

CONNECTIONS

Brain Injury Canada's Newsletter

The year is coming to an end, but it's full-steam ahead here at Brain Injury Canada. **We will be closed from December 24, 2024 to January 1, 2025** for the holidays, but we'll be back with more resources for the brain injury community, more advocacy updates, and more awareness initiatives for 2025.

This year has been one of growth and progress for our organization. Our team has expanded to include incredible people committed to bringing more resources and more awareness to the brain injury community. Our partners and team members have poured their hearts into Bill C-277, An Act to Establish a National Strategy on Brain Injuries that would make meaningful change across the country. And we have created even more educational resources for caregivers, associations, and people living with brain injury to make information and tools accessible.

Thank you for being with us as we say goodbye to 2024 and hello to 2025 and all the great things on the horizon.

The Brain Injury Canada Team

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An update on Bill C-277

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. 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.

Where we are now

Right now we are in the **Report Stage**. This means the House is considering the Standing Committee on Health's report and any other amendments that may be proposed. We are working hard with our partners, the bill's sponsor MP Alistair MacGregor and all political parties to move the bill to the Senate.

The House of Commons has risen for the Winter break but we will keep moving this forward in 2025.

How can I help?

Following Brain Injury Canada's social media accounts and subscribing to our newsletter is the best thing you can do right now, because that's how we tell our community about actions they can take to support Bill C-277. [We'll regularly update you and our information page to let you know how you can help.](#)

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](#)

Thank you for your support on Giving Tuesday

New symptom management resources on the way in 2025

We want to express our deep appreciation to all of our supporters who helped make this year's Giving Tuesday a tremendous success!

All donations made this year are supporting the development of symptom management resources created specifically for individuals living with the effects of brain injury. We heard directly from communities across Canada about the need for more support to navigate the complexities of brain injury recovery. With the generosity of our donors, we will be able to provide these resources completely free of charge.

To continue the giving season, all donations made through December 31st 2024 will be designated toward the development of these critical symptom management tools. If you haven't yet contributed, we ask you join us in supporting this important work so that together, we can make a lasting difference for Canadians living with brain injuries.

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?](#)



Update: New caregiver e-course coming in 2025

Our free e-course on helping a loved one transition from youth to adulthood

In our last newsletter we said that our last course in the Petro-Canada CareMakers Foundation series was launching in the fall. Unfortunately this project has been slightly delayed. But do not worry, because it is coming in Winter 2025! This will be 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.

In the meantime, we encourage you to check out our other free courses for caregivers, including an introduction to brain injury; self-care for the people who take care of everything else; and planning for the future of yourself and your loved one with a brain injury.

[Check out our free e-courses](#)

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](#)

Anthony's story: "I have a hidden disability. It may not show, but life for me isn't easy"



Please be aware: before you keep reading, there is a mention of gun violence.

On September 25, 1989, when I was 16 years old, I was shot in the cerebellum with a .22 rifle loaded with a mushroom shell. My memories of that morning are not completely clear. I remember being outside in the yard of my parents' summer home. I was with a friend. Next thing I remember I was falling face down towards the ground. I must have been in and out of consciousness from this point as I can

only remember parts of the ambulance ride and the attendant trying to keep me awake. 4 weeks later I awoke from a coma to later learn I had been shot in the head.

It was challenging – my life basically started over. I had to learn everything over again. Reading, writing, trying to walk, swimming with no balance. As a kid, I played the drums. Not being able to physically do that anymore was mentally challenging, but I continued to try and still do. You just can't give up. I was always tired after being in a coma. My neurologist, and my family, especially my mom, never gave up on me. They pushed me to do things when I didn't want to do them. My parents, family and friends were my support. However, I slowly distanced myself from friends and isolated myself to pretty much being home or with my parents all the time – so my friends eventually went away.

If I could go back, I would tell myself to be around people. Don't feel embarrassed – talk about how you really feel. Don't hide your emotions, and let people in. I did all of these things and it really affected my life. I have a hidden disability and I never told anyone. It was so hard on my wife and kids and held me back.

