I hate articles that start with a list. But when it comes to the impact of injuries on our province, a list of all the players committed to a safer Saskatchewan is a critical part of establishing context.

There are the “big” players, such as:
- Saskatchewan Workers’ Compensation Board;
- Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI);
- Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety;
- Worksafe Saskatchewan;
- Saskatchewan Safety Council; and
- Safe Saskatchewan.

Like an iceberg, however, there is a mass of support that we often don’t see.

Agricultural injury prevention includes the:
- Agricultural Health and Safety Network;
- Canadian Agricultural Safety Association;
- Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute;
- Saskatchewan Association of Agricultural Societies and Exhibitions; and
- Saskatchewan Abilities Council—Farmers with Disabilities Program.

Due to their community-led injury prevention, Prince Albert and area, Assiniboia and Humboldt and area received Safe Community designations. Other collaborative efforts in Saskatchewan include the Acquired Brain Injury Partnership Project, the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute, the Saskatoon Falls Prevention Consortium, Students Against Drinking and Driving (SADD), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and the P.A.R.T.Y. Program (Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth).

Safety organizations are targeting workforce health and safety in construction, the service and hospitality industry, the health sector, manufacturing, motor safety, heavy construction and the upstream oil and gas industry, to name a few.

Let’s not forget national organizations like St. John Ambulance, the Lifesaving Society, the Canadian Red Cross, the First Nations and Inuit Health programs of Health Canada and the Community Against Preventable Injuries.

And who can forget the Canadian Safety Council’s “Elmer the Safety Elephant”?

There are also other players on the injury prevention team (my apologies for not being exhaustive). For example, in June 2015, the national charity, Parachute, released new data in The
The Conference Board of Canada provided valuable insights into forecasting the impact of injury prevention. The insights were based on further and continued investments in programs that we already know make a difference. The report concludes that by reducing injuries by an average of 10 per cent each year over 10 years, an average annual reduction of $3.6 billion in total economic costs from preventable injuries could be achieved. After 20 years, the report continues, the cost reduction climbs to annual savings of $4.4 billion every year. Boost those reductions to 25 per cent a year and annual savings would grow to $11 billion after 20 years.

THE INJURY ISSUE
According to the Parachute report, injuries are the leading cause of death for Canadians aged 1 to 44. Injuries affect as many, or more, people in Canada today than some of our deadliest diseases. Children and seniors are impacted the most: children die mainly from car crashes and are hospitalized mainly from falls, while seniors both die and are hospitalized mainly from falls.

As the report states, the simple fact is that almost all of these injuries and deaths could have been prevented. Most “accidents” are not accidents at all, but are predictable and preventable events.

While there remains little research evidence that links this data to productivity, innovation, and leadership, the connection seems clear. With a plethora of hospitalizations, disabilities, and deaths every year, Saskatchewan must be losing some measure of leadership talent. How much more productive could we be as a province if we weren’t losing the equivalent of over a $1 billion in direct and indirect costs annually?

Relatively modest investments in injury prevention can significantly reduce the impact on society. All of the organizations working to reduce injuries and increase awareness of the impact of injuries in Saskatchewan deserve a heartfelt “thank you.” But more needs to be done.

Behind the report’s evidence-based statistical approach are individual lives and families. It’s a cultural shift that, when combined with investments in injury prevention, will produce significant economic impact.

“Look after your pennies,” said my grandfather, “and the dollars will look after themselves.”

In Canada, preventable injuries result in 15,866 deaths a year; 231,596 people hospitalized; and nearly 3.5 million emergency room visits. The total economic cost is $26.8 billion.

Individual commitments culminate in social movements for change. One such change is the commitment that businesses and organizations have made to the Saskatchewan Health & Safety Leadership Charter. Initiated in 2010 by Safe Saskatchewan (an organization consisting of public, private, co-operative and non-profit sector investors), the charter now boasts over 430 signatories.

The charter’s purpose is to form the foundation for a cultural shift in the way Saskatchewan leaders view injuries and injury prevention. It advocates for continuous improvement of healthy and safe workplaces and communities. After signing the charter, leaders are invited to join the Leadership Learning Community and continue the discussion.

The Conference Board of Canada and the Saskatchewan Institute continue to be engaged in the dialogue and evidence-gathering that will support better decision-making on injury prevention. We know the impact of unintentional injuries in our province is high. The question we must all ask ourselves is: What am I doing about it?