

25 YEARS SERVING THE COMMUNITY



ACOL
ANNUAL
REPORT
2009-10



Message from the President

In 2006 I attended, as a Board Member, the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto and was overwhelmed by the sheer immensity of the event. There were the politics, the cultural perspectives, the resources and presentations, and the commitment by researchers and governments (albeit not our own) to continue in the fight amid limited resources and unstable funding. This summer, the 18th International AIDS Conference occurred in Vienna and, while I did not attend, some observations hit home once again:

HIV/AIDS, for a brief period, was in the news again. Sections of national newspapers were covering the conference, highlighting the struggle, the lack of funding, and the politics. It is now four years later, with the Mexico Conference sandwiched in between, and yet little seems to have changed.

Criminalization of HIV was in the news this past year and there appears to have been little progress in this area as well. As we struggle with the wording of position statements and policies, individuals are driven to hide their HIV status for fear of legal repercussions.

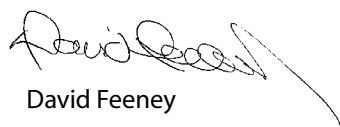
In 2006, the government of Canada was strangely quiet during the International AIDS Conference. Now, in 2010, funding for HIV/AIDS organizations such as the AIDS Committee of London has an uncertain future as a review begins of the AIDS Bureau funding formula.

We are embarking on our 26th year of service at the AIDS Committee of London (ACOL). We are embarking on re-branding our organization as it strives to represent the various communities we now serve. We are, in fact, embarking on an uncertain future. Of course this is no different than it has ever been. As the media saturation of the 18th International Conference fades and the national newspapers move on to other topics, it is our responsibility to continue to keep the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS in the public consciousness. ACOL has been doing this for 25 years and will continue to do this, despite funding or broader public interest, for another 25 years if necessary.

The Vienna conference took as its theme, "Rights Here, Right Now." One of the documents coming out of the conference is the Vienna Declaration, which states that "drug policy should be based on science, not ideology." Even in the 21st century ideology and science, human rights and the religious right, continue to clash. This is the reality within the AIDS movement today.

I am proud to serve on the Board of Directors in an organization that has always strived to be ahead of the curve and not afraid to tackle any and all of the above issues. I am proud to be on the Board of Directions in this, our 25th anniversary year. I am proud of where we have been, where we are now and where we are going. You should be proud as well to support this organization in the work it does.

I want to thank the Board of Directors, Brian Lester, the staff and volunteers at ACOL, and you for another fine year.



David Feeney



Message from the Executive Director

As you may be aware, 2010 marks 25 years of social justice work by the AIDS Committee of London. Perhaps obvious, but I think important to state - the work we do is not easy! The myriad issues and competing demands within our sector command creativity, resiliency and fortitude from those who continue to offer their best in this important work. I am so fortunate and humbled to work with such a talented team of passionate staff, volunteers and Board of Directors. I feel it's a gift that I work at ACOL as you inspire, educate and entertain me while we strive to serve our mission.

This past year we have accomplished much in support of our mission. Some of the key highlights include: ACOL's participation in the launch of a province wide Women's HIV/AIDS Community Development initiative. Additionally, we introduced a joint Education and Support program to address Hepatitis C (HCV) and related issues. This program provides information and support to individuals living with HCV while educating stakeholders and other community organizations. In the winter of this year we offered our first PHA peer to peer support program entitled "Full Circle." The intent of the program is to increase our capacity to connect with and support PHAs across our expanded catchment area. ACOL's proud involvement with two local community based research initiatives will help us understand barriers to accessing health care for Gay, Bi and MSM while the second research project will inform us of similar information related to members of the African/Caribbean/Black community. The findings will help inform our prevention, support and advocacy strategies as we move forward.

Also noteworthy, the Board of Directors voted to adopt the UNAIDS position statement on the criminalization of HIV for non-disclosure. This complex, evolving and sensitive issue presents many challenges to the HIV/AIDS movement and I commend the Board for giving this priority attention. Our Strategic Plan was completed with extensive community consultation, resulting in a 3-year road map guiding the work of the agency. It seems synchronistic that at this 25-year mark we will unveil a new name supported by a new vision, revised mission and guiding principles. Please join us for the unveiling at our 25th anniversary commemorative fundraiser on Saturday, November 27, 2010.

