

# 2024 - 2025 Annual Report



Traverse the Distance to Independence |



## Traverse Independence: A Legacy of Empowerment and Community

Founded in 1975 as Participation House, Traverse Independence began as an initiative by a group of determined parents who envisioned a future of autonomy and dignity for their adult children with physical disabilities. Partnering with the Ontario Federation of Cerebral Palsy (OFCP) and the Ministry of Health, they pioneered supportive housing in the Waterloo Region - creating not just homes, but hope.

Incorporated in 1977, Participation House Project Waterloo Region took shape under the guidance of its first Board of Directors - many of whom were the very parents who sparked the vision. Their tenacity led to the creation of the Highpoint Building, one of Ontario's first supportive housing buildings. This foundational project set the tone for a new standard in independent living. As the success of Highpoint inspired growth, new sites like Union Lane and the ABI group home on Tagge Street followed. The organization expanded its mission to support not only individuals with physical disabilities but also survivors of acquired brain injuries—reflecting a broader, more inclusive commitment to community care.

In 2010, Participation House rebranded as Traverse Independence, signaling a renewed focus on growth, change, and the spirit of movement forward. During staff engagement sessions **spring became the metaphor for renewal and green was chosen as a symbol of vitality and hope**. A walking trail by a river became the visual embodiment of the journey our clients take - toward independence, purpose, and community.

Today, Traverse Independence operates eight facilities across the Region of Waterloo and the County of Wellington. Our services continue to grow, evolve, and meet the complex needs of those living with physical disabilities and acquired brain injuries. Some of the original staff and clients remain with us today - a living testament to our enduring values. Traverse Independence remains rooted in the belief that everyone deserves to live life on their own terms - with dignity and with independence.



Nature Walk  
with clients  
and staff



As we reflect on the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we do so with immense pride and a deep sense of accomplishment. Despite a year marked by significant challenges—including systemic issues affecting our partners, increasing complexity and hardship for our clients, and constrained resources—we remained steadfast in our mission. Our commitment to excellence across all programs and services has never wavered.

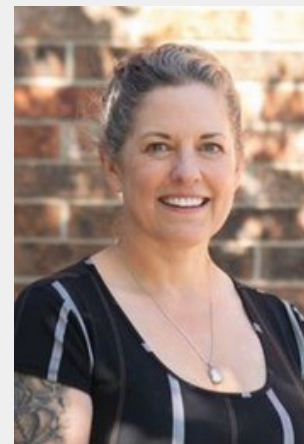
This year was particularly meaningful as we celebrated our **50th anniversary**—a historic milestone that not only honors our legacy but also renews our dedication to improving the lives of those we serve. This golden anniversary offered a moment of reflection, pride, and a reaffirmation of our purpose.

Our mission is to assist adults with acquired brain injuries and physical disabilities to traverse the distance to their individual definition of independence. A key focus of our advocacy continues to be the recognition of **brain injury as a critical component within the mental health and addictions system**. We know that a significant portion of the population is impacted by all three, mental health, addictions and brain injury and we are committed to ensuring that their needs are met through integrated and informed care.

Throughout the year, we have demonstrated unwavering dedication to **partnership, collaboration, and system integration**. We believe in the transformative power of a unified health and housing system—one that is nimble, responsive, equitable, and accessible. Our work is grounded in the belief that real change is possible when we harness the collective strength of our partners, clients, and families.

As we look ahead, we remain inspired by the resilience of our community, the loyalty and dedication of our employees, and the determination of our clients to be independent. With this inspiration, we are energized and will continue to seek opportunities to innovate and lead. Together, we will continue to build a future where every individual we support can thrive and be as independent as possible.

