

AIDS COMMITTEE OF LONDON

Annual General Report 2008-09



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Transitions and Strategizing for the Future

MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Surviving Transition and Creating a Strategy for the Future



Perhaps the quote by sixth century Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "Nothing endures but change" reflects the experiences of ACOL during the 2008/09 service delivery year. Change occurred on many fronts and created challenges and opportunities to address HIV/AIDS at local, regional and provincial levels. Over the past five years, through the leadership of Peter Hayes, ACOL has benefited from much growth and garnered considerable respect across the province. In part, this was accomplished by shifting the organization to an external focus. This led to ACOL's presence around many tables with the goal to influence programming and educate stakeholders about the relevance and importance of HIV/AIDS.

Last year around the time we had just relocated to our new home at 186 King Street, Peter identified the need to take an extended personal leave. Transition in leadership can bring about anxiety and fear and cause upheaval in the most stable of organizations. In response to this watershed moment we determined a viable strategy to mitigate the potential risk to the agency associated with such a shift. Our new reality revealed the importance of focusing on internal matters to ensure the organization maintained its financial and psychological health through, what could be perceived, as an uncertain transitional period.

In the fall of 2008, we examined our financial resources and made some difficult, but prudent decisions to ensure ACOL would achieve a favourable financial position at the end of March 2009. With careful consideration we embarked on minor restructuring and adjusted various expenditures.

2008-09 Board of Directors

David Feeney, President
Kimberley Graber, Vice President
Denis Campeau
Brenda Done

Brian Elliot
David Forestell
Wendy MacQueen
Terri Martin



Membership form

By submitting this form, I am indicating my desire to become a member of the AIDS Committee of London. Membership acknowledges I agree with and support ACOL's mission statement, philosophy and goals.

Membership fees are \$10 a year, but are waived for individuals living with HIV or anyone who has volunteered at least 20 hours with ACOL in the last six months. To be eligible to vote at ACOL's Annual General Meeting, we must receive this form at least 30 days before the date of the AGM.

Please check one of these boxes:

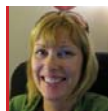
- Enclosed is my \$_____ donation, for which I will receive a tax receipt.
- I have given \$10 or more to ACOL in the last year. Please apply to my membership.
- I am an HIV+ individual. (Fee is waived)
- I have volunteered at least 20 hours with ACOL in the last 6 months. (Fee is waived)

Method of Payment:
 Cheque Visa Mastercard

Name _____ Card # _____
Address _____ Expiry _____
City/Postal _____ Signature _____
Phone _____

Please mail to: #30-186 King St., London, ON, N6A1C7 or E-mail info@aidslondon.com

Meet the 2009-2010 staff complement at the AIDS Committee of London. Together we will work hard to fulfill ACOL's mission!



Karen Burton
Needle Exchange Coordinator



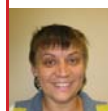
Sheila Coad
HCV Educator/Support Worker



Shannon Dougherty
Director of Support Services



Peter Hayes
Executive Director



Natalie Hébert
Coordinator of Volunteer Services



Amiel Houghton
Youth Education Coordinator



Elizabeth Lam
Office Manager



Brian Lester
Interim Executive Director



Richard MacDonagh
Case Manager



Paul McCarty-Johnston
MSM HIV Prevention Educator



Michelle McKay
Fund Development Coordinator



Kevin Murphy
Gay Men's HIV Prevention Worker



Rob Newman
PHA Peer Support/Advocacy



Mercy Nleya
Multicultural Outreach Worker



Dana Nosella
HIV Regional Resource Coordinator



Darlene Pratt
Director of Communications and Partnerships



Daniel Pugh
Interim Director of Education



Miriam Rivera
Case Manager



Nick Scrivo
IDU Outreach Worker



Sarah Wood
Harm Reduction/HCV Support

Then on December 1, the AIDS Bureau announced an unanticipated 2.8% increase in core funding and also increased financial resources for specific positions such as our IDU Outreach, Multicultural Outreach and Gay Men's HIV Prevention. This good news, along with two eleventh-hour, year-end funding announcements from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) contributed to a positive bottom line at year end for 2008-09.

