

# CONNECTIONS

## Brain Injury Canada's Newsletter

Fall is fast approaching, and we have a lot of things on the go. It's an exciting time because we are working hard along with our partners to push forward on Bill C-277, An Act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries. We'll tell you what this means and how you can help in this newsletter.

We've launched new resources such as our infographic series and our expanding britecanada.ca website for kids. We're also looking for feedback from the community on their voting experience and their interactions with the Disability Tax Credit.

Thank you for your continued support, and happy reading!

The Brain Injury Canada Team

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# Bill C-277 is with the Standing Committee on Health

**Show your support by September 16, 2024**

On June 12 2024, the House of Commons voted unanimously in favour of [Bill C-277, An Act to establish a national strategy on brain injuries](#).

Bill C-277 aims to improve the health of people with living with brain injury by:

- Making sure all provinces and territories work together in the same way.
- Reducing differences in healthcare quality.
- Making it easier to get care and collecting standard data on how common brain injuries are and impact over the lifespan, so that policies and resources can be better directed to where they are needed most.
- Ensuring the Minister of Health is responsible for reporting on the details of the legislation every year.

If the bill passes, that could mean a lot of positive changes in how brain injury is looked at, which can lead to new and improved supports.

## Where we are now

The bill has now been referred to the [Standing Committee on Health](#), and it will then go through other stages to reach Royal Assent.

If an election is called, all bills that have not been passed die on the order paper. This means they are removed from the agenda of Parliament and must be re-introduced in the new session of Parliament after an election. Unless an election is called early, Canada will have a federal election in October 2025.

**So this means we have to work fast—and we need the help of everyone.**

## How can I help?

The House of Commons and Committee have risen for the summer period and will resume in September 2024.

Our goal is to impress upon the Standing Committee on Health the demonstrably strong cross-Canadian support for a National Strategy, through letters and written briefs from individuals and organizations. This is an important and long-overlooked need on behalf of Canadians living with brain injury and this is our chance to make ourselves heard.

You can help by submitting a letter or brief sharing your perspective of why a national

## Bill C-277 is with the Standing Committee on Health

strategy is needed and how it will improve the lives of individuals and families living with the effects of brain injury. Deadline for submissions is Monday September 16, 2024.

If you want to share your perspective as an individual with a brain injury, a caregiver or a friend/family member, you can send a letter.



**Send a letter**

<https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/bill-c-277/letter/>

If you are speaking on behalf of an organization, you should send a brief. Staff who work for organizations that support individuals and families living with brain injury can also submit a letter sharing their experience and support for a strategy.



**Send a brief**

<https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/bill-c-277/brief/>

## Visit Brain Injury and Teens (BRITE), our new resource website



britecanada.ca is our new resource website specifically created for kids to take charge of their own learning when it comes to concussion, brain injury and recovery. This website is available in English and French, and is a growing resource that has new information being added regularly.

If you have children in your life with a brain injury, encourage them to check out britecanada.ca and/or share their story through our community page.

**Learn more**

# Concussion Awareness Week

**September 22-28**

Concussion Awareness Week is a national movement to recognize and raise awareness about the impacts of concussion. This week hosts many different awareness initiatives and events, including Rowan's Law Day in Ontario, named for Rowan Stringer. She was a high school rugby player that passed away in 2013 from multiple concussions in a short period of time (known as second impact syndrome).

Many people don't realize that concussion is a traumatic brain injury. While most people recover from a concussion, some people experience long-term symptoms. A concussion can lead to drastic changes in a person's life. That's just one of the reasons concussion awareness and supports are so important.

During Concussion Awareness Week, help organizations like Brain Injury Canada, your local brain injury association, [Parachute](#), and [the Canadian Concussion Network](#) by:

- Learning more about concussion through their websites
- Sharing their social media posts to help reach new people
- Making a donation to support concussion education and programming



**Learn more about concussion**



**Make a donation**

<https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/concussion/>

<https://braininjurycanada.ca/en/donate/>

## Find your local brain injury association

Provincial and local brain injury associations are available across Canada and are ready to provide support, information, education, advocacy, and a variety of programs and services.

