



John Gordon Home
London Regional AIDS Hospice



January 20, 2015

AIDS Organizations Amalgamate to Strengthen Services

Two major organizations in the HIV/AIDS sector have officially agreed to amalgamate. London-based John Gordon Home and Regional HIV/AIDS Connection will merge their Boards, administrative operations, staff, programs and services under one entity beginning April 1st of this year.

Both Boards and members have voted to proceed with the amalgamation in a move to strengthen services while integrating operations. Each will continue to reside at their present locations; there will be no staff reductions; and current RHAC Executive Director, Brian Lester will head the new organization, supported by John Gordon Home E.D., Bruce Rankin who will join RHAC's leadership team as a Director.

RHAC, formerly the AIDS Committee of London, marks its 30th anniversary this year and the John Gordon Home is nearing its 25th year of providing respite, transitional and palliative health care.

According to Lester, "we are aware of the need to be collaborative and efficient in the changing landscape of healthcare...combined we have over 50 years of knowledge, experience and compassion for people living with or at risk for illnesses associated with HIV. This amalgamation positions us well for both the challenges and opportunities in our future".

Stigma and misinformation are major challenges for the HIV/AIDS sector. Lester cites the following examples:

- HIV is still an epidemic and touches people of all ages and diverse backgrounds

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- Thirty percent of people with HIV in Ontario do not know they have it – making testing and education significant priorities
- Due to advancements in medical treatment, people with HIV can now live long lives; but many individuals living with HIV are currently living in poverty and not getting adequate nutrition and other basic needs
- Individuals living with HIV are often silent for fear they will be marginalized by others who make judgements or assumptions about them - thereby perpetuating the issue of stigma

Executive Director of the John Gordon Home, Bruce Rankin notes “the Home is named after John Gordon, one of the first people in the region with enough courage to speak publicly about the fact he had AIDS”. Rankin says “Our organizations should not be competing for scarce resources, volunteers and fund-raising activities”.

Despite the challenges in the sector – both Lester and Rankin are quick to point out London is the centre for scientific and applied research into HIV/AIDS and they are surrounded by other health partners and community agencies committed to HIV/AIDS health care and social services.

“Hope for a cure is real, and joining forces makes us better, stronger, and more powerful along the path to get there”.

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