I have a hidden disability. It may not show, but life for me isn't easy. Everything I accomplished in life or continue to do comes from hard work and dedication. I have a burning sensation in my head that has never gone away. I had to learn how to read, write and walk after my accident so sometimes I don't do things in a traditional way and I also may need extra time when reading. I have to think and plan things out all the time just to complete a simple task like walking because I have bad balance. I may not show emotion but I feel it. That doesn't mean I can't do things. It may slow me down at times, but I can do it as good if not better than others. Because I have always felt that people would treat me differently or stereotype me if I shared my hidden disability I chose not to. This has probably also caused me to lose job opportunities. I always want to accomplish things on my own. My wife tells me I have a stubborn side.

After trying my luck at small business and working many rewarding jobs, including as a volunteer firefighter and red seal chef, I am currently a Petty Officer/ Rescue Specialist working my way up the ranks within the Canadian Coast Guard.

I hope that my life can be an example to others living with a disability.

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](#)



Provide your input on concussion informational resources for older adults

From our colleagues at Parachute

Many concussion resources are aimed at children and youth, parents, coaches, health professionals and other adults in roles caring for children and youth. Older adults who have experienced a concussion may not feel represented in these resources or that any resources have been developed for them or with them.

To start addressing this gap, Parachute, a national injury prevention charity, is developing an informational resource about concussion specifically for older adults, in English and French. We are seeking input from older adults, families and caregivers, and health professionals and other service providers who care for older adults.

Link to survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OlderAdultsConcussion>

The survey will close January 8, 2025.

If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Cowle, scowle@parachute.ca

Tips for navigating a busy holiday season

The holidays are a time of year with a lot of activities and social events. This can be so fun—but it can also be so tiring. It's easy to get caught up in the merriment, and suddenly you realize you're not even enjoying yourself anymore.

If you have a busy holiday season, here are some tips to help you navigate it.

Say no if you can't (or don't want to) do something

There's often a lot of pressure to say yes around the holidays. People want to see each other and engage in traditions together. But if you say yes to every invite or event, you end up with a packed schedule. Now some people like this. But for others, this can lead to more fatigue and more disruption to your routine. This may make effects of brain injury you experience already more challenging.

For example: You've agreed to do five different things in the next two weeks. You have to keep track of what you're doing, where you're doing it, when you have to be there, what you need to bring, etc. You normally need a couple days of routine after an event to feel your best, but you won't be able to do that. You start feeling some emotional distress because you feel tired and stressed by these things that were originally supposed to be fun.

You don't have to say no to everything, as there will be some activities that are really important to you. But if you receive an invite that you think will be more stressful than fun for you, it's okay to say no.

Many people struggle with saying no (particularly around the holidays) because they don't want to hurt others feelings. But saying no doesn't have to be dismissive or hurtful. Here are some ways you can approach it:

“Thank you for the invite, but I'm not able to join you. I appreciate you thinking of me.”

“I appreciate the invite, but I have a lot of other things happening around that time, and I really need some time to myself to balance it out. I would love to get together with you in the new year.”

“Thanks for thinking of me. I don't think I'll be able to go, but I know you'll have so much fun. If you can, send me some photos!”

These are just a few examples of ways you can say no.

Tips for navigating a busy holiday season

Build breaks into your schedule

It's important for everyone to have a little time to decompress, particularly when a lot of social stuff is happening back to back. Blocking out periods of time in your schedule for a break is a helpful way to make sure you're getting the time you need.

For example: You have a holiday party on Friday evening, and then a family dinner on the Saturday evening. You want to go to both, but now you'll need some extra rest and a little time to be alone. You block out the Saturday morning and afternoon on your calendar as a rest period so you know not to book anything for that time.

Taking a break could even look like setting aside 30 minutes during a holiday gathering to go sit quietly or be in a new environment. Be open with friends and family about what you need in order to participate, and ask for help accessing it.

Find environments that work for you

Holiday events can be noisy, have a lot of bright lights, and be in environments that may not work for you.



If going out to parties is too fatiguing for you, suggest alternates like a more quiet family dinner at home.