Our Mission

The AIDS Committee of London brings people together in partnership to provide leadership in education, support and advocacy to meet the challenge of HIV/AIDS.

By respecting human dignity and diversity, the AIDS Committee of London creates an atmosphere of trust, which enables people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS to make informed choices.

Through this period we endured staff transition and said farewell to a number of individuals who contributed to the success of the agency. Later on, opportunities were created for new staff to join the ACOL family. With federal funding to support a Hepatitis C initiative and to support our regional expansion priorities, openings were created for employees in new roles within the organization. We strengthened our commitment to the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) and currently employ two skilled individuals who are living with HIV.

While it may be true that "nothing endures but change" it is also true that change brings new opportunities, inspires creative ideas, and if embraced, can certainly strengthen an organization's capacity to meet its mission.

As we enter our 25th year of service delivery I am confident that through the process of change ACOL has become very well positioned to effectively advance the work of our mission. Strategic planning will build a roadmap for the future and with the guidance of a dedicated Board, expertise of skilled staff and the dedication of talented volunteers ACOL will continue to be a respected leader in the social justice work of HIV/AIDS.

Brian Lester, IED

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR 2008-09

The Education team was busy keeping the greater London community, as well as our regional service delivery area, informed and updated about the changing face of HIV/AIDS. We have remained committed to providing the general public with important health awareness.

Accomplishments in '08-'09 include:

☛ April 2008, Amiel Houghton began as ACOL's Youth Education Coordinator working with Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) and Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) to establish a program that educates high school youth about HIV and AIDS. Initially, positioned in Communications and Partnerships, Amiel joined forces with Education in January 2009. To date, Amiel has reached almost 4,000 local and rural youth!

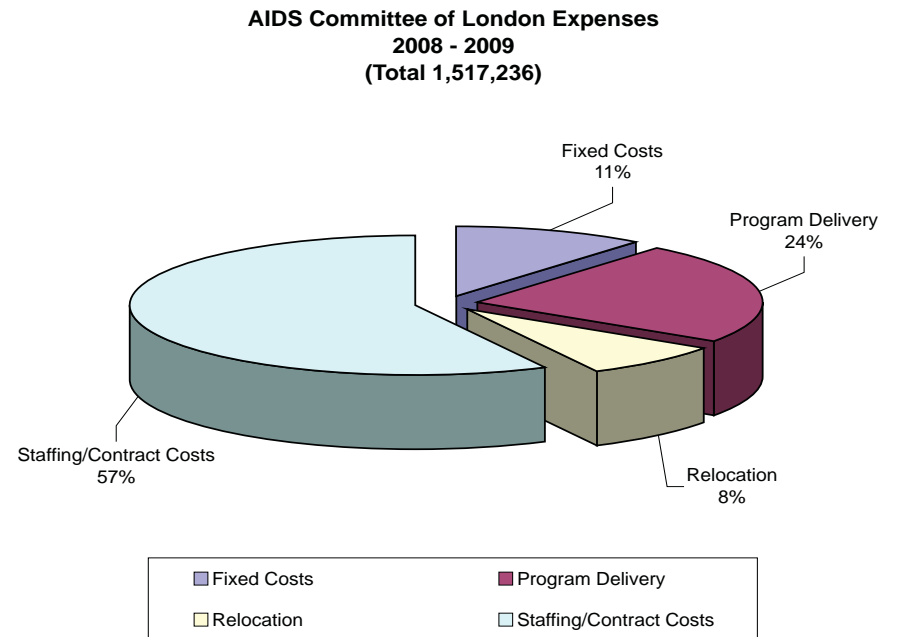
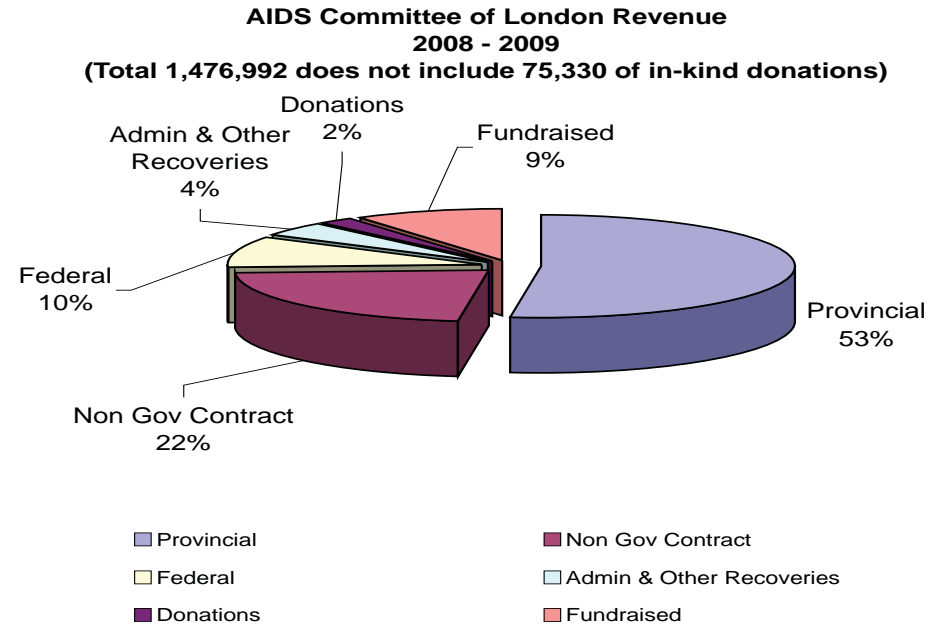


