

The Economic Burden of Unintentional Injury in Atlantic Canada

Report prepared for the Atlantic Network of Injury Prevention (ANIP) by SMARTRISK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every hour of every day, 36 people in Atlantic Canada are unintentionally injured (over 860/day), roughly 2 people in Atlantic Canada die daily from these injuries and almost 6,700 are disabled every year. Overall, almost 316,000 residents of Atlantic Canada are injured each year. While doubtless, the greatest impact of these injuries is in terms of human pain and suffering, they also have a societal impact in terms of cost. The people of Atlantic Canada need to know how much unintentional injury costs. ANIP, with funding support from Royal & SunAlliance and Health Canada, commissioned this study to determine the health care costs and other societal costs associated with unintentional injuries and to bring this public health issue to the forefront of public policy.

In 1999 preventable injuries cost the people of Atlantic Canada \$1.2 Billion or \$489 for every citizen. Falls accounted for \$440 million or 38 per cent of the total amount. Motor vehicle crashes cost \$210 million or roughly 18 per cent of the \$1.2 Billion. The remaining 44 per cent of total costs can be attributed to a combination of costs incurred by poisoning, drowning, fires, and a range of other injuries not specified by hospital classification systems. On average, each injury generates about \$3672.72 in direct and indirect costs.

Table 1 Summary of Findings, Atlantic Canada, 1999

Injury Deaths	Hospitalized Injuries	Non-Hospitalized Injuries	Total Injuries	Injuries Resulting in Partial Permanent Disability	Injuries Resulting in Total Permanent Disability	Total Annual Cost
682	18,012	297,059	315,753	6,201	471	\$1.2 Billion

The results of this study highlight a crucial issue. If these injuries are largely preventable, then how much more money and how many more lives could Atlantic Canada save by enhancing existing strategic prevention programs? To demonstrate, the study offers examples of prevention strategies showing the extent to which Atlantic Canada could save money and lives.

Acknowledging the need to act is the first step. The next step is to bring together the key players and stakeholders to devise, resource and operationalize strategies in each Atlantic province. The rationale is clear. Unintentional injuries cost Atlantic Canada \$1.2 Billion. The consequences for not acting are far reaching for this significant health and societal problem. This is a challenge requiring a truly integrated response involving a partnership between provincial governments, the federal government, non-governmental, regional and community-based organizations involved in injury prevention and control. The key to success is to recognize that we can tackle this problem and achieve great results together. We must challenge this health and societal threat in Atlantic Canada. Together we can make the difference!