**What's my local association?**



## Coming soon

### A new e-course for caregivers

We're excited to share that later this fall, we're launching our last course in the Petro-Canada Caregiver series. We will be publishing a free e-course on when your child with a brain injury transitions into adulthood, both in the health care system and in other aspects of daily living. This includes relationships, work, housing and more!

This course will feature expert input on the transition process and personal stories from caregivers who have supported a loved one with a brain injury in childhood into adulthood. Stay tuned for email updates and social media announcements when the course launches later this fall.



## Free E-Courses for Family Caregivers

Sign up for our free self-guided e-courses for family caregivers all about brain injury, caregiving, and more

Sign up today

## Our Annual General Meeting is September 23, 2024 at 6pm EST

In August, you received an email letting you know about our annual general meeting. This meeting is open to our members (that's you!). If you're interested in attending, please use the link below to register.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAKcOqrpjMrG9HVoS5UEZ4smPIm5StRYQdT>

## Dave's story: "In writing about my experience, my goal is to help others"



My traumatic brain injury is a result of an accident that occurred in July 2021. I was a motorcycle racer, and was competing in a qualifying event that would determine our starting order on the grid for the next day's races, based on the order we finished ordered by lap times. So I was trying to go as fast as I could.

I raced for about 15 years, and I was also an instructor training other riders on how to ride as safely as possible. I also maintained my motorcycle as meticulously as I could. But none of those things can stop a person from making mistakes, and that is what I believe happened based on what I was told post-accident. I have to rely on what I was told and what we put together from injuries that were a result of the accident, as I am missing my memory from before the accident to about three weeks afterwards.

Because of the location of the accident, I must have been braking when the accident occurred. I went over the front of the bike, and my head impacted the pavement hard enough to cause the TBI, as well as a sixth nerve palsy in one eye, and two broken wrists.

I was transported by ambulance to the hospital, where I was put on life support for a week due to breathing problems. Afterwards I was diagnosed with a moderate to severe traumatic brain injury.

After the initial two weeks in ICU/emergency, I was moved to a rehabilitation hospital where I received treatment for the brain injury over the next four weeks. After that, I was released home to continue my recovery there.

At home, I started taking a lot of walks with the dog. From my time spent at the gym over the years, I knew walking to be good for overall body and brain recovery as long as it didn't have any negative physical impacts due to injuries. I also found walking helpful with working to recover my vision, as walking on residential streets meant using both near and far sight. Eventually this got me to a point where I could go for a road test to get my license back, which had been taken away at the hospital.

A few months after being released from hospital and working on recovering any way I was able to, I went through cognitive testing and other assessments and was approved to go back to work.

In writing about my experience, my goal is to help others who can identify with similar experiences or symptoms, and how I went about working with or around these things.

Probably the biggest issue I had post-TBI both at work and at home was that my short term memory was drastically reduced. I relied on reminders for important things I didn't want to forget about even prior to my accident, but after the TBI I relied heavily on tasks and notes on my phone for daily things (so scheduling recurring reminders).

Because I took so many notes, I even started organizing them in folders to make them easier to remember and find.

For those living with a TBI, here are some things I have experienced and would like others to know about:

- Over-explaining: I find I have difficulty summarizing things and can talk at length about things that could be summed up more briefly, and need to get reminders about this to help me.
- Identity: I was given some very good advice that, post-TBI, you need to recognize that you basically have a new identity now and try your best to accept it, along with any physical limitations you may have. It is definitely not easy to do, but it is important to evaluate what you can and cannot do. This may mean letting go of longer term goals, and finding things that you can still do that will bring you happiness. Being as realistic as you can about how things will be going forward can help reduce stress.
- Hyper-focusing on things: I haven't found it possible to stop this (despite trying guided meditation, yoga etc.). I've tried to turn my focus towards positive and productive things instead of focusing on negative things.
- Emotional regulation: I feel like this is very different from before the accident. I now struggle a lot to manage my mood, especially when tired. I find just pausing before I react to things can allow me time to think through what a reasonable and rational response would be. I also find getting enough sleep is critical to being able to manage and keep as stable an emotional state as I can.
- Keeping a log: a log of good things you experience can be helpful for not forgetting about positive experiences, as it's important to hold on to those to help with mental health.
- Weightlifting: This may not be something that's possible for everyone depending if you have other injuries you're recovering from, but in my case I actually found going back to the gym was very helpful in getting my wrists functioning well again, and have always found going to the gym to help my mood (exercise can boost endorphins) and mental health overall.
- Memorization: I have tried learning languages to see if I can improve my short-term memory, and have found small improvements using a language app. I think the memorization helps me improve my brain's function in some aspects, even if my short-term memory remains poor overall.

