



The National Strategy on Brain Injury Must Stand Alone

Brain injury is one of the most pressing public health crises facing Canada today. It is a leading cause of death and disability among those under the age of 45, yet it remains widely misunderstood and under-addressed in health and social policy. While brain injury intersects with mental health, addictions, and other neurological conditions, it needs more than inclusion in a broad research framework or being categorized under other diagnoses. A dedicated National Strategy on Brain Injury is essential to ensure that prevention, rehabilitation, and lifelong support receive the targeted attention they require.

Lived Experience and Service Delivery Must Drive the Strategy

A national strategy must be built on the needs of those directly affected by brain injury—survivors, caregivers, and frontline service providers. The most pressing issues are access to care, proper diagnosis, long-term rehabilitation, and community integration. While research and the intersection of other neurological conditions plays an important role in understanding brain injury, it cannot be a substitute for the policy and service delivery changes that individuals and families need now. If brain injury is absorbed into a broader research agenda or grouped with other medical conditions, these immediate priorities risk being overshadowed, delaying meaningful action.

Brain Injury is a Public Health and Socio-Economic Crisis

Brain injury is distinct from other neurological conditions in that it is largely preventable. It frequently results from external trauma, substance use, intimate partner violence, and systemic gaps in healthcare and social services. Without proper intervention, brain injury contributes to increased rates of homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, and mental health challenges. A national strategy must focus on reducing these societal costs by ensuring that prevention, early intervention, and long-term supports are properly resourced and accessible.

Brain Injury is Not Just a Medical Issue—It Requires Systemic Solutions

Unlike many other neurological conditions, brain injury is not solely a medical diagnosis—it is a life-altering event with far-reaching consequences. It disproportionately affects marginalized populations, including individuals experiencing homelessness, those involved in the justice system, and survivors of intimate partner violence. Addressing brain injury requires an integrated approach that spans healthcare, housing, employment, education, justice, and research. However, this level of cross-sector coordination will not happen if brain injury is treated as a subset of another agenda.

Data Collection Must Serve Policy and Service Improvements

A key component of a national strategy must be the collection and standardization of data to drive real-world improvements. While research is valuable and necessary, data must also be applied to enhance frontline services, improve early detection, and guide funding decisions. In

this context, data collection must serve both research and policy development, ensuring that findings translate into tangible benefits for those affected by brain injury.

Conclusion: A Standalone Strategy is Essential

For too long, brain injury has been an invisible issue in Canadian health and social policy. It requires dedicated leadership, targeted funding, and a strategic plan that is not diluted by broader priorities. A National Strategy on Brain Injury must remain distinct and focused on practical solutions that improve the lives of those affected. Policymakers have an opportunity to create lasting change by ensuring that brain injury receives the independent attention and investment it urgently deserves.