

A YEAR OF IMPACT



Regional
HIV/AIDS
Connection

**ANNUAL REPORT
2018/19**

SERVING PERTH, HURON, LAMBTON, ELGIN,
MIDDLESEX AND OXFORD COUNTIES

“A YEAR OF IMPACT”

**Regional HIV/AIDS Connection’s Annual Report for
Fiscal 2018/19 (April 1, 2018—March 31, 2019).**

We acknowledge the regions we serve
as the traditional territories of the Algonquin,
Anishinaabe, Attawandaron (Neutral),
Haudenosaunee, and Leni-Lunaape Peoples.

What's Inside

Executive Message	1
Caring for our Clients	5
Collaborating in Response to Crisis	7
Connecting with Diverse Communities	9
Thinking Big	11
2018-19 Financials	13
Thank You	15

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection (RHAC)

is community-inspired and dedicated to positively impacting the lives of individuals and diverse communities living with, at-risk for, and affected by HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.



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Charitable Registration No.

1187 79008 RR0001

Serving Perth, Huron, Lambton, Elgin, Middlesex and Oxford Counties

Frontlines. Headlines. Deadlines.

These words appropriately encapsulate the RHAC experience in 2018-19. It has been a year of headlines associated with Supervised Consumption Services (SCS), impactful frontline efforts by those committed to serving our mission, and frequent deadlines to meet funding application requirements.

Our evidence-based prevention efforts facilitated access to modern day HIV prevention through our PrEP* Clinic. This successful HIV prevention program is delivered in partnership with a nurse practitioner through Specialty Rx and RHAC's prevention staff.

Our longstanding support program, Open Closet, has continued to serve 2SLGBTQIA+ youth each Friday evening throughout the year. We remain committed to serving 2SLGBTQIA+ community members with a range of HIV prevention strategies, including bathhouse outreach, engagement at Pride London Festival, and community capacity building. We also delivered a well-attended health fair for members of African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) communities with the goal to raise awareness of HIV and other health impacts.

The expansion of our harm reduction work resulted in an increased frontline presence through regional mobile outreach. In partnership with Southwestern Public Health and Addiction Services of Thames Valley, RHAC is providing a mobile vehicle and staff to reach people who use drugs in Oxford and Elgin counties.

*PrEP: The use of a daily pill to prevent HIV.

The ongoing efforts associated with SCS kept RHAC in the headlines while delivering life-saving results at the front line. This vital and Pillar-award-winning program would not be possible without the efforts of many. It is important to acknowledge Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) for dedicating organizational resources and leadership as they took the lead to meet the rigorous application demands and deadlines. Community partners consistently wrapped around the program and the support of London Police Services and EMS contributed to the success. When no other site option was viable, RHAC created internal capacity to deliver this service within our own premises thus thrusting 186 King Street into the headlines!

People living with HIV/AIDS remain at the centre of our frontline work and RHAC continues to commit to the principles of GIPA – the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS. This has been demonstrated in numerous ways over the past year, but perhaps most significantly by the daily contributions of people with lived experience to our mission.

Headlines cast uncertainty across the province. Whether it is healthcare transformation, the restructuring of public health, a looming federal election, or the ongoing challenges associated with the Opioid Crisis, RHAC will be at the frontline, responding to deadlines, and undoubtedly in the headlines in the year to come.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission!



David Smith
Board President



Brian Lester
Executive Director

Every
Client,
Volunteer,
Donor,
Dollar,
Day,
Decision, -----
Partner,
Peer,
Program,
and
Employee



Make a positive impact

Welcome to our
Annual Report.

Let's look back on our
year of **impact**.

Caring for our Clients

Embracing the Value of Lived Experience.

The greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA/MIPA) remains a central guiding principle in the work we do. This year, RHAC held its annual GIPA/MIPA Ceremony with all staff and Board members making a signed recommitment to the engagement and empowerment of people with lived experience.



4,354 hours
contributed to
our mission by
PHAs*



6,235
HIV/HCV
client service
interactions.

Providing Quality Care and Safe Supports.

Clients continued to benefit from RHAC's practical and social supports. Our HIV and HCV Support Services connected clients to testing and treatment opportunities while also inviting them to engage in programming aimed at reducing stigma and isolation, increasing resiliency, and building health and wellness skills.

Supporting Residents' Transitions.

At John Gordon Home (JGH), our Resident Transition Fund continued to provide essential items for residents transitioning out of *The Home with a Heart*. Thanks to friends and supporters, our 7th annual *A Heartfelt Evening* raised \$6,845 in support of this transformative fund—ultimately setting residents up for sustained health, hope and happiness ahead.



20 residents
received
care at JGH.

8 residents supported
by the Resident
Transition Fund.

1,029 hours
volunteered at JGH.

