer for the next two years, and it has since become the biggest corporate team riding in what has become the largest fundraising cycling event in Canada. Since the Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer's founding in 2008, an astounding \$155 million has been collected for cancer research and support programs in Canada. And to date, Team CAE has raised over \$1.4 million to help fund cancer research and care at the Segal Cancer Centre at the Jewish General Hospital and throughout Quebec.



We are all extremely proud of this accomplishment and I've experienced few greater moments than crossing the finish line surrounded by the hundred-strong riders of Team CAE. The camaraderie is incredible, and I think participating in this event is at the core of CAE's value set: One CAE. Through our ongoing commitment to this cause and CAE's advances in healthcare simulation and training we are making an important difference in the quality of healthcare not just in Canada, but the world over.

This year will mark my sixth consecutive Ride to Conquer Cancer. And what's changed the most on a personal level is how this event has moved from being a good cause to a way of life. It's a tangible way to break a sweat and save lives. Marie-Hélène chose to trade her engineering career for philanthropy and is today a Director at the Jewish General Hospital Foundation. She's devoting her life's work to the hospital that saved her life and to the advancement of critical medical research. She is my hero and my permanent link to the Ride. Marie and I were married in August of 2015, and for my part, I'm still pedaling no matter the weather!



Now it's your turn to share your story. Which cause is important to you and why?