

From My Experience: Why a National Strategy on Brain Injury Matters to Me

By Janelle Breese Biagioni, CEO, CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses & Community Lead, National Strategy on Brain Injury

In 1990, my husband, Constable Gerry Breese, was critically injured in the line of duty. He survived the physical trauma—but the brain injury he sustained changed everything. Overnight, our family entered a world of uncertainty, where services were fragmented, support was inconsistent, and understanding was painfully limited. He died five months later.

That was over three decades ago.

You would think by now things would be different. But for too many people across this country, the experience today is still the same—or worse.

That's why I'm fighting for a **National Strategy on Brain Injury**.

It's Personal

Brain injury doesn't just affect one person. It reshapes families, futures, and the very fabric of someone's identity. I watched Gerry struggle to reclaim his sense of self and dignity, all while we scrambled to find services that spoke to his needs—not just as a police officer, but as a human being navigating loss, confusion, and isolation.

There was no roadmap. No central coordination. No national voice to say: **You're not alone, and here's how we can help.**

What we did have was each other—and the resilience to keep going.

But it shouldn't have to be that hard.

It's Systemic

Over the years, I've met hundreds—if not thousands—of Canadians living with brain injury or supporting someone who is. Survivors who were misdiagnosed, dismissed, or forgotten. Families left to coordinate care across multiple provinces, programs, and patchwork policies. Children navigating school without adequate support. Adults trapped in cycles of poverty, incarceration, or addiction, all rooted in an unacknowledged brain injury.

And yet, brain injury still falls between the cracks of mental health, disability, addictions, and healthcare systems. There is **no national framework** to recognize its complexity or its reach.

That's why we need a strategy.

It's Time

A National Strategy on Brain Injury would ensure:

- Coordinated policies across provinces and territories
- Investment in prevention, research, and rehabilitation
- Education for professionals in healthcare, justice, education, and social services

- Recognition of the intersection between brain injury and homelessness, substance use, incarceration, intimate partner violence, and trauma
- A seat at the table for people with **lived experience**

We have the evidence. We have the stories. We have the will.

We just need the leadership.

We Can Do This—Together

Through the **National Strategy on Brain Injury** campaign, we're calling on the federal government to expedite **Bill C-206 (formerly Bill C-277)**, which would formally establish a national strategy. We're also asking Canadians to raise their voices, share their stories, and demand action.

Because for every story like mine, there are thousands more that remain untold. Families that are still waiting. Survivors who are still fighting.

And because I've seen what's possible when we come together—not just as advocates or professionals, but as people—committed to dignity, recovery, and hope.

If you want to know why this matters to me, it's simple:

Because no one should have to walk this road alone.

And with a national strategy, they won't have to.

Join us at www.nationalstrategyonbraininjury.ca and be part of the movement for change.

Janelle Breese Biagioni is the CEO of the CGB Centre for Traumatic Life Losses and serves as the Community Lead for the National Strategy on Brain Injury. She has been a dedicated advocate for brain injury survivors and families for over 30 years.