☛ In fall 2008, we were saddened by the departure of Multicultural Outreach Worker, Joel Morupisi, but we were glad to welcome Mercy Nleya into the position in February 2009. Since her arrival, Mercy has rejuvenated outreach services at London Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC), Limberlost Community Centre and community centres in the south and northeast ends of London.

☛ In the fall 2008, Paul McCarty-Johnston completed work on the SHEIR (Sexual Health Educator's Internet Resource) guide for the AIDS Bureau and Gay Men's Sexual Health Alliance (gmsa.ca.) Paul then presented at the Gay Men's summit in February. Our team was impacted by the departure of Mark Lucas as our MSM HIV Educator.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2008-09

These condensed financial statements are excerpted from the report of auditors Neal, Pallett and Townsend, Chartered Accountants. Complete audited financial statements are available upon request.



HiMM

**Health in Middlesex
Men Matters**

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD



It is hard to believe another year has passed and we are, once again, preparing for our Annual General Meeting (AGM.) I am writing this on the day after Southwestern Ontario was hit with severe weather and a number of tornados; one of which caused significant damage in the Toronto area. In the early 80s, AIDS metaphorically created a path of destruction within the gay community, gaining strength and moving out into the rest of the population. While those early days of devastation are behind us, the AIDS crisis is not over and is not confined to small, marginalized groups. As the face of AIDS has changed, the demands and the response of the AIDS movement have also required change.

The AIDS Committee of London (ACOL) has been on the frontline of the movement, responding to the crisis and developing strategies and initiatives in that response. ACOL has expanded its mandate over the years, has changed locations a number of times, has ridden the wave of funding initiatives and cuts, and been subject to the ever-changing currents of public and political opinion. Throughout all of these challenges, ACOL has maintained integrity, strong core values and community involvement—most importantly, people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS have always been the first priority for this organization.

An Annual General Meeting becomes a time of reflection and as we prepare for this AGM, embark on our Strategic Planning and I reflect upon some of the challenges of our past year, I can honestly say I am very proud to be part of this organization. From the staff and management levels to the Board, I can attest to the commitment and dedication of everyone involved. Most importantly, I want to applaud the volunteer base and the PHAs—ACOL exists because of you. Thank you for the honour of sharing in this important work. I look forward to working with you over the next year.



David Feeney, president

But, we were pleased to see Mark continue in AIDS work at the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. Last July's Pride (= Life) was another big success, seeing the distribution of over 5,000 condom packs including lubricant and information. We also screened a film called *Silence = Death* followed by a panel discussion.

☛ Kevin Murphy joined us in January 2009, and shared his enthusiasm for the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) as a lead for the Opening Doors conference held in Windsor. Kevin continued to provide safer sex messages through speaks, booths, Bathhouse Bingo, as well as online.



