

**Still calling it an
“accident”? Seriously?**



**In 2008 I was involved
in a double fatality
car crash that made
national headlines.**

My life or what I knew
as my truth had been
changed—I completed my
doctorate as a survivor
focused on honouring the
lives of my parents.

My thesis focused on the language used to describe motor vehicle incidents in order to understand how public and legal discourse impact law and accountability, and the experiences of survivors.

Empowered by the results, I have embarked on a journey to change the discourse around how we speak of preventable injury and fatality, and I hope for your support in encouraging continued discussion on the issue.

There is evidence to support that people repeat what they hear in the media. I believe that those who speak to the public are in a unique position to shape opinion. How we present stories has a direct impact on how they are understood. Word choices matter, and with your support, we can continue to highlight the importance of language in describing preventable injury and fatality.

I ask you to participate by considering the effect that your words have on how people perceive preventable injuries and fatalities, and engaging in dialogue with your peers.

Thank you for your consideration, time, and support.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Badh'.

Dr. Varinder Badh, MA, DSocSci

ac·ci·dent

noun

An unfortunate incident that happens unexpectedly and unintentionally, typically resulting in damage or injury¹

Throughout my career as former Supreme Court and Court of Appeal Justice in British Columbia, I have witnessed the painful impact of the words “it was an accident” on families who have suffered the untimely loss of a loved one due to negligent behaviour on our roadways. The implication that the event was unavoidable, and the outcome of a fated conclusion, is inaccurate and unjust.

This campaign is about leadership in creating greater public dialogue and understanding of the predictability and preventability of road injury and fatality. The words that are used to describe these life-altering events in the public discourse have an impact on our perceptions on the inevitability of the outcome. It is important that collectively we recognize that words have power to shape reality, and take the necessary steps to ensure that discourse is used thoughtfully and accurately.

I encourage you to join me in choosing our words to reflect a new reality, where all British Columbians deserve to be safe on our roads, and serious injuries are not accepted as “accidents.”



Honorable Wally Oppal, O.B.C., Q.C



BCAA has been protecting British Columbians for over 115 years. Our Roadside Service Technicians and Insurance teams have seen first-hand the life-altering effects of what we used to call car “accidents.”



Many road injuries and fatalities are preventable—calling them accidents isn't a true reflection of the tragedy they cause. It's time to make a change.

Although we've been around for a long time, we're always striving to get better. In our ongoing effort to keep BC drivers and our employees safe on the road, we're committed to partnering with Preventable to change the way we talk about serious road injuries and fatalities.

The words we use have a profound effect on how we think about situations, the plans we put in place and how we react when the worst happens. It's a small but critically important step in making change.

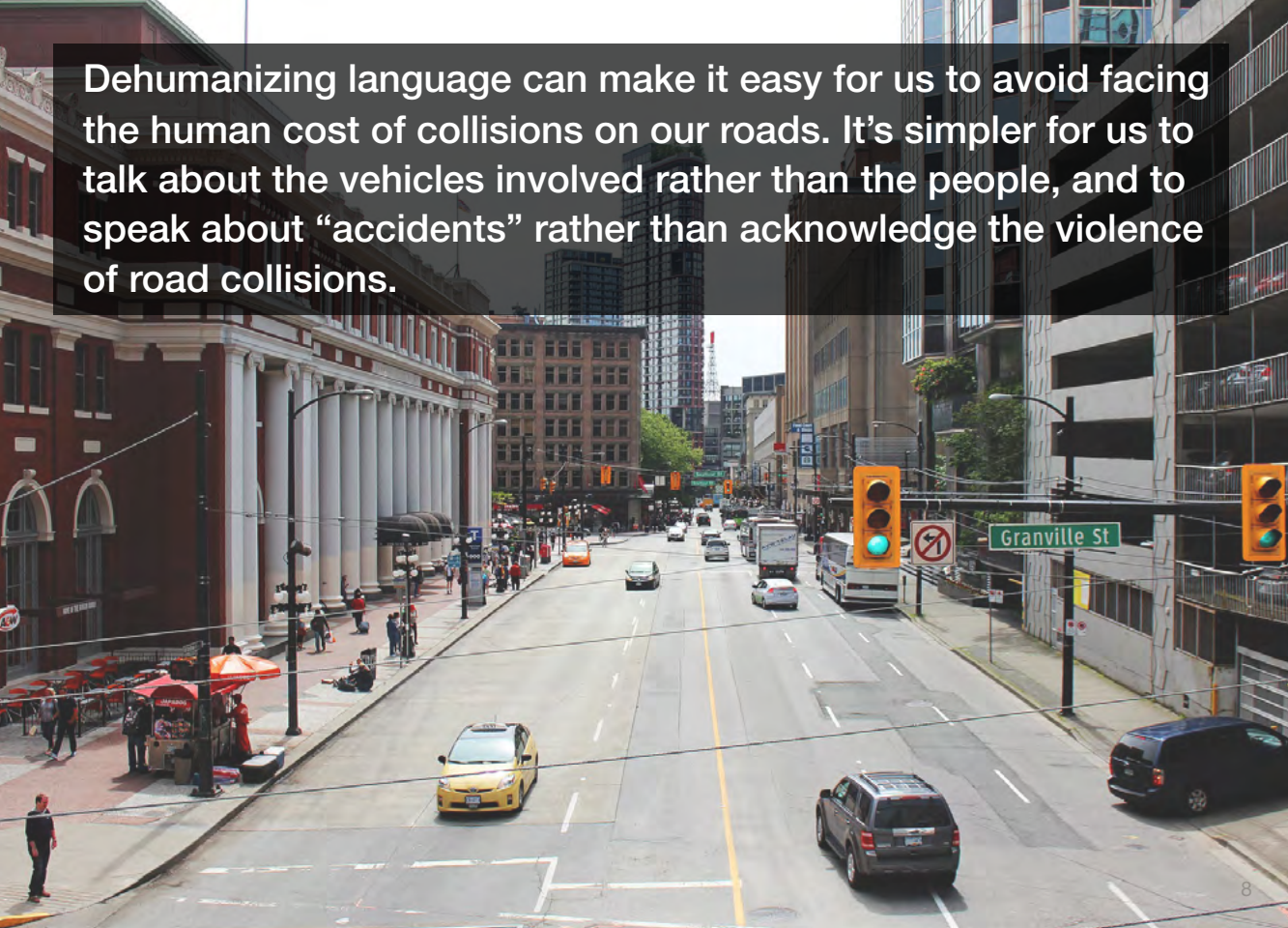
I encourage you to join us to shift the dialogue and put prevention at the forefront to keep everyone who uses our roads safe.