*PHA: Person living with HIV/AIDS

Changing the Course of HIV

Reducing New Infections. In January 2019, Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU) reported a 52 percent drop in new HIV cases between 2016-2018. We are proud of the collaborative contribution RHAC and its partners make to increased access to prevention, harm reduction, and testing.



**52% drop
in new HIV
cases**

“I’m Pat Brown, 62 years old, and HIV+ for over 24 years. But I refuse to be defined by that. It’s the least of me and probably the most boring part.”

Pat challenging HIV stigma at our 2018 *Red Scarf* concert.



Increasing access to HIV prevention. Since June 2018, RHAC’s PrEP Clinic has worked with Specialty Rx Solutions and Nurse Practitioner Mia Biondi to deliver quality care to over 40 clients! Not only has the clinic provided PrEP to help prevent HIV; it is also creating a safe space for clients to explore sexual health and testing options.

Empowering HIV Testing. This year, we embarked on the development of a new HIV testing and prevention campaign that will earn us opportunities to connect effectively with both seasonal workers and guys who have sex with guys in the regions we serve. At its core, the *Find Your Reason* campaign is about relationships and connections, personal and public health, and, ultimately, empowerment.

Collaborating in - - - - Response to Crisis

Collaborative Care. February 12, 2019 marked the 1 year anniversary of what began as London's Temporary Overdose Prevention Site (TOPS). Amidst the growing overdose crisis, the challenges of government transitions, and ongoing stigma, RHAC and MLHU worked alongside a dedicated network of partners and supporters to deliver this much-needed health service to our community's most marginalized members. In 2018, TOPS formally transitioned to a Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS) which continues to offer supervised consumption services and access to wrap-around supports.



Meeting People Where They Are At. On July 4, 2018, RHAC, Southwestern Public Health and Addiction Services Thames Valley (ADSTV) launched mobile outreach services to serve the harm reduction needs of individuals in Oxford and Elgin counties who oftentimes face barriers such as distance, stigma and social isolation. Services include support information, naloxone and safe supplies.

Saving Lives Together



88
overdoses
reversed



1,192 referrals
to community
supports



14,273
total client
visits



277 new
CTS clients

(April 1, 2018—March 31, 2019)

Where Collaboration Meets Innovation. RHAC and MLHU were honoured to receive the 2018 Pillar Community Innovation Award for Collaboration in recognition of London's Temporary Overdose Prevention Site: a partnership between RHAC and MLHU and many other community collaborators. The award to RHAC and its partners was met with a standing ovation from approximately 1,000 attendees, serving as an affirmation of the positive impact of harm reduction in our community.

Connecting with Diverse Communities

Starting Community Conversations. Every year, Sunfest and Pride serve as prime opportunities for RHAC to create dialogues with diverse communities about HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and the work we do. This year, RHAC promoted the theme of 'knowledge', focusing on advances in HIV prevention linked to PrEP and U=U.* Staff and volunteers were delighted to raise awareness, share information, and break down myths about HIV transmission.

Supporting Safer 2SLGBTQIA+ Spaces. Throughout the year, RHAC hosted 13 events for guys into guys, including mindfulness and meditation sessions and queer film nights. We also hosted *Gender Journeys*, a social program to support trans individuals through the many impacts of transition.



36 2SLGBTQIA+ youth supported Open Closet.



*U=U: Undetectable=Untransmittable.



Improving Community Health

Supporting Healing and Harm Reduction with Indigenous Communities. Since signing a memorandum of understanding for shared services, SOAHAC and RHAC have worked together with Indigenous communities to offer culturally-competent programs that deliver traditional medicines and harm reduction supports.

Building Health and Wellness with Diversity. RHAC hosted its second annual Multicultural Health Fair with a focus on a holistic approach to health and well-being. The Health Fair aimed to build resilience within African, Caribbean and Black communities. Attendees engaged in important discussions and wellness activities, such as: yoga, cultural nutrition, mindfulness and mental health workshops, and on-site Hep C and HIV testing.

Reaching the Regions. In October, our agency hosted a regional meeting with local health units and sector service providers to uncover trends and insights to improve service delivery across the regions. In addition, we launched sexual health outreach to seasonal workers across the six counties, as well as our new Oxford county mobile outreach initiative.

Empowering Women's Wellness. In Fall 2018, RHAC and Sisters of St. Joseph presented a women's wellness symposium to explore art therapy, Indigenous healing, harm reduction, and HIV treatment with both service users and providers. RHAC also continued to deliver support and programming to women at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre.

Thinking Big

Welcoming National and International Developments. This year marked important advancements in the HIV/AIDS sector. On World AIDS Day, the Federal Government announced a new directive to limit unjust prosecutions against people living with HIV and Canada became the first country in the world to endorse U=U! New guidelines were also released this past year, expanding HCV testing recommendations.

