

INJURIES COST BC \$2.8 BILLION

A new report reveals the true cost of injuries in British Columbia

VANCOUVER, B.C. (August 18, 2009) – Preventable injuries cost every man, woman and child in British Columbia \$665 every year – more than the national average – according to *The Economic Burden of Injury in Canada*, a new report released today by SMARTRISK.

The in-depth national report, which reviewed figures from 2004, found that preventable injuries cost British Columbians \$2.8 billion that year. The BC chapter of the report was prepared in partnership with The Community Against Preventable Injuries (The Community) and the BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit (BCIRPU), and shows how all British Columbians pay a price for preventable injuries.

BC chapter findings:

- Preventable injuries cost every British Columbian an estimated \$665 – nearly eight per cent higher than the national average.
- The estimated direct and indirect cost of preventable injuries is \$2.8 billion.
- The direct (health care) cost of injury in British Columbia in 2004 was \$1.6 billion or \$373 for every British Columbian, and represented 56 per cent of total injury costs, while indirect costs amounted to \$1.2 billion or 44 per cent.
- Injuries such as, motor vehicle crashes, falls, poisoning and drownings, accounted for an increased cost of \$200 million between 1998 and 2004.

The report found that injuries remain the leading cause of death for Canadians aged one to 44, and cost Canadians nearly \$20 billion annually.

While a hefty financial price is paid for preventable injuries, the real price is the human cost. According to the report, 1,620 British Columbians lost their lives to injury in 2004 and 9,900 were permanently disabled. And thousands more were indirectly affected when their loved ones were hurt, permanently disabled or killed.

“Preventable injuries are a silent epidemic that causes immeasurable human pain and suffering and needlessly drains critical resources from BC’s health care system,” says Dr. Ian Pike, spokesperson for The Community. “Evidence suggests that 95 per cent of injuries are preventable, and by preventing these injuries we could save resources and redirect it towards critically important needs within our health care system.”

Over the past decade, injury rates in BC have demonstrated positive downward trends. These successes are a result of an integrated approach focusing on awareness campaigns, policies, research and practice by the provincial government along with many other injury prevention organizations.

Despite these efforts, preventable injuries are still one of the largest cost contributors to our health care system. It is a serious public health issue that requires modest investment and continuous injury prevention efforts to further reduce the injury incidence.

“The trouble is many of us are unaware of the magnitude of the issue,” says Dr. Pike. “Many believe they won’t get hurt, and that serious injuries only happen to other people.”

The Community Against Preventable Injuries encourages British Columbians to think about the inherent risks involved in all the activities they plan, and take appropriate measures to be safe whether on the road, at work, at play or at home. Together we can reduce the tremendous economic burden of injury borne by all Canadians.

To read the full report visit, www.injuryresearch.bc.ca

About The Community Against Preventable Injuries

The Community Against Preventable Injuries is an organization established to raise awareness, transform attitudes and behaviours and ultimately reduce the number and severity of preventable injuries in BC. The Community’s work is made possible through the financial and in-kind support of a variety of organizations that continue to sign on as The Community’s partners to fight this epidemic of preventable injuries in BC.

For more information visit, www.preventable.ca

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Editor notes:

- The Community Against Preventable Injuries currently focuses on preventable injuries, which include: motor vehicle crashes, falls, poisonings, drownings and burns. According to the SMARTRISK report, these injuries account for 81 per cent of the total injury cost or \$2.3 billion dollars.
- The report does not include the claim costs incurred by WorkSafeBC for work-related injuries or ICBC for motor vehicle crashes. The Community estimates the total cost of preventable injuries (excluding suicide, violence and self-harm) to be \$4 billion every year.
- Other injuries such as suicide, violence and self-harm account for 17 per cent of the total injury cost or \$479 million. Injuries due to undetermined intent account for the remaining two per cent of the total injury cost.

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