

March 5, 2024

Re: The National Strategy on Brain Injuries Act

Dear Mayor Krog and Nanaimo City Council,

Acquired Brain Injury (ABI), both traumatic and non-traumatic, profoundly impacts the cognition, personality, and overall well-being of British Columbians. With over 1.5 million Canadians grappling with this condition, including more than 180,000 individuals in British Columbia alone, brain injuries often catalyze mental health challenges, substance abuse, homelessness, incarceration, violence, and suicide. A staggering sixty people in British Columbia will acquire a brain injury today.

In Canada, the annual incidence of acquired brain injury (ABI) is forty-four times more common than spinal cord injuries, thirty times more common than breast cancer, and 400 times more common than HIV/AIDS. The incidence and prevalence of brain injury surpasses that of HIV/AIDS, spinal cord injury, breast cancer, and multiple sclerosis combined.

Despite meeting healthcare criteria, the current state of brain injury services and supports across the country is characterized by fragmentation, isolation, and chronic underfunding. The existing framework for post-acute acquired brain injury support either lacks existence or presents formidable barriers to essential wrap-around assistance. Implementing an early intervention system holds the promise of preserving support networks, reducing overdose fatalities, mitigating mental health issues, and enabling governments to reallocate resources.

The critical need for a comprehensive national strategy to include brain injury awareness, prevention, treatment, and the holistic recovery of Canadians struggling with brain injuries is paramount to addressing this pressing national crisis.

In June 2022, Member of Parliament Alistair MacGregor introduced Private Members' Bill C-277, calling for the establishment of a national strategy for brain injury. A national strategy for brain injury would mean greater unification and commitments to building supports for people with brain injury and their families/caregivers.

Like other communities across Canada who have been hit hard by the toxic drug crisis, we must do more to reduce the number of deaths and incidents of brain injury caused by the unregulated drug supply. On November 1, 2023, the Chief Coroner of British Columbia released the report: [An Urgent Response to a Continuing Crisis](#). The report states more than 13,000 (200 per month / 6 per day) British Columbians have died since a public health emergency was first declared on April 14, 2016 in response to drug-related emergencies and deaths. From that date through to September 30, 2023, more than thirteen thousand preventable deaths occurred.

Dr. Elizabeth Plant, BA MD CCFP (AM), DISAM, B.C. addiction specialist
presented: [Context of the Opioid Crisis: Hypoxic/Anoxic Brain Injury & the Cumulative Impact of Nonfatal Overdose](#). Dr. Plant states there are an estimated 20-30 non-fatal overdoses to every one death.

In considering the Chief Coroner's report and applying Dr. Plant's knowledge, this means that in British Columbia, there are now, to date, approximately 260,000 – 390,000 individuals who have survived drug poisoning. Furthermore, Dr. Plant states: *Any overdose which causes a loss of consciousness is, by definition, a hypoxic event (brain injury); a non-fatal overdose is a risk for repeat or fatal overdose.*

A National Strategy on Brain Injury would focus the Minister of Health, in consultation with representatives of the provincial governments responsible for health, Indigenous groups, and relevant stakeholders (including individuals and families living with the effects of brain injury), to develop a national strategy to support and improve brain injury awareness, prevention, and treatment as well as the rehabilitation and recovery of persons living with a brain injury.

Request:

That Council endorse the content of, and support, the federal private member's Bill C-277 – National Strategy on Brain Injuries Act.

That Council requests the mayor to write to other municipalities in BC urging them to endorse the content of, and support, the federal private member's Bill C-277 – National Strategy on Brain Injuries Act, and express that support to their local Members of Parliament, provincial MLAs, and municipal council members.

That Council request the mayor to write to MP Alistair MacGregor, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, federal Minister of Health Mark Holland, and Nanaimo MP Lisa Marie Baron, noting the City of Nanaimo's support for Bill C-277 – National Strategy on Brain Injuries Act.

Respectfully submitted,



Kix Citton
Executive Director
Nanaimo Brain Injury Society.

Attachment A: Bill C-277 – An Act to Establish a National Strategy on Brain Injuries