Building a Bigger Movement. In 2018, RHAC's growing Red Scarf movement brought community together to raise awareness and end the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS. The message of "Know HIV. No Stigma" was shared across our pop-up events and annual Red Scarf concert featuring Bedouin Soundclash in the lead-up to World AIDS Day and Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Week.



2,039 red scarves donated



22 Red Scarf pop up events



\$40,944 raised in support



Red Scarf 2018 at London Music Hall.

World AIDS Day. RHAC marked the 30th annual World AIDS Day with vigils in London and Stratford, and several outreach events that offered red scarves as a symbol of solidarity.

World Hepatitis Day. With support from Gilead, RHAC hosted four specialist clinics and initiated 40 treatment starts through community outreach during Hepatitis Awareness Month.

Thinking Ahead



300+ students supported our mission

Training Tomorrow's Leaders. Over the last year, RHAC remained committed to fostering learning opportunities for the next generation of healthcare and harm reduction leaders with students from Western University (Brescia and King's University Colleges), Fanshawe College, and local area high schools.

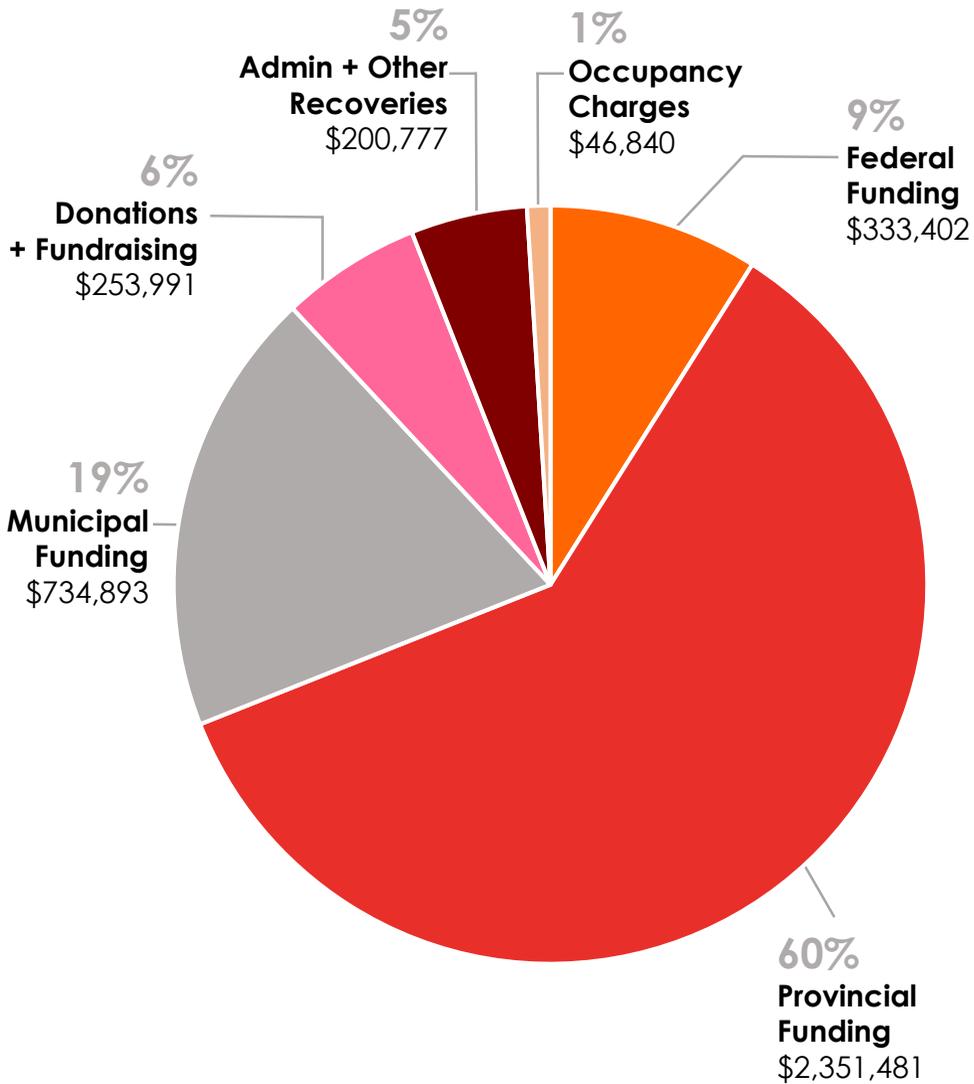
Our Future. In 2019, RHAC is only one year away from its 35th anniversary. As our agency grows in response to client needs, we are intent on finding a permanent and welcoming home for RHAC's services and growing team for many more years to come. As we continue to save lives in our community, we extend our appreciation for the ongoing support of our many community stakeholders.

