

The Case for a National Strategy on Brain Injury: Why Canada Can't Wait



Across Canada, countless lives are being shaped—and often shattered—by brain injury. Yet this complex, life-altering condition remains systemically neglected in policy and practice. From emergency rooms to shelters, from prisons to long-term care homes, the evidence is clear: brain injury is everywhere. And Canada has no coordinated strategy to deal with it.

The time to act is now. We need a **National Strategy on Brain Injury**, and we need it urgently.

The Crisis We Can't Afford to Ignore

Brain injury doesn't just affect individuals—it affects families, communities, and entire systems of care. It's deeply intertwined with other crises gripping our country: the toxic drug supply, the homelessness emergency, gender-based violence, and the overrepresentation of people with disabilities in the justice system.

Consider *The Globe and Mail's* recent exposé, "[How fentanyl ravaged Victoria's Pandora Avenue](#)". In the heart of one of Canada's most picturesque cities lies a corridor where trauma, addiction, and social abandonment collide. What you don't see at first glance—but what front-line workers know all too well—is the invisible epidemic underlying many of these struggles: **undiagnosed and unsupported brain injury**.

Brain injury often precedes or coexists with substance use. It is both a consequence and a cause—disorienting cognition, impairing judgment, and disrupting emotional regulation. It can be the injury that pushes someone into homelessness, or the invisible trauma that keeps them from stabilizing and healing.

Forgotten Canadians: A National Shame

At www.nationalstrategyonbraininjury.ca, our eBook *Forgotten Canadians: The Case for a National Strategy on Brain Injury* gives voice to those who have been overlooked for too long—survivors, caregivers, Indigenous peoples, those affected by intimate partner violence, and those lost in the revolving doors of institutions.

This publication underscores the profound gaps in service, the failure of early detection, the stigma of “non-visible” disabilities, and the devastating consequences of inaction. But it also reveals something else: **hope**. Hope that if we commit to a coordinated national approach, we can begin to change the trajectory—not only of individuals, but of our entire society.

What a National Strategy Would Do

A National Strategy on Brain Injury isn't about adding another bureaucratic layer. It's about building a shared roadmap that includes:

- **Early detection and diagnosis** across health, justice, education, and social service sectors

- **Culturally safe and trauma-informed services** developed with Indigenous and marginalized communities
- **Support for families and caregivers** who are often the unsung heroes of recovery
- **Prevention initiatives** targeting violence, sports, workplace injury, and overdose
- **National data collection** to guide effective policy and investment
- **Integration with mental health, addiction, and housing strategies**
- **Respect for human rights and dignity** at every stage of the journey

Leadership Rooted in Lived Experience

The CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses has spearheaded the call for a National Strategy, grounded in the understanding that real leadership must come from those living the journey. Our work across provinces has shown that while brain injury touches every jurisdiction, the **lack of national coordination leaves people falling through the cracks**.

As Canadians, we have a choice. We can continue to piece together short-term solutions—or we can **lead** with vision, courage, and compassion.

A Call to Action

Let us not wait for another exposé, another overdose, another death in custody, another survivor turned away because “you look fine.”

Let us step forward with a national strategy—built not just on evidence, but on empathy.

Because people living with brain injury are not invisible. They are **#PeopleLikeUs**.

And Canada can no longer afford to look away.

Take Action

 Read *Forgotten Canadians* at www.nationalstrategyonbraininjury.ca

 Share this post using the hashtag **#PeopleLikeUs**

 Write to your MP and ask them to support the reintroduction of **Bill C-277: The National Strategy on Brain Injury Act**

Let's make sure no Canadian is forgotten.

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