



Brain Injury Association of Canada  
Association canadienne des lésés cérébraux

A Contribution from  
The Brain Injury Association of Canada

to the  
**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS 2011**

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## **Introduction**

The Brain Injury Association of Canada (**BIAC**) is pleased to submit a written brief to the Standing Committee on Finance. BIAC is committed to reducing brain trauma in Canada. We are committed to improving the quality of life for all Canadians affected by acquired brain injury and promoting its prevention.

## **About Our Cause: Acquired Brain Injury**

In an instant a life is changed, forever. Everyday we participate in activities that produce endless risks for sustaining a brain injury: car accidents, a fall from a bike, or a blow to the head. It is estimated that thousands of Canadians incur a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI), also known as a concussion, each year, the majority being young adults. Statistics indicate that the incidence of brain injury is two times greater in men. The Brain Injury Association of Canada (BIAC) strives to raise awareness of the incidence of acquired brain injury (ABI) in Canada.

A brain injury may make it necessary for the injured person to require full time assistance. Families often become the primary caregiver and support person. Many families are left to cope on their own. They sometimes have little understanding of the effects of the injury and the demands that will be made of them by an injured family member. Families need support from others who understand the effects of acquired brain injury. (BIAC) provides a shared forum for the support of both families and survivors. BIAC also advocates for the enhancement of support services.

Prevention through public education, and safety legislation is the key to the reducing the occurrence of ABI amongst Canadians. The Brain Injury Association of Canada engages in extensive public education initiatives through its many local community associations across Canada. Neuroscience and injury prevention research is another key to addressing ABI. BIAC endeavours to support and promote research in Canada and internationally.

Brain injuries can have long term cognitive, behavioral, physical and emotional deficits that afflict people of all ages with TBI. Experts from behavioral neurology, neuropsychology and neuropsychiatry can explain how a MTBI can significantly impair future earning capacity of an individual. Some MTBI victims may require substantial rehabilitation and funding for future care. Some MTBI victims do not recover and suffer significant long term consequences. As result of brain injury a segment of the Canadian population remain unemployable and may end up homeless, destitute or incarcerated.

The Brain Injury Association of Canada and its community of brain injury survivors and caregivers can work with all levels of government to reduce the social, economic and health burden that is the Silent Epidemic of Brain Injuries. Since information about brain injuries has exploded demand for information, awareness campaigns, research and program support has followed suit.

### **Request**

In order for the Brain Injury Association of Canada to support grassroots organizations, the Association requires seed funding for a period of 4 years to carry out its ambitious development plan to support close to 1.4 million Canadians living with acquired brain injury and to assist in reducing the social, economic and health burden that affects all Canadians. **The Brain Injury Association of Canada is requesting an investment of two million dollars over 4 years from the Government of Canada:**

- to allow the association to build a national movement with provincial affiliates;
- to assist BIAC with its development of research excellence;
- to enhance our ability to tell the brain injury story and create awareness;
- to assist the association's ability to reach Canadians with information about the prevention of and support for those with brain injury;
- to assist BIAC with a launch of a national fundraising program;
- to assist BIAC's ability to represent and communicate with Canada's francophone community

The return of this investment will be priceless as soon as new and innovative brain injury programs and services become operationalized. BIAC will be in a position to assist all levels of government in reducing preventable brain injuries and injuries which places a tremendous economic burden on this country, conservatively reducing the estimated at **\$20 billion annually** in direct and indirect health costs associated with injuries!

This investment will allow BIAC and its partners along with government to work towards developing a **National Registry of Brain Injury**. Presently, there is no national collection of brain injury statistics. As an example, the Lions Gate Hospital that falls within the Whistler-Blackcomb Ski Resort catchment does not record brain injuries! Data and information management are fundamental to fully understand the scope of brain injuries. Of equal importance is the coordination among hospitals, national data collection agencies and large research projects associated with brain injuries, and child and youth health.

This investment will allow BIAC, its partners and the government to access funds to fund and develop a **National Strategy for Brain Injury Survivors**. Recovering from a Brain Injury is a long journey where one will not recover fully. The scope of this strategy will start with the development of a plan for **Housing of Brain Injury Survivors**, presently children and young adults that suffer a brain injury are usually cared for by parents, often with little or no support. What happens to these children and young adults when those parents grow older or pass away? What follow-up will there be? As our population ages, this will become more of a challenge and may be the beginning if it isn't already of another silent epidemic. **Employment and Homelessness and Acquired Brain Injury Survivors, Crime and Acquired Brain Injury Survivors, and many more topics will fall into this National Strategy.**

An investment to BIAC will allow the Association in partnership with Government to continue in its leadership role through Heritage Canada and Sport Canada to develop a **National Concussion Management Program** that will educate all Canadians, parents, athletes, coaches, sports leaders and medical personnel about the short and long term effects of repetitive concussions, and how concussions can be prevented through certified equipment (ski and snowboard helmets and helmets for all recreational and sport activities and bicycles, skateboards, ATV's..); rule changes; smart living at home, work and play; and enforcement.

For example, few Canadians are unaware that bicycle helmets have a shelf life of 5 years. Many Canadians are wearing bicycle helmets that are no longer safe due to age.

An investment in the Brain Injury Association of Canada can assist in improving Canada's standing when it comes to the health and wellness of children and youth is remarkably poor. Among 29 OECD nations:

- Canada ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> when it comes to preventable childhood injuries and deaths;
- Canada ranks 21<sup>st</sup> in child well being, including mental health; and
- Canada ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in childhood obesity.

Overall, Canada only ranks 12<sup>th</sup> out of 21 wealthy countries in the United Nations' rankings of child well-being. The future for these children and young adults is not bright unless we prepare for the future today and we, as Canadians, develop and implement a strategy to start dealing with those presently affected by acquired brain injury and providing them with a quality of life that is escaping them and that all Canadians deserve.

### **Conclusion**

In order for the Brain Injury Association of Canada to continue to make a positive impact on Canadian society, it requires a funding investment to support BIAC moving towards long term sustainability while improving the quality of life for all Canadians affected by acquired brain injury and promoting its prevention.

What is a brain injury? <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arxLLmV6v5g>