Over the past 25 years ACOL has been on the front lines and around key planning tables to ensure voice is given to the issues important to those we serve. Unfortunately, the battle against HIV/AIDS has not been won. While new treatments extend life and offer hope, it is still important to acknowledge there is no cure. People still die from AIDS or complications of HIV treatments while stigma continues to impact access to testing, support and treatment.

As we move beyond our 25th milestone I would like to re-affirm to those living with, at risk for or affected by HIV that ACOL will continue its promise of providing quality, support, prevention, education and community awareness to the many issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Thank you for your continued support!



Brian Lester

Brian Lester

Support Services



Over the past 10 years ACOL's Support Services department has seen a demographic shift in populations served to include increased numbers of women and new Canadians. The shift speaks well of our strengthened relationships with community partners such as John Gordon Home and Infectious Diseases Care Program at St. Joseph's Health Care Centre who are referring HIV+ individuals to us. It also points strongly to the early success of our regional expansion work, and overall commitment to outreach and provision of services to very diverse and often marginalized populations.

ACOL SUPPORT SERVICES STATISTICS FOR 2009-10

"When I was first diagnosed I thought life was a death sentence. Now, I think life is what you make it."

Diane

- **250 clients** served.
- **Women** now comprise **41%** of our **client base** – up from 28% in 2001.
- Increase in new Canadian clients seeking services.
- **80% of clients** living **below the poverty line**.
- **3 monthly** social Support groups for PHAs – PHA Café, Women's Group and Sarnia drop-in.
- **Increase** in number of clients presenting with **complex needs** such as co-infections or multiple health complications, poverty, substance use, mental health, etc.
- **6 client deaths** in 2009-10. Not since the late 90's have we seen numbers that high.
- **Increase** in requests for transportation costs for PHAs to get to appointments related to HIV status **due to expanded service delivery** in **six counties**.
- **8 participants** in Full Circle Peer Support training program. Incorporating elements of the GIPA principle (Greater Involvement of People with AIDS), harm reduction principles and POZ Prevention, the program seeks to **create a regional peer support** network for people newly diagnosed or new to the area.
- **Implemented Wellness Assistance Fund (WAF)** to take the place of Emergency Financial Assistance Program to respond to an increase in requests to help pay for medications and other health and wellness related items.

ACOL's professional reputation as provincial leaders in HIV care, support and prevention education continues.

We currently have two major community-based research projects in progress - BLACCH and HiMMM – funded through the Ontario HIV/AIDS Treatment Network and Canadian Institutes of

- Community partnerships continued to flourish, particularly with the HBT (Homophobia, Biphobia, Transphobia) Working Group, the Southwestern Ontario LGBT Health Initiative, London Police Services, London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, Central Spa, and Youth Action Centre.

- Over **177 outreach events** were successfully completed at Central Spa, LAVISH, Club 7/Brennan's Bistro, Buck Wild's, Cross Cultural Learner Centre, Limberlost Community Centre, Families First run by the South London Community Centre,

EDUCATIONAL Milestones FOR FISCAL 2009-2010



International Day Against Homophobia, May 17, 2009.



Desmond Tutu and Kevin Murphy, May 22, 2009.

Health Research respectively. Both were presented at local, provincial and international forums during 2009-10. Our contributions to the GMSH (Gay Men's Sexual Health) strategy are multifunctional and include presence on all working groups, in research projects and in presentations at conferences. In early 2010, the AIDS Bureau provided funding to build an initiative that supports women and HIV in Ontario. Our multicultural work continues to grow in diversity from its close relationship with ACCHO (African, Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario) and the CCLC (Cross Cultural Learner Centre) immigrant and newcomer populations.

Final shifts and observations from Education:

- Approximately, **4,500** local youth received HIV/AIDS education through funding provided by The Ontario Trillium Foundation.

- **Open Closet**, our weekly support group for queer identified youth, saw an average weekly attendance of 15-18.
- POZ prevention and GIPA continue to drive our principles for HIV prevention and education among People Living with HIV/AIDS (PHAs).
- **The HIV stigma (.com)** campaign was successful in generating genuine dialogue about HIV stigma at the 2009 GMSH annual summit, during bar outreach, on billboards, during online discussion, on the new Web site www.theshag.ca and in many lengthy outreach discussions at Central Spa.
- Approximately **25 different learning institutions** received over 100 ACOL HIV educational presentations and workshops.

