



HEAD OFFICE
1382 Weber Street East - Unit 1, Kitchener, ON N2A 1C4
p: 519 741 5845 | f: 1 - 519 741 8731

September 07, 2023

Mayor and Council – City of Guelph

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Council Members,

As a member of the Steering Committee of the GW OHT, I read with interest the final report, being tabled by Collective Results; A Review and Gap Analysis of Housing, Mental Health & Substance Use Services for People Experiencing Homelessness in Guelph. The report is thorough and comprehensive but has one glaring omission - the absence of any reference to brain injury. When brain injury is raised as a significant issue for this population, the most common response is yes, people who are homeless have a myriad of other issues and concurrent disorders, not just brain injury so why focus on brain injury. This is true, but there are studies indicating **that over 65% of people who are experiencing homelessness have a brain injury.**

We are the sole provider of brain injury services in Guelph/Wellington, and we run a program in the City of Guelph called ABI in the Streets, where we not only provide ABI specialized supports to folks experiencing homelessness but complete a remarkably simple ABI screener called the HELPS Screening tool. <https://abitoolkit.ca/assets/images/HELPS-tool.pdf> We have run blitzes with this tool at the shelters, the Community Health Center, in the encampments and many other places over the past 24 months, and consistently our data shows that 65-70% of the people we screen, come up positive for a potential brain injury. In antidotal conversations with outreach staff and others, they clearly state that they think at least 70% of the clients they work with have a brain injury, if not more.

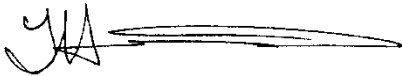
The symptoms of brain injury require a specialized approach, so not only do our staff provide that, but we have been offering training and support to many other organizations and front-line staff in the City



of Guelph. The clients who screen positive for a suspected brain injury are easily able to access our low barrier program and our front-line workers. Below I have included some links of the studies I am referring to around this issue.

Traverse Independence would be more than happy to offer more information on this pressing issue and offer support with the challenging and urgent issue related to homelessness in the City of Guelph as we believe brain injury is impacting the outcomes that the City of Guelph is trying to achieve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'TH', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Toby Harris
CEO, Traverse Independence

https://abinetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Toronto-ABI-Network_OHT-Guide_Final_Sept_2021.pdf

<http://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/26-traumatic-brain-injury-homeless-population-toronto-study>, <http://globalnews.ca/news/6245863/homeless-traumatic-brain-injury/>

<https://www.cp24.com/news/brain-injury-endemic-among-homeless-populations-vancouver-research-1.5769428>

cc: Stephen Gross - Board Chairperson, Traverse Independence

www.traverseindependence.ca

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