- Coping with panic: if I feel panic rising, a good technique I've found is called "box breathing" – breathing in, holding your breath, breathing out, and holding again—all for equal amounts of time (4-5 seconds for example). This helps calm the mind and nervous system along with it, getting the heart rate under control and letting your mind move away from the state of panic.
- Meditation: prior to my TBI, I found guided meditation to be helpful, so I have continued to try it when possible to see if it can help. There are good apps and podcasts out there, some of which are TBI-specific. Finding the right one for you will likely be a matter of listening to different material until you find something that resonates.
- Gratitude: remember to feel gratitude, even for small things. When feeling frustrated over something minor, I try to remember things like the fact that I am very lucky to be alive given the severity of my accident, and I need to remember to step back and see all the good things I'm surrounded by in my daily life.
- Be patient with yourself: It will take time for initial healing, and then slowly learning what your new limitations are, how you will react to situations. Some of these learning processes may be life long.

For those who live with or know someone dealing with a TBI, it is important to know some things:

- TBIs can have different severities, and many symptoms are not obvious—especially if you don't know the person well enough to know how they acted prior to the brain injury.
- Those with a TBI can have different reactions than you may be expecting, especially if they are tired or dealing with something unexpected (while not to the same degree as pre-TBI, it is possible to prepare ourselves and think about how to appropriately react to something)
- Try to be as patient as you can, even though I'm sure it can be frustrating when we forget something you told us very recently, for example. Our behaviour and reactions can be different to what you knew before and may be expecting now. A bit of patience can go a long way.
- Communication is very important—listen to what we're experiencing and feeling, as things can be very confusing and difficult to navigate after a TBI. Having guidance can be helpful, and even though we may not be in the right situation or mood to show appreciation for it, we may feel that later.
- Know that some things may change and improve over time, but with a TBI there are some things that may never change. This can be difficult to accept for the person living with a TBI and those around them, but this may be the reality.



## Brain Injury Canada Connect

Find services for individuals with brain injury & caregivers across Canada through our interactive service directory. And if you provide supports, list with us today!

[Access the service directory](#)



## Educational infographics now available

With the support of our honorary patron Dan Andrae, Brain Injury Canada has recently launched a series of shareable infographics. Topics include concussion, brain injury, and intersections such as mental health, unemployment, housing and more.

Visit our website to learn more about important areas of brain injury such as prevention, symptoms and accessing supports. Download the infographics or share them using a special embed code for websites.

[Check out the infographics](#)



## Classify Moderate to Severe Brain Injury as a Chronic Condition

A significant collaboration between Brain Injury Canada and the Canadian Traumatic Brain Injury Research Consortium (CTRC) is calling for moderate to severe Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) to be officially classified as a chronic condition in Canada. This move would significantly enhance nationwide healthcare strategies, policies, and patient outcomes.

[Read the position paper](#)

## The Disability Tax Credit: What is it, and am I eligible for it?

In Canada, some people are eligible for what is called the disability tax credit (DTC). This is a non-refundable tax credit for people with disabilities (or caregivers supporting someone with a disability) that reduces how much income tax they have to pay every year [1].