- and North East St. Lawrence Church.
- In 2009-2010, our educators distributed almost **16,000 brochures**, pamphlets, resources, and inserts matched by **20,500 condoms** in another sweeping attempt to reduce risks and empower the public with information.

Harm Reduction

In 2009-10, distribution of IDU equipment continued to rise as old clients returned to ACOL following a dip in client numbers after the agency relocated during the summer of 2008. Our partnership with the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) continued to be integral to the needle exchange program with MLHU providing

On any given day no matter what is on their plates, there is always someone willing to take the time to make sure I'm safe."

Counterpoint Client

all funds necessary to deliver the program in adherence to Ontario's Needle Exchange Programs: Best Practices Recommendations. Our ongoing involvement in London CArES continued to provide opportunities to meaningfully engage peers, as well as take an active role in building a community continuum of care and support for our target population. The Hepatitis C Educator / Support Worker Initiative which started in 2008-09 was renewed through 2011, allowing ACOL to continue providing enhanced services to persons living with, affected by or at risk of contracting HCV.

COUNTERPOINT SERVICES IN 2009-10

- **250** clients served *per week*.
- 1,232,593 needles distributed through Counterpoint in 2009-10, **up 21%** from 2008-09.
- approximately **65% needle recovery rate** for Counterpoint program.
- **7,030 syringes** safely disposed of by the Peer Syringe Recovery Program out of London's downtown core neighbourhoods, demonstrating the **peers' commitment** to making a difference in the community.
- **225 clients** received immediate, practical information, materials, referrals and support through the **Hepatitis C initiative**.
- **100 Counterpoint clients** enthusiastically participated in an onsite survey for Dr. Strike of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. **Findings were published** in an article entitled *HIV prevention intervention targets – injection initiation and modeling behavior*.

Peer Syringe Recovery



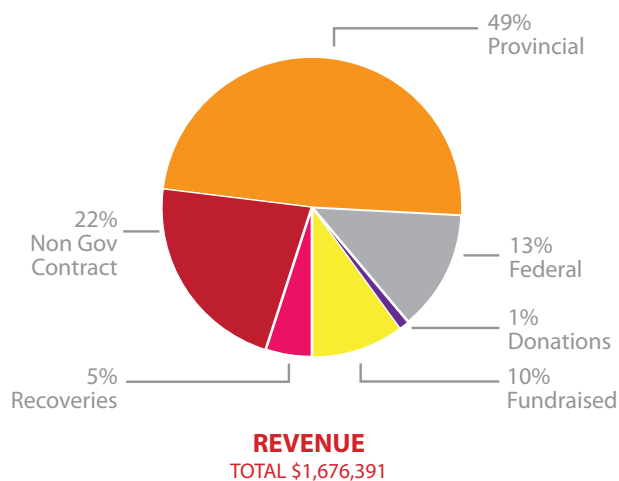
Mobile Outreach



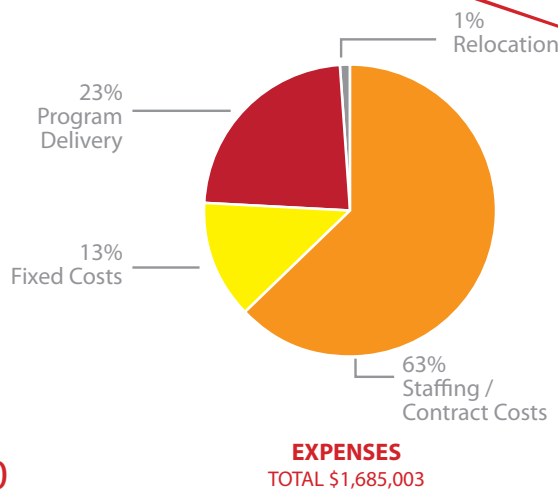
On-site Needle Exchange



Financials



2009 - 2010



The year ending March 31, 2010 presented many challenges and opportunities financially as well as in every other facet of service delivery for ACOL.

Closing the previous year in a deficit position due to the major commitment of moving the agency to our new home put a strain on our finances. As a result, the Board of Directors asked for a financial plan for 2009-10 that would put ACOL back on track financially.

Fiscal responsibility, well planned budgets and rebuilding a contingency fund contributed to the agency's favourable bottom line in 09/10. The directors' team has worked together to ensure that programs were effectively run within established budgets.

