



Brain Injury Association of Canada  
Association canadienne des lésés cérébraux

A Contribution from  
The Brain Injury Association of Canada  
to the  
**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS 2009**

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The Brain Injury Association of Canada (**BIAC**) is pleased to submit a written brief to the Standing Committee on Finance. BIAC is committed to reducing brain trauma in Canada. We are committed to improving the quality of life for all Canadians affected by acquired brain injury and promoting its prevention.

Since 2002, several reports have highlighted the need for a **National Injury Prevention Strategy**. At times some things old are still new. A common theme within these reports, members will note is that an investment in prevention programs will reduce the long term health costs of caring for those who have acquired a preventable brain injury / injury and allow our health system to look after our aging population.

- **Romanow Report** – Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada in particular Chapter 5 – **2002**
- **Ending Canada’s Invisible Epidemic** – A Strategy for Injury Prevention, A Report prepared by Smart Risk with the support from the Insurance Bureau of Canada – **2005**
- **Leitch Report** – A National Strategy to Reduce the Risk of Injury among Canadian Children – **2008**

Preventable injuries places a tremendous economic burden on this country, conservatively estimated at **\$19.8 billion annually** in direct and indirect costs!

The Brain Injury Association of Canada is committed to reducing this economic burden but we need the government of the day to commit, to invest and to implement the following recommendations:

1. To create and implement a **National Sport Helmets Standards Certification Program**. Canadians are entitled to wear sport helmets that meet the highest Canadian standard. This will start with the implementation of having CSA certified ski and snowboard helmets available to the public for sale in Canada and to support a **National Education Program** on helmet safety at a cost of **\$2 million over 4 years**.

Presently, there is no existing Federal program to fund this request even though there is support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the medical community and many groups working towards health care prevention.

Currently, there is no national standard against which the growing array of provincial regulations for sport helmets can be referenced. This gap in Canada's public health and safety regulatory framework is resulting in increasing risk to Canadians as people seek out more recreational leisure opportunities. For example, few Canadians are unaware that bicycle helmets have a shelf life of 5 years. Many Canadians are wearing bicycle helmets that are no longer safe due to age.

In 2005, Provincial, Territorial and Federal Sport Ministers set a target to raise the activity levels of Canadians by 10% by the year 2010. As well, the B.C. government set a target to increase physical activity by 20% by 2010. Meanwhile, associated health care costs for the treatment of preventable head injuries continue to increase. Canadian helmet standards are the solution to mitigate this unacceptable risk.

The lack of Canadian standards for recreational sporting helmets is contributing to increased rates of preventable injury, creating an additional burden on the health care system and causing confusion in retail and consumer sectors of the Canadian economy.

2. The government must fund and develop a **National Data Bank of Brain Injury**. Presently, there is no national collection of brain injury statistics. As an example, the Lions Gate Hospital that falls within the Whistler-Blackcomb Ski Resort catchment does not record brain injuries! Data and information management are fundamental to fully understand the scope of brain injuries. Of equal importance is the coordination among hospitals, national data collection agencies and large research projects associated with brain injuries, and child and youth health.
3. The government must fund and develop a **National Strategy for Brain Injury Survivors**. Recovering from a Brain Injury is a long journey where one will not recover fully. The scope of this strategy will start with the development of a plan for **Housing of Brain Injury Survivors**, presently children and young adults that suffer a brain injury are usually cared for by parents, often with little or no support. What happens to these children and young adults when those parents grow older or pass away? What follow-up will there be? As our population ages, this will become more of a challenge and may be the beginning if it isn't already of another silent epidemic. **Employment and Homelessness and Acquired Brain Injury Survivors, Crime and Acquired Brain Injury Survivors, and many more topics will fall into this National Strategy.**

4. The Government must take a leadership role through Heritage Canada and Sport Canada to develop a **National Concussion Management Program** that will educate parents, athletes, coaches, sports leaders and medical personnel about the short and long term effects of repetitive concussions, and how concussions can be prevented through certified equipment, rule changes and enforcement.

Presently, Canada's standing when it comes to the health and wellness of children and youth is remarkably poor. Among 29 OECD nations:

- Canada ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> when it comes to preventable childhood injuries and deaths;
- Canada ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in child well being, including mental health; and
- Canada ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in childhood obesity.

Overall, Canada only ranks 12<sup>th</sup> out of 21 wealthy countries in the United Nations' rankings of child well-being. The future for these children and young adults is not bright unless we prepare for the future today and we, as Canadians, develop and implement a strategy to start dealing with those presently affected by acquired brain injury and providing them with a quality of life that is escaping them and that all Canadians deserve.

What is a brain injury? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arxILmV6v5g>