☛ Daniel Pugh has been busy as Co-Principal Investigator for the HiMMM (Health in Middlesex Men Matters) research project with UWO and Infectious Diseases Care Program (IDCP.) Our winter 2009 MSM health forum brought out approximately 20 members of the MSM (Men who have sex with men) community to discuss HIV stigma and the provincial campaign www.hivstigma.com.

In 2008-09 the Education team:

- *completed over 140 presentations.*
- *made over 9,000 contacts through outreach activities.*
- *distributed approximately 15,000 brochures, pamphlets and information pieces.*
- *revitalized Open Closet, a drop in support group for youth 14-18 who identify as anything but straight, by attracting over 30 new youth!*

COUNTERPOINT NEEDLE EXCHANGE REPORT

Our Counterpoint program, funded by the Middlesex London Health Unit (MLHU) experienced transition on numerous fronts during 08/09. This included our relocation, the launch of London CAREs, increased demand for service, new peer engagement, concerning client health issues, and new funding to address Hepatitis C.



Distribution of clean needles increased 38% in 2008-09 to 1,020,575. We reinforce the importance of safe return/disposal of used equipment and continue to achieve a 65% needle return rate.

At our new location a separate entrance for Counterpoint clients is available to those who prefer it. The north entrance offers clients enhanced confidentiality for their service needs since they can choose to by-pass the main, more public entrance. The store room offers additional square footage, holding a larger volume of product. Our new waiting room is filled with helpful information promoting health and wellness for service users.

A serious concern for ACOL staff and many service providers across the province was the issue of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA.) At least seven Counterpoint clients succumbed to infections directly related to MRSA. This kind of loss in one year is devastating to staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to provide services to our most marginalized.

We experienced a predictable decline in individuals accessing the on site needle exchange during and directly following our relocation. However, by the latter part of the 3rd quarter and into the 4th quarter of the year our weekly numbers indicated we met and surpassed the numbers from the previous year. Currently, we average 260 clients per week, attributable in part to the hiring of Karen Burton as our Needle Exchange Program Coordinator. Karen, and Nick Scrivo, IDU Outreach Worker, are well-known and respected among the IDU (Injection Drug User) population.



London Community Addiction Response Strategy

Two new events were introduced to our fund raising roster in fiscal '08-'09. We hired a contract event coordinator who organized a dinner, cabaret and auction event in Stratford around World AIDS Day. It was the first such event in that community in a few years and was highly successful. Our efforts their help support programs and services in Stratford/Perth.



The second new event was a launch party for A Taste For Life called *Big Taste*. It featured a food fashion show, which highlighted the culinary fare of several participating Taste restaurants. It was also a great way to heighten the excitement leading up to the night of A Taste For Life, as well as to thank our many sponsors and supporters.



On August 1 the agency moved into 186 King Street in heart of downtown London. With more space and fresh surroundings we redoubled our commitment to HIV / AIDS work. In March, we proudly invited our neighbours, clients, volunteers, community partners, and the general public to tour our facility and learn about the work of each department in the agency. The evening was a great success with over 120 people in attendance. Our office manager said she'd never been so proud of ACOL as she was that particular day showing everyone the good work we do and have done for close to 25 years!

Of course, each of the above-mentioned initiatives is only made possible through strong volunteer involvement. In 2008-09, 70 ACOL



volunteers gave over 5,000 hours of their time to pack kits for and to work in the needle exchange, stuff the ACOLade into envelopes, take leadership in event planning and implementation, greet diners and take donations during A Taste For Life, and make weekly visits to clients.

In the fall of 2008, with funding from London CAREs, a collaborative community response to homelessness and addiction, ACOL launched a syringe recovery program. This initiative engages members of the IDU community (peers) to recover syringes in the downtown/London CAREs catchment area. This year 10 peers contributed to the return of 642,806 used needles. Additionally Counterpoint and MLHU initiated a pilot with London CAREs to provide syringes and related equipment to CAREs Street Outreach Workers.

The rising cost of bio-hazard disposal continues to challenge ACOL and MLHU, but we are working together to address the issue while ensuring our ability to deliver the program in accordance with NEP (Needle Exchange Program) best practices.