As mandated by the Board, ACOL is beginning to re-build a contingency fund that may only be accessed, with Board approval, should the agency experience unforeseen changes in funding or expenses. These funds are part of the agency's revenue earned through administering external programs combined with longer term and new rental partnerships.

While our current funding environment, both government and fundraising is less certain in these leaner times, ACOL will continue to work on building the contingency fund. We are proud of the fact that ACOL continues to be recognized as an agency able to deliver excellent client-centered programming in a financially responsible manner.

Our People

2009-10 Board of Directors

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David Feeney

VICE-PRESIDENT
Kimberley Graber

TREASURER
Brian Elliot

SECRETARY
Wendy MacQueen

Stephen Barr

Eugene Dufour

Terry Martin

Graham Pollett

Vicky Simanovski

Sean Waite

Current AIDS Committee of London Staff Members

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Brian Lester

OFFICE MANAGER
Elizabeth Lam

RECEPTION/ADMINISTRATION
Deanna Holden

HUMAN RESOURCES SPECIALIST
Danny Catunto

DIRECTOR OF SUPPORT SERVICES
Shannon Dougherty

CASE MANAGER
Miriam Rivera

CASE MANAGER
Richard MacDonagh

PHA PEER SUPPORT/ADVOCACY
Rob Newman

DIRECTOR OF HARM REDUCTION SERVICES
Sheila Coad

HEPATITIS C EDUCATOR & SUPPORT WORKER
Sarah Wood

HARM REDUCTION/ HEPATITIS C PEER SUPPORT WORKER
Nicole Elliott

NEEDLE EXCHANGE COORDINATOR
Karen Burton

HIV IDU OUTREACH WORKER
Nick Scrivo

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
Daniel Pugh

MULTICULTURAL HIV PREVENTION COORDINATOR
Mercy Nleya

MSM HIV EDUCATOR
Paul Sutton

GAY MEN'S HIV PREVENTION WORKER
Kevin Murphy

WOMEN'S HIV/AIDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
Bonnie Baynham

DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS
Darlene Pratt

COORDINATOR OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES
Natalie Hébert

FUND DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR
Michelle McKay

HIV REGIONAL RESOURCE COORDINATOR
Jennifer Gritke

Communications and Partnerships

The Communications and Partnerships department continued to strengthen its regional expansion work, fundraising and volunteer programs, as well as public awareness initiatives. ACOL's fundraising portfolio included a direct mail campaign, events in both London and Stratford, development of a third-party fundraising kit for public use, more proposal writing, and extensive research to develop corporate sponsorship prospects. Volunteers continued to be the cornerstone of our program delivery with many successful training and public education nights, as well as volunteers helping in administration, information technology support, event management, harm reduction supplies, education, etc. Our regional service delivery took a leap forward with the hiring of ACOL's HIV Regional Resource Coordinator who



connected our organization to multiple service delivery agencies in the six counties of Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford. The department developed several eye-catching public awareness and education materials such as brochures targeted to our regional audiences as well as banner stands and a tradeshow display to help enhance ACOL's public visibility.

- A Taste For Life raised over **\$74,000** to support programs and services for people living with, affected by and at-risk for HIV/AIDS.
- HIV Regional Resource Coordinator oversaw the placement of monthly **HIV Lives Here** column in the Stratford Citizen with a circulation of 13,000 per issue. Articles included topics such as HIV basics, testing, World AIDS Day, and the value of volunteering, among others.
- Offered **3 anonymous HIV testing clinics in Stratford** in partnership with Options Clinic.
- Held first AIDS Vigil in Stratford supported by local volunteers.
- In partnership with **John Gordon Home** and **Camp Wendake**, the **Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life raised over \$41,000** to support the important work of the three organizations.
- **142 volunteers** participated across the agency to support ACOL's mission giving **8,078 hours** of their precious time.
- 132 individuals attended our orientation and information evenings offered every other month.
- Rejuvenated and enhanced ACOLade, the agency newsletter, and distributed 3 editions to over **3,000 people** both in hard copy and electronically.
- Sent out **3 electronic stakeholders' reports** to a distribution list comprising over **220 contacts** in London and region. The reports include content from community partners such as John Gordon Home, Infectious Diseases Care Program, Options Anonymous HIV Testing Clinic, and Middlesex London Health Unit.