**Important: You need your application and any health information certified by a medical practitioner in order to be considered for the disability tax credit.**

### Am I eligible for the disability tax credit?

There are a few different categories of need a person might fit into in order to qualify for the disability tax credit. These include:

- Walking
- Mental functions
- Dressing
- Feeding
- Eliminating (bowel or bladder functions)
- Hearing
- Speaking
- Vision
- Life-sustaining therapy

Each of these categories have their own criteria. [You can view the list on the Government of Canada website.](#)

You might be eligible for the disability tax credit if:

- You have a severe or prolonged impairment in one of the categories;
- You have significant limitations in two or more of the categories, or;
- You receive therapy to support a vital function

### Let's walk through an example

For many people with brain injury, their mental/cognitive functions make it hard to complete activities of daily living (this can include everything from caring for oneself to working). So let's select mental functions as our category [2].

On this page, you will see a brief overview of what the category is and what someone needs to be eligible for the disability tax credit in this category. It also includes some

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examples of people who are eligible. [We encourage you to take some time and read that information.](#)

Let's use Geoff as an example. Geoff has had a brain injury for 2+ years, and isn't able to work or live alone. He often forgets his wallet, keys and ID when he leaves the house, and can't plan out the activities of his day. He also struggles to pay attention for long periods of time. These are all cognitive skills that people rely on every day.

The eligibility checklist requires Geoff to meet all three of the criteria listed.

- You are unable to perform mental functions necessary for everyday life, or it takes you 3 times longer than someone of similar age who does not have the impairment (even with appropriate therapy, medication, and devices)
- Your impairment is present all or almost all of the time (generally 90% or more)
- Your impairment has lasted or is expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months

Based on what you know about Geoff, he does meet these requirements. But it will still depend on what the medical practitioner supporting Geoff's application says. [The Government of Canada has a full list of eligibility requirements that you can find here.](#)

### How much would I get?

If your application is approved, the credit is calculated using a 'Base Amount' for adults—and in some cases if you care for children with disabilities, a 'Supplemental Amount'. The federal Base Amount at the time of publishing this information in 2024 was \$9,872. As an adult, you would receive 15% of that amount (approximately \$1,480). You would also receive a provincial amount, which changes based on where you live [3].

Let's use New Brunswick as an example. In 2024, the base amount was \$9,747 [4]. Let's say the percentage in New Brunswick is about 9% (based on past data—this may not be the current provincial rate) [5]. That would equal approximately \$877.

$\$1,480 + \$877 = \$2,357$ . This is what you could receive in total. Keep in mind that this number isn't a given—it depends on your eligibility and where you live.

### Applying for the disability tax credit

Even if you aren't sure if you're eligible for the disability tax credit, you should still apply. You can [apply online using this digital form](#) or by using the [T2201 Disability Tax Credit](#)

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[Certificate](#). For step-by-step application instructions, visit the [Government of Canada website](#). You may want to ask someone you trust to help you with the process.

### Disability tax credit vs. Canada Disability Benefit

The disability tax credit is not the same thing as the Canada Disability Benefit. The disability tax credit is a non-refundable credit meant to help people lower the amount they owe in taxes each year. The Canada Disability Benefit was introduced in the Canada Disability Benefit Act which would see low-and modest income working-age individuals with severe and prolonged disabilities receive an annual sum. You would need to be approved for the disability tax credit in order to receive the Canada Disability Benefit [7]. As of August 2024, the Canada Disability Benefit has not yet been made available (the regulations are still in development).

### Resources

If you still have questions or want to learn more, check out these additional resources about the disability tax credit.




- [The Disability Tax Credit Resource Guide–Disability Credit Canada](#). This is a long guide, so we recommend taking a lot of breaks and writing down the information that's important to you.
- [Disability Alliance BC Help Sheet on the Disability Tax Credit](#)
- [Information on tax credits and deductions for persons with disabilities–The Government of Canada](#)

### What are your thoughts on the disability tax credit?

There has been a lot of public feedback on the disability tax credit, including recommendations to change the eligibility requirements so more people can get the credit [8]. We'd like to better understand the brain injury community's experience with the Disability Tax Credit. If you have applied for the credit, received it, been rejected for it, or are just learning about it, we want to hear from you. All information is kept private and confidential.

Share my feedback

## You might also be interested in...

-  The University of Washington has a new InfoComics strip on Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury
-  Make a donation to Brain Injury Canada
-  Health care professionals can sign up for our Foundations educational e-course for just \$65+HST

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