Tips for navigating a busy holiday season

For example: Your family wants to go to the town's annual tree lighting ceremony. This is an event that has a lot of crowds, a lot of noise, requires a lot of standing, and includes many bright lights.

You may decide that you want to participate in events with a lot of sensory stimulation, but you choose to participate for a shorter period of time. You can also talk to the people in your life about environments that work for you so together you can find a venue or an activity that works. So maybe you can't go to a tree lighting, but you can have a special movie night at a friend's house.

Make adjustments to your traditions

Traditions are an important part of the holiday season for many people. They hold a special place in hearts and memories. You may have your own favourite holiday traditions. But after a brain injury, it may not be possible for you to engage with them in exactly the same way.

For example: Every year you host a big holiday party at your house for all your friends. But the planning, prepping, cooking and decorating takes a lot of your mental and physical energy. You are able to cook one dish comfortably, but organizing and hosting a whole party for a bunch of people just isn't something you want or are able to do this year.

You may feel some grief/loss around a tradition like that. It's perfectly natural to be disappointed that you aren't able to do things the same way. However, that doesn't mean you don't have to do them at all. In this example, you could ask one of your friends to take over hosting duties and you'll bring one special dish you served every year. It may not look exactly the same, but you are still getting to spend time with good friends (and good food).

Making adjustments to traditions so they work for you helps make sure that you enjoy them and the holidays more.

And remember: it's okay to say goodbye to traditions that aren't working for you anymore. You want to feel your best during the holiday season, and if some traditions are causing you stress, it may be helpful to take a break from them this year.

Set a budget

Many holidays this time of year have a gift-giving component. This can get expensive,

Tips for navigating a busy holiday season

and finances can be quite stressful. One of the best ways to help yourself navigate holiday expenses is to set a budget that will allow you to give without stress. We have some tips on setting budgets on our website.

Here are some ideas around gift-giving at the holidays that could fall within your budget:

- Propose a Secret Santa gift exchange in your family so everyone only buys one present
- Buy second-hand gifts from repurpose stores
- Ask to set a budget for gift-giving within a group. For example, if you and three friends want to buy each other gifts, set a limit of \$25 dollars. It helps your wallet and it encourages everyone to be creative with their spending
- Make donations in people's names to charities that are important to them
- Make gifts
- Offer quality time or experiences instead of a physical gift. For example, if you know someone really loves movies, give them a little card that says you will treat them to a movie date.

Talk to your family and friends about what you need

Many people try to do it all during the holidays, often on their own because they feel it's their responsibility to make the holiday great. But holidays emphasize the importance of being together. If you have concerns about the holiday, or need some help, talk to your loved ones. They want to support you, and they may need you to tell them what you can do, what you don't want to do, and how you're feeling.

The holidays are a lovely time of year, but they can get busy and overwhelming. These are just some tips you can use to help navigate the busy season, prioritize your wants and needs, and find a balance.

We at Brain Injury Canada wish you happy holidays and look forward to more connections in the new year.



What's coming in 2025

We have so much we hope to accomplish in 2025. Here is just a small sneak peek.

Bill C-277

We will continue to work hard with our partners to move Bill C-277 forward

New resources on symptom management

Thanks to generous donations and the support of our partners and community, we will be creating new resources on symptom management for individuals with brain injury. We will be working with members of the community to build these resources, which will be based on current medical recommendations and informed by personal stories. We are looking forward to building these resources and making them available **free of charge** later in the year.

Partnering with Elections Canada

We are excited to be continuing our partnership with Elections Canada ahead of next year's federal election. We will be releasing pre-recorded workshops on voting and working with Elections Canada, as well as updating our website with lots of information and tools to help you be involved in our democratic process.

New educational e-courses

We will be launching new e-courses throughout 2025, including a new course for long-term care professionals. These courses help make information about brain injury more accessible and will continue to promote higher quality of care for members of the brain injury community.

Building awareness of brain injury

One of our biggest commitments is to make sure that we continue to raise awareness of brain injury to the general public. We're already starting to prepare for Brain Injury Awareness Month and look forward to new ways of reaching people.

You might also be interested in...

-  [Educational infographics on brain injury, concussion and more](#)
-  [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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