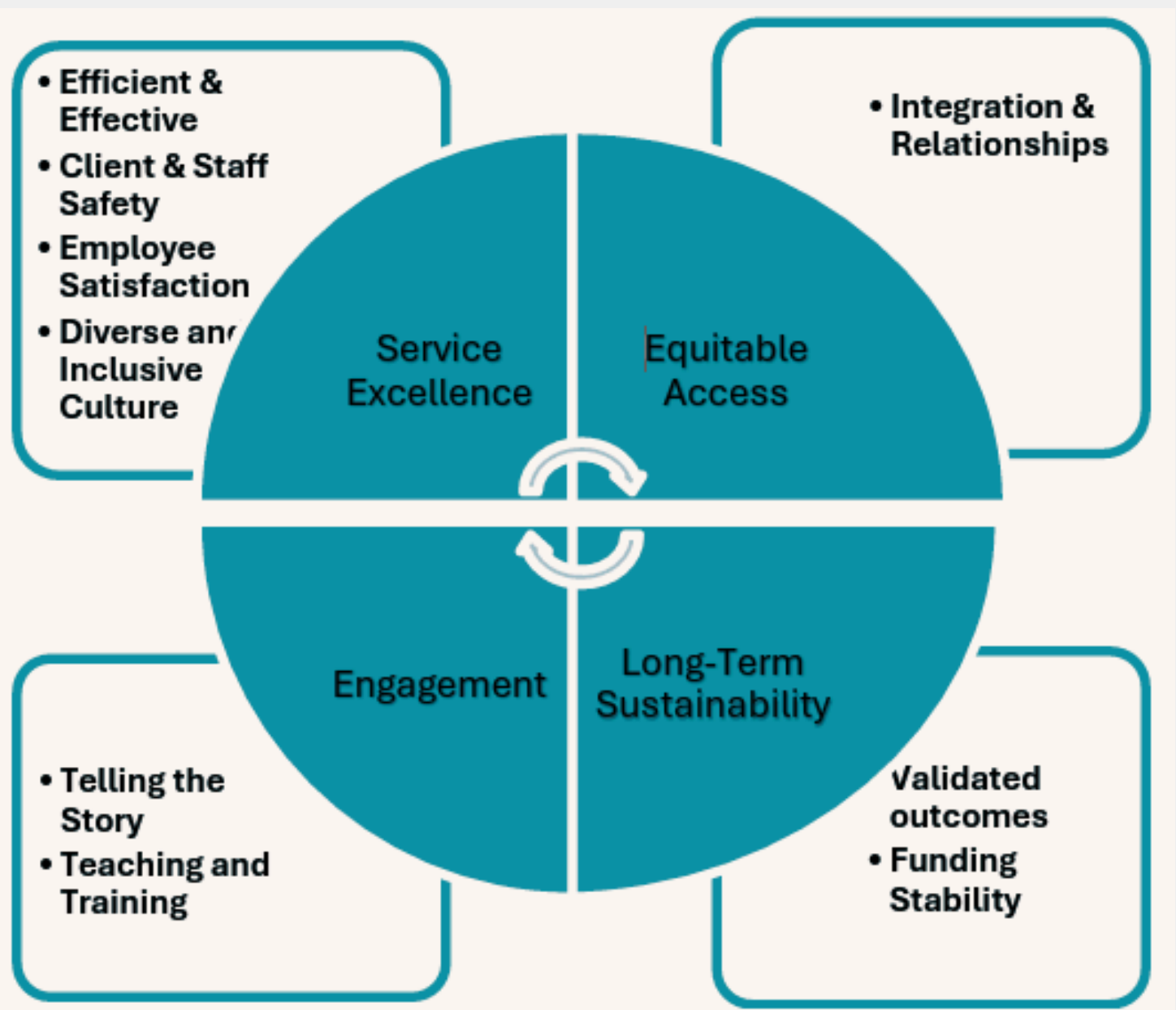
**Adrienne Farrell**  
*Chair Person*



**Toby Harris**  
*Chief Executive Officer*



Strategic Plan Pillars



- 01 Service Excellence
- 02 Engagement
- 03 Equitable Access
- 04 Long-Term Sustainability



# Our Programs and Services



Bowman Street  
Affordable  
Housing

## **ABI Residential Services**

Union Lane, Kitchener  
Strasburg Road, Kitchener  
ABI Group Home

## **Affordable Housing**

Bowman Street, Waterloo

## **Community Services**

ABI Day Program  
ABI Mainstream Outreach & ABI in the Streets  
ABI Intensive Case Coordination and System Navigation  
ABI Goal Attainment Program (GAP)  
Care to Share Support Groups for Caregivers

## **ABI Transitional Living Services**

Stanley Avenue, Kitchener  
Fergusson Place, Fergus



Tagge Street  
Group  
Home



# Management and Governance



## Senior Team

Toby Harris  
*Chief Executive Officer (CEO)*

Aaron Willmott  
*Director Client Services*

Alyssa Nelson  
*Manager of Human Resources*

## Program Managers

Jim Izzard  
*Transitional Living*

Sabrina Jesso  
*Residential Services*

Karen Liphard  
*Community Services*



## Program Service Coordinators

Brandi Easton  
Alicia Elvins  
Jaime Harper  
Ashley Kosmowski  
James Rolls  
Lesley Adams  
Brittany Stroeder  
Kira Valentine  
Lizzie Henderson