With a fiscal year end announcement of funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) we were able to begin the process of launching our Hepatitis C (HCV) Education and Support Program. HCV prevalence within the IDU population is an ongoing concern and our program will provide prevention information and various types of support to members of the IDU population while providing education services to community stakeholders.

SUPPORT SERVICES REPORT

Support Services staff saw a 12% increase in the number of clients requesting services (from 264 to 297 clients.) We had anticipated a decrease in requests during the summer given the transition period when we relocated our office. The fact that we saw an increase speaks to the high needs of some of our clients, particularly in respect to financial needs, basic needs (food and housing) and assistance with acquiring medications.



During the 2008/09 fiscal year referrals for housing were up 18%. We gave out a total of \$18,209 in financial assistance to 181 clients. The majority of the requests were for housing, utilities, medications, and transportation. The impact of our regional expansion and the additional geographic area we

serve has been primarily financial as we continue to facilitate transportation of clients from outlying regions into London for HIV specific services.

Also of note this year was the number of requests filled through the Skowronski Fund. The Skowronski family in memory of their son set up this fund during the 1990s. The fund pays for telephone and television rental for HIV+ individuals who are hospitalized. During the 2008/09 year we paid out a total of \$3,958 from the fund for 21 individuals for a total of 297 days in local and outlying hospitals.

During the spring and summer of 2008 we ran a successful healthy living program in partnership with the local YMCA. A dozen PHAs participated in weekly fitness and nutrition programs. In partnership, the Y and ACOL subsidized fees for the program. We also offered regular evening drop-ins for PHAs who are unable to access our services during regular business hours.

Through Fanshawe College we had two successful Social Service Worker (SSW) placement students; one we subsequently hired as a part-time Case Manager, the other will be returning as a volunteer group facilitator later in 2009.

We were successful in securing another year of funding for out PHA Peer Support and Advocacy Worker, Rob Newman. Rob has been instrumental in providing skills building sessions for PHAs, including the eight HIV+ volunteers who attended various levels of provincial leadership training provided by the Ontario AIDS Network (OAN.) Rob has been responsible for reconnecting PHAs with ACOL who have not been involved with us for several years. He has also been guiding the work of volunteers as they produce regular editions of the PHA newsletter, *Your Voice*.

Support statistics for 2008-09

- 12% increase in clients
- housing referrals up 18%
- 181 clients used \$18,209 in financial assistance
- \$3,958 from Skowronski Fund to 21 people

COMMUNICATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS REPORT

2008-09 was also a transitional year for the Communications and Partnerships team. New leadership and other staff movement presented challenges that were adeptly confronted by the talented staff.

Regional service delivery officially became part of our program planning in 2007-08. With the dissolution of AIDS Action Perth in May 2008, ACOL began to have a strong presence in the communities of Stratford and Sarnia in particular.

Our HIV Regional Resource Coordinator chaired a steering committee comprising members of several area organizations such as Infectious Diseases Care Program (IDCP), regional health units, Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy, London Regional AIDS Hospice (JGH), and Huron County HIV/AIDS Network (HCHAN.) Together we formulated a plan for further development of HIV education and prevention initiatives in the six counties the AIDS Bureau mandated us to serve - Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex, and Oxford.

For the first time A Taste For Life, our signature fund raising event, achieved beyond the \$70,000 mark! Thanks to our *Sustaining Partner*, TD Bank Financial Group, and our media sponsors The London Free Press, Atv and Astral Media this 'natural' fundraiser has become a well-known and well-loved night out for Londoners. In 2008, an estimated 2,200 diners enjoyed meals at 30 restaurants in the downtown core and as far away as Exeter.



Autumn was busy with the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life, and Rocky Horror Picture Show (RHPS) and Monstrous Movie Poster Sale. In partnership with London Regional AIDS Hospice (a.k.a. John Gordon Home) and Camp Wendake, the Walk raised over \$40,000 to support programs at each of the three agencies. Our friends at Rainbow Cinemas supported the Rocky Horror and poster sale events. Over 100 people donned costumes and attended the film screening, which we intend to make a fun annual event!