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Shom Sen
President & CEO, British Columbia Automobile Association



Dehumanizing language can make it easy for us to avoid facing the human cost of collisions on our roads. It's simpler for us to talk about the vehicles involved rather than the people, and to speak about "accidents" rather than acknowledge the violence of road collisions.



Understandably, we seek a bit of distance from the horrifying realities of road injuries. But behind each crumpled vehicle is a person whose life may be ended or forever changed. Every emergency room physician and nurse can tell you many stories about their patients with devastating injuries from road collisions. And the ripple effects on families, friends, colleagues, and communities are far-reaching.



Our choice of words often suggests that road collisions are unpredictable and inevitable. But there is a plethora of evidence on how we can effectively reduce injuries on our roads, if we make the commitment to do so. We need to use language that demands that we own responsibility for road injuries, both individually and collectively.

Let's stop talking about accidents and start talking about crashes and collisions. Let's stop talking about what happened to a vehicle, and start talking about what happened to a person. And then let's start talking about how we can prevent these injuries in the first place.

Emily Newhouse, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Medical Health Officer, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority

90% of all injuries aren't random, unconnected, unpredictable events—they are predictable, and therefore preventable.

Preventable is a province-wide, multi-partner organization raising awareness, transforming attitudes, and ultimately changing behaviours. With your help we can change attitudes and beliefs about injuries—a leading cause of death in BC.

Injuries devastate families, and leave gaping holes in schools, communities, and workplaces. Yet many British Columbians believe that injuries are just a fact of life, that they are “accidents.”

Research like Dr. Badh's has shown that changing how we think and speak about preventable injuries can change people's reality.

A few simple words will empower British Columbians to no longer accept that injuries “just happen” nor feel like a “victim” if they suffer an injury.

Instead of “car accident,” terms like “car crash,” “collision,” or “fender-bender” can change the tone of the conversation; instead of “accident,” try “injury,” “trauma,” or “incident.”

It is our hope that you will join us and together we can alter the discourse; change the conversation and the reality.

To learn more, visit preventable.ca.



British Columbians have made excellent progress in reducing injuries and deaths on our roads, but there is still work to be done:

- On average, 283 British Columbians die each year from road-related crashes.²
 - 27% of these deaths are due to distracted driving or inattention.
 - 29% are speed-related.
 - 24% are related to alcohol or drug impairment.
- In 2016/17, 393 children and youth aged 0-19 were hospitalized for motor vehicle or road-related injuries.³
- Crashes involving pedestrians happen most often on Wednesdays and Thursdays, from 3 to 6 PM, in fall and winter when the days are shorter.⁴

For media inquiries, please contact:

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Funding for this project was provided by the Provincial Health Services Authority and ICBC. Photos courtesy of Pixabay, BCAA.

¹ Accident, English Oxford Living Dictionaries. Accessed: <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/accident>.

² Motor Vehicle Related Fatalities: 10-Year Statistics for BC, RoadSafetyBC, 5-year average, 2013-2017.

³ Discharge Abstract Database, Ministry of Health, BCIRPU Injury Data Online Tool, 2018.

⁴ Pedestrian Safety, ICBC, 2018. Accessed: <https://www.icbc.com/road-safety/sharing/pedestrian-safety/Pages/default.aspx>.

car crash
injury rear-ender
breakdown **smash** incident
hazard **crash** bump
pile-up **collision** fender-bender
bang-up emergency calamity
spin-out **wreck** impact

THE COMMUNITY AGAINST
preventable
INJURIES