Daniel Holisek  
*Intensive Case Coordinator  
& System Navigator*

Ashley Chessell  
*Intake Coordinator*



## Finance and Human Resources

Brenden Bellai  
*CPA, CA*  
*RLB Chartered Professional Accountants*

Sandy Burtch  
*Human Resources Coordinator*

Chris Levac  
*Human Resources Department - Coordinator*



## Board of Directors

Adrienne Farrell  
*Chairperson*

Margaret Penner  
*Vice Chairperson*

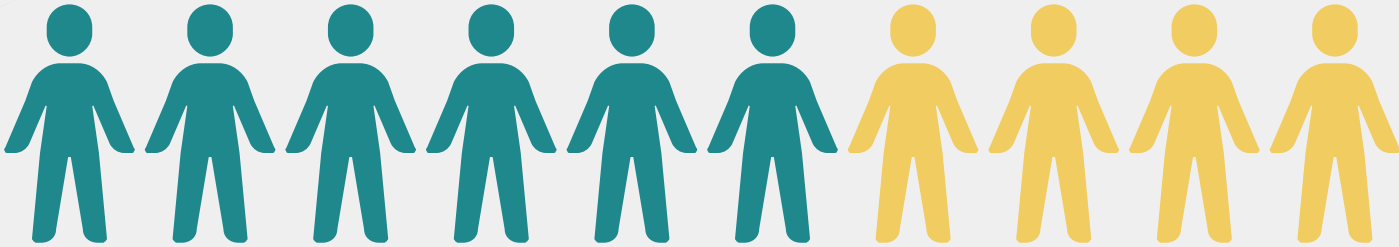
Mike Simpson  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

Margaret Penner  
Cassy Keilbar  
Lynn Rubinstein  
Vic Maciulis  
*Directors*

Welcoming new board members:  
Alykhan Esmail  
Kristina Coi

We would like to thank our outgoing board member Lynn Rubinstein for invaluable contributions to Traverse Independence over the past year.





Human Resources

9.63 %

Turnover Rate - 24/25 - reduced by 1.2%

Average Vacant Attendant Shifts

3.85%

Goal was to keep under 11%

Employees

53

New Hires in 24/25 - same as prior year



# People Served

945 clients - 43% over target

# Brain Injury Training

311 professionals - 36% over target

# Service Delivered

5,400 days - 10% over target

95,895 hrs.



Outreach 22,400 hrs.  
59% over target





# Staff Years of Recognition

## 25 Years

Jo-Ann Martin - Scheduling Specialist  
Pauline Fedy - Life Skills Facilitator at The OC

## 15 Years

Brenda LeBlanc - Scheduling Specialist  
Tammy Stewart - Community Facilitator (Wellington Outreach)  
Alicia Elvins - Service Coordinator - (Waterloo Outreach)



## 10 Years

Rebecca Riek - Attendant Care at UL  
Lisa O'Brien - Attendant Care at FG  
Jacinta Oluoch - Attendant Care at UL  
Ashley Lyons - Attendant Care at SR  
Nathan Dickinson - Attendant Care at ST

## 5 Years

Sabrina Jesso - Program Manager - Residential Services  
Amanda Polsterer - Attendant Care at FG  
Alyssa Nelson - Human Resources Manage

# Food Security

In partnership with the FoodBank  
of Waterloo Region

Meals Served in 24/25

9,449

Hampers Provided

448

Individuals Assisted

277







# Client Spotlight - A Journey to Wellness

Graham Currie has been a dedicated participant at our drop-in centre and day program since its inception over 23 years ago. Over the past year, Graham faced a significant health challenge—severe arthritis in his hip that caused him immense pain. Determined to improve his quality of life, Graham made the courageous decision to embark on a wellness journey, aiming to reduce his pain and potentially qualify for hip replacement surgery—or even delay the need for it altogether.

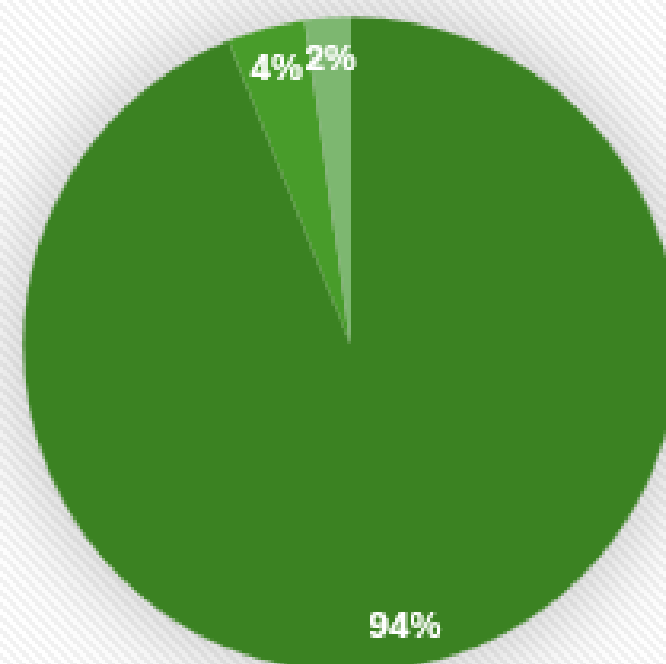
“My exercise routine has changed considerably since I learned of my arthritis in my hip back in October,” Graham shares. He now attends aquafit classes at the local pool at least three times a week, has engaged in strength-based training with a physiotherapist, and continues to work with a personal trainer biweekly.

