

*For immediate release
May 19, 2009*

Premier to participate in wheelchair basketball game in recognition of spinal cord injury awareness month

On Wednesday, May 20, 2009 at 12:30 p.m., Premier Shawn Graham and his team will tip-off against members of A.L. Gullison All Courts in a three-on-three wheelchair basketball demonstration game at the Legislature in Fredericton. The All Courts recently captured silver medals in the Canadian Wheelchair Basketball League Championships in Halifax.

The event marks National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month which is being recognized throughout Canada during the month of May. This month was officially kicked off on May 7 on Parliament Hill when several MPs and Senators spent the day in a wheelchair.

"I'm honoured to lead our government team and to be a part of this great event for spinal cord injury awareness," Graham said. "Too many people in our province sustain spinal cord injuries every year. We will continue to do our part as a government to reduce spinal cord injuries and remove barriers for New Brunswickers with disabilities related to mobility in order to assure that they can be part of an integrated community."

For over 50 years, the Canadian Paraplegic Association (N.B.) Inc. has worked with New Brunswickers with spinal cord injuries and other physical disabilities to identify, reduce and remove barriers to community participation. We help individuals and families cope with disability, find accessible housing, apply to funding programs to modify their homes, obtain appropriate equipment, explore education and employment options – we help people get the right services at the right time.

"The sudden reality of a spinal cord injury or the onset of any physical disability can be frightening and overwhelming. Our Community Rehabilitation Counsellors are on the road throughout the province working with our clients to ensure access to the right supports and services," said Courtney Keenan, CPA (N.B.) Inc. Board President. "This demonstration game is a way for government leaders to experience life in a wheelchair and create awareness of spinal cord injury. Our wheelchair basketball athletes are prime examples of the fact that abilities matter."

Spinal cord injury facts

- Each year, between 20 and 30 New Brunswickers incur a spinal cord injury (SCI).
- The most common cause of SCI in Canada is motor vehicles collisions. The second highest cause of injury is falls, including industrial accidents. Other causes include medical conditions, diving and sports injuries.

- Over 82,300 New Brunswickers over the age of 15 have a disability related to mobility – 11 per cent of the population!
- Over 34,500 New Brunswickers over the age of 65 have a disability related to mobility.

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