Thank you to our title sponsor TD Bank Group, our participating restaurants and everyone who dined in support of *A Taste for Life 2018*, which raised \$45,495 in support of ongoing client programs and services.



Financial Summary

FY 2018/2019: April 1, 2018—March 31, 2019

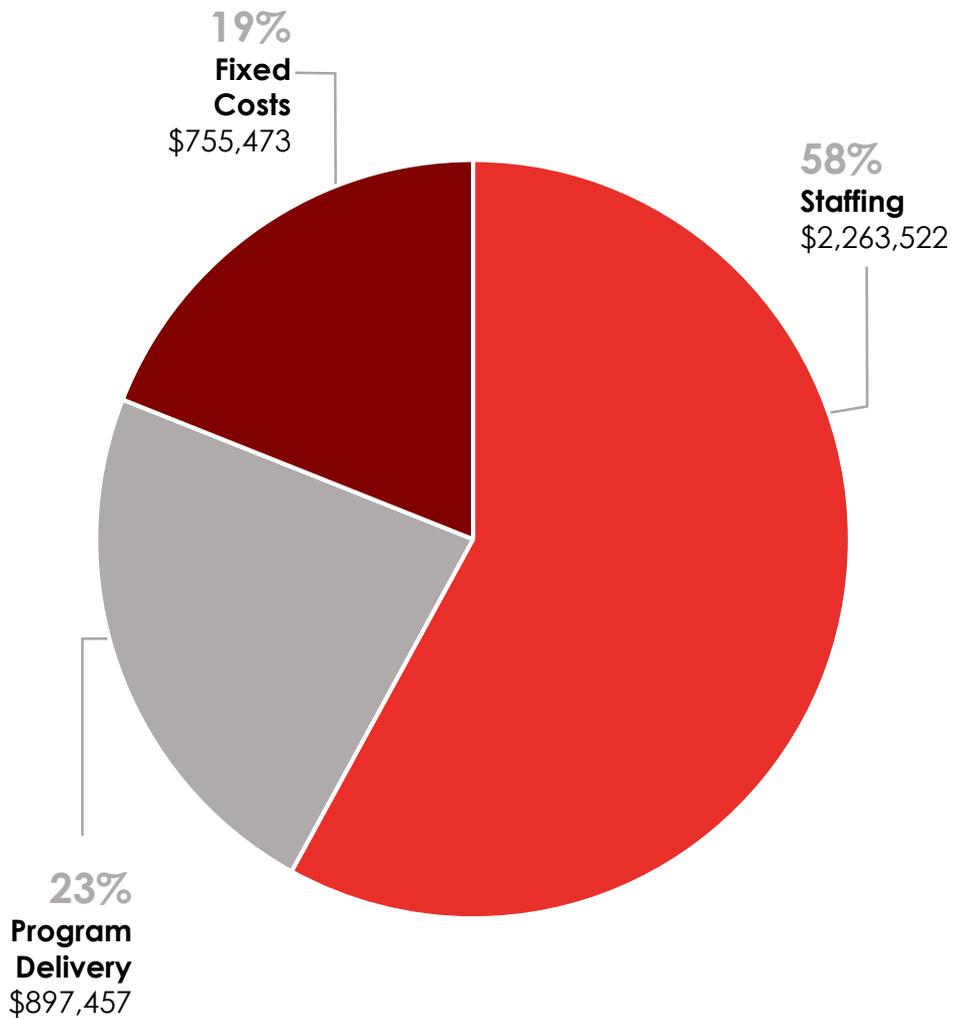


Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

REVENUE 2018/19

TOTAL
\$3,921,384

Totals do not include in-kind donations.



Regional HIV/AIDS Connection
EXPENSES 2018/19

TOTAL
\$3,916,452

Totals do not include in-kind donations.

THANK

Our Funders

Public Health Agency of Canada

AIDS Bureau – Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Housing – Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

Southwest Local Health Integration Network

Employment and Social Development Canada

City of London

Middlesex-London Health Unit

Our Grantors and Major Donors

Government of Ontario

TD Bank Group

Sisters of St. Joseph

Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry

The Johansen-Larsen Foundation

Gilead Sciences Inc.

The Bray Family

The Law Society Foundation

Dynacare

Royal Imperial Sovereign Court of London & S.W.O Inc.

Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada Inc.

YOU...

To all of our partners and supporters, we are deeply grateful to you for demonstrating *the courage to do what is right* by helping us to deliver care, support, and comfort to the people we serve. The work of our volunteers, the trust of our clients, the support of our community partners, and the generosity of our sponsors and donors make it possible to make a positive impact in our clients' lives. **Thank you.**

Our 2018/19 Board

DAVID SMITH – President

NUNO DA SILVA – Vice President

SHAWN BROWN – Treasurer

MARIAM HAMOU – Secretary

CYNTHIA HOVE

KIMBERLEY GRAHAM

KELSEY ADAMS

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