Graham has also made remarkable strides in his nutrition. Drawing on guidance from a dietitian, he has embraced healthy eating habits. “I’ve learned a lot about nutrition,” he says with pride.

Thanks to his dedication and perseverance, Graham has experienced a significant reduction in chronic pain and enjoys increased energy. His story is a powerful reminder that with determination and support, meaningful change is possible. Graham is a true role model for others living with brain injury—showing that when you set your mind to something, you can achieve it.

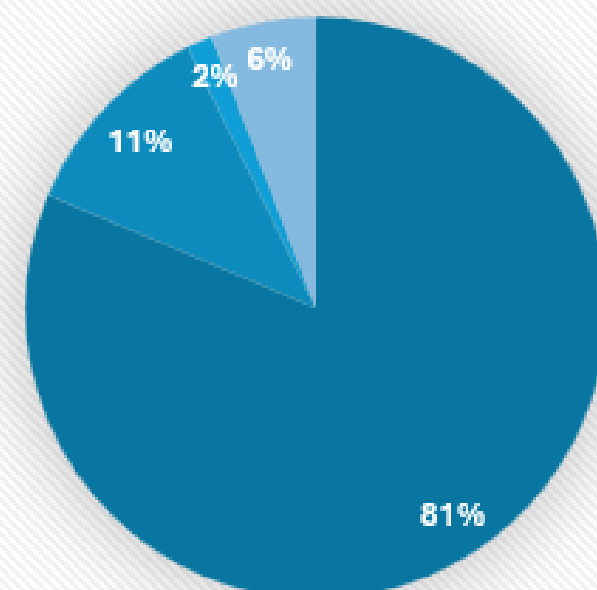


## Where Support Comes From - Total Operating Revenue \$7,978,868



■ Ontario Health ■ Private Funds ■ Donations

## Total Expenditures - Funds are Spent Here - Net Surplus \$58,243

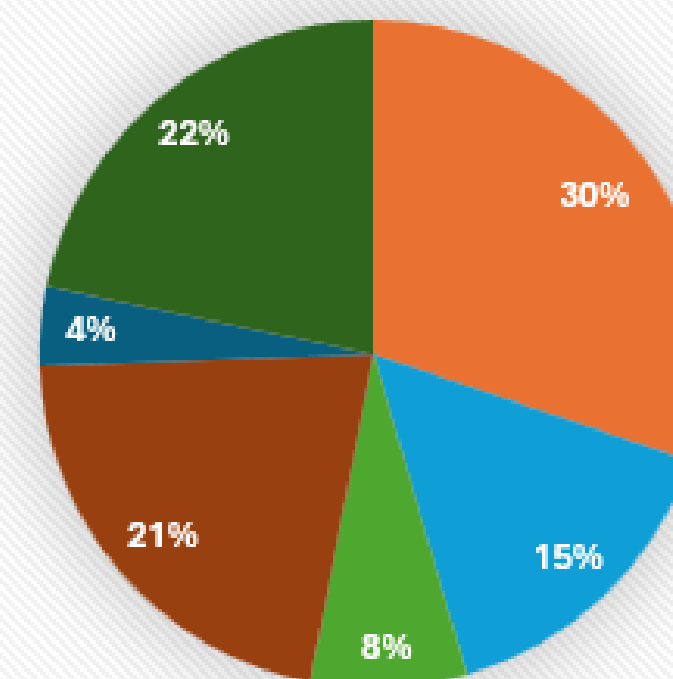


■ Wages/Benefits ■ Supplies/Sundry ■ Equipment ■ Building/Grounds ■ Amortization

## Audited Statements

Full audited financial statements and the 2024/25 Annual Operating Budget are available on our website at [www.traverseindependence.ca](http://www.traverseindependence.ca)

## Total Expenditures - Split by Programs



■ Supportive Housing ■ Group Home ■ ABI Day Program  
■ ABI Transitional Housing ■ Specialized Services ■ ABI Outreach





519-741-5845



[www.traverseindependence.ca](http://www.traverseindependence.ca)



1-1382 Weber Street East Kitchener, ON N2A 1C4

Charity Registration # 107820524RR 001

