

Ending Canada's Invisible Epidemic

A Strategy for Injury Prevention

A report prepared by

SMARTRISK[™]



SAUVE-QUI-PENSE[™]

preventing injury with smart thinking

with support from

INSURANCE
BUREAU
OF CANADA



BUREAU
D'ASSURANCE
DU CANADA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Injury is Canada's invisible epidemic. It is the leading killer and disabler of Canadians in the prime of their lives and it kills more youth and young adults than all other causes combined. Injury also places a tremendous economic burden on this country, conservatively estimated at \$14.7 billion annually in direct and indirect costs.

Nonetheless, injury has historically been overlooked as a health issue, consistently taking a back seat to far lesser health threats. This is due, in part, to the common belief that injuries are "accidents" that can be neither anticipated nor prevented. Like diseases, however, most injuries follow a distinct pattern and are, therefore, both predictable and preventable. Where evidence-based prevention measures have been introduced, significant reductions in disability and loss of life have resulted. The dramatic success of mandatory seatbelt and bicycle helmet laws are two such examples.

Despite this evidence, Canadian policy-makers and the public remain largely unaware of the human and economic burden associated with preventable injury and of the many effective ways this can be reduced. As a result, one of Canada's most critical health problems continues to go largely unaddressed. In the current struggle to contain rising health care costs and to ensure the sustainability of Canada's public health care system, policy-makers can no longer afford to ignore injury prevention; it is one of the most promising means to significantly reduce hospitalizations, wait times, and related health care costs without compromising the accessibility and quality of care that Canadians want.

One after another, provincial governments are turning their attention to injury prevention as one of a range of solutions to the health care sustainability challenge. Even as they have begun to establish their own initiatives and programs, these governments have signalled the need for federal leadership in establishing a coordinated, pan-Canadian strategy to build the necessary surveillance systems and research programs, and

to make the requisite investments to support and help drive effective, evidence-based prevention efforts.

The establishment of the new Public Health Agency of Canada offers an important opportunity to address this long-standing gap in Canada's public health system. By establishing a national coordinating centre for injury prevention within the new agency, the federal government could work with the provinces and other national and regional stakeholders to set national injury prevention targets. These targets would then motivate subsequent actions, such as capacity building, resource mobilization, and coordination of surveillance, research and programming. As Canadians look for signs of progress in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the health care system, injury prevention offers a unique means for federal, provincial and territorial governments to join together with a common strategy to quickly and measurably reduce health care costs and show important health gains for Canadians.

Over the past 24 months, injury prevention stakeholders across Canada have been working to develop a framework for a pan-Canadian injury prevention strategy. The table is now set for the federal government, supported by provincial and territorial governments, to take the lead in moving Canada to the forefront of injury prevention and protecting Canadians from injuries' heavy and readily preventable human toll and economic burden.

RECOMMENDATIONS

SMARTRISK and its consultation partners, including Insurance Bureau of Canada, recommend that the federal government aim to ensure that Canada has the lowest injury rates of any country in the world. To accomplish this, the government needs to develop a pan-Canadian injury prevention strategy built on six strategic pillars:

1. National leadership and coordination

The federal government should establish an Injury Prevention Centre of Canada (IPCC) that uses coordinated pan-Canadian strategies to reduce the frequency and severity of injuries and improve health outcomes for those affected by injury. The Centre should:

- ❖ be an integral part of the new Public Health Agency of Canada;
- ❖ maintain a distinct budget and mandate to ensure an undiluted focus on injury; and
- ❖ promote strategies and initiatives that are evidence-based and developed and implemented in partnership with relevant injury prevention stakeholders.

2. An effective surveillance system

The federal government should establish a National Injury Surveillance Coordinating Committee (NISCC), within the IPCC, to coordinate national efforts to:

- ❖ enhance existing injury surveillance capacity;
- ❖ ensure development and timely dissemination of surveillance products for key users; and
- ❖ monitor and report publicly on progress in reducing injury rates through the annual release of an *Injury in Canada* report directly from Canada's Chief Public Health Officer.

3. Research

The IPCC should build a cadre of injury researchers and foster the translation of knowledge into action by:

- ❖ establishing a strategic injury research agenda focused on areas where injury reduction would produce the greatest health, social and economic gains;
- ❖ partnering with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) to co-fund team development grants at a level of \$100,000

annually and eventually fund five Centres of Excellence in Injury at a level of \$1.5 million annually for each centre;

- ❖ establishing a \$4 million annual Injury Research and Demonstration Fund to test and evaluate injury prevention and control approaches; and
- ❖ creating a National Injury Information and Education Committee comprising all major national injury stakeholders to coordinate the translation and dissemination of injury research findings and their incorporation into injury prevention information and activities in the field.

4. Community supports and resources

The federal government should support community level programs and initiatives for injury prevention by:

- ❖ establishing a \$30 million annual National Injury Prevention Community Fund (modelled on the National Crime Prevention Fund); and
- ❖ establishing an on-line National Injury Prevention Clearinghouse, maintained by the IPCC, to provide communities with the information and tools they need to design, implement, evaluate and share information about effective injury prevention strategies.

5. Policy analysis and development

The IPCC should work with federal and provincial governments to provide expert information and analysis and to facilitate the introduction of evidence-based policies, regulations and programs to reduce the risk for injury in Canada. The IPCC's activities should include:

- ❖ regular international policy scans to update evidence on effective practices;
- ❖ domestic policy reviews to identify opportunities for action;

- ❖ systematic communication of emerging evidence on effective policies and regulatory approaches to government partners; and
- ❖ support of federal/provincial/territorial processes related to injury and the facilitation of more informal intra- and inter-governmental dialogue and information exchange.

6. Public information and education

The IPCC should develop systematic communication strategies to support the achievement of national injury prevention targets and goals. These strategies should include, but not be limited to:

- ❖ mounting public information and social marketing campaigns to advance specific national injury prevention goals;
- ❖ developing public information and reference materials tailored to distinct segments of users and target populations;

- ❖ building a dedicated Resource Centre within the National Injury Prevention Clearinghouse, cataloguing evidence-based communications materials for public use, with supporting reference materials;
- ❖ creating on-line communication vehicles for non-governmental organizations, professional organizations, and program and policy-makers active in injury prevention; and
- ❖ establishing a media relations program to increase the frequency and quality of media coverage of injury issues and to facilitate timely media contact with experts.

FUNDING

The pan-Canadian injury prevention strategy outlined above will require a federal government investment of \$50 million annually when fully phased in over a five-year period. The core components of the strategy and their estimated costs are set out in the table below.

PILLAR	COMPONENTS	ANNUAL COST
1. National leadership and coordination and 5. Policy analysis and development	Injury Prevention Centre of Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation and coordination • Policy analysis and development 	\$4 million
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program management • Knowledge translation 	
2. Surveillance	Injury surveillance coordination	2 million
3. Research	Injury Research and Demonstration Fund	4 million
	Five Centres of Excellence	5 million
4. Community supports and resources	National Injury Prevention Community Fund <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community mobilization (\$10 million) • Targeted prevention initiatives (\$20 million) 	30 million
6. Public information and education	National Injury Prevention Clearinghouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resource Centre and services • Public education and social marketing • Media relations program 	5 million
Total		\$50 million