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# BRIAN LESTER'S RETIREMENT



Celebrating 16 years of  
service and leadership at  
Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

**THURSDAY  
MARCH 30**

**CIVIC GARDEN  
COMPLEX**  
625 SPRINGBANK  
DRIVE, LONDON, ON

I am going to miss you so much.

Who's going to sit with me at the rowdy table  
when the OAN gets its stuff together?

Brian, as I have said many times; you are the ED  
I want to be when I grow up. Thanks for being  
such a remarkable mentor and friend the last 16  
years. You are the best example of effective,  
respectful leadership I have ever seen and  
despite all the bouts of imposter syndrome we  
have both experienced over the years you are the  
person from whom I have learned the most.  
Thank you.

Much love,  
Adrian

*Elizabeth Lam*

*Elizabeth Lam*

Dearest Brian,

It has been such a privilege working with you  
for all of these years (not that we are old or  
anything). You have always been my go to for all  
things leadership. I admire the many, many,  
many successes you and your team have had  
over your tenure. You have really helped not  
only your community, but all of Ontario and  
our movement forward together. I will miss  
your wonderful sense of humor and your  
strategic thinking. Thank you for everything,  
Brian. I hope you have a good retirement.  
stacey mayhall (and ACNBA)



We'll always have  
Ottawa.

The OG SWEDS

Dear Brian,

I wish you the very best in retirement and life journey ahead. You will be sorely missed and you are leaving behind giant shoes to fill. Thank you and my sincere gratitude for your commitment, dedication, passion and hard work in the

As a "newbie" in the sector, I am so grateful to have been able to benefit from your wisdom and knowledge. It might have only been virtual, but your impact has been undeniable. All the best for the next chapter in your life.

Thank you for inspiring me and your authentic support when I needed it the most. You are a leader that people should aspire to be, I will truly miss you my friend and sincerely hope that our paths will cross again. Take good care of yourself. Warm hugs and love to you.

Khaled Salam - ACO

Brian, thank you for being such a caring champion in so many settings- respecting others' foibles and seeking to connect in meaningful ways that deliver real results. Your gifts of humour, naming the

Wishing all the best in  
your next Journey.

Muhaari A

**BRIAN, YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT OVER THE  
LAST FEW YEARS HAS MEANT SO MUCH MORE  
THAN YOU COULD EVER KNOW. I WISH YOU  
THE BEST OF EVERYTHING IN RETIREMENT!  
JACKIE BARRETT-GREENE**

It has been a true  
honour and privilege  
to get to work with  
you Brian - thank  
you for your  
leadership and  
inspiration

Sheila Simpson

You have been not only the most supportive people in our community, but in my life. You instill hope where the flame is dim, and you've inspired patience, honour and compassion throughout this family. You are a living legend, friend.

Carlen

*Brian, You've been such an inclusive and engaging leader in our community for many years. Your legacy carries on while you enjoy a wonderful retirement!*

Steve Cordes



Congratulations Brian!  
Thanks for all you  
have done in  
community - truly and  
inspirational leader!  
Dharshi

Brian,  
Congratulations on  
an incredible body of  
work and  
commitment to the  
work of the  
HIV/AIDS sector.  
Enjoy retirement and  
this new chapter in  
your life. You will be  
missed.

Beth Jordan

Brian you will be dearly  
missed, your leadership  
especially throughout the  
opioid crisis but also a great  
time working with you!! You  
deserve to enjoy your next  
chapter.

Dear Brian,  
Congratulations on your retirement. Your contributions are  
impressive, and you have so many qualities young leaders can  
aspire to. Kick up your heels and enjoy each moment forward!  
Cheers,  
Dane Griffiths, GMSH

Best of luck as you retire  
congratulations on  
your retirement! It is  
well deserved!  
Alex R.

Dear Brian,  
You are now retired. So much  
fun lies ahead, and I hope you  
get to relish every part of the  
fun. You have always given the  
best in every project you led.  
How about putting that kind  
of effort in with nothing to  
do? Enjoy your retirement  
Marvelous Muchenje

Dearest Brian,

What started off as an opportunity to give back to the community, led me to meeting one of the most steadfast and compassionate leaders I have seen in a long time. As a bonus, I was blessed with a great new friendship and chance to get to know you. It has been such an honour and privilege to have worked with you at the Board of Directors for RHAC. You have forever left a mark in my journey and I wish you the upmost best as you receive all the greatness and joy that you have put into the universe back in twofold. Retire well my friend and know that you have left a legacy that will continue to inspire long after you are gone.

Tina Ranta

*Dearest Brian. Best wishes on your retirement and your future endeavours, Brian. It has been a pleasure working with you these past several years. I have admired you as a community champion and your authentic leadership with your unselfish contributions to the community and the well-being of vulnerable people. Enjoy carving out your new pathway in life. Happy retirement.*

*Peter Heywood*

I recall many moons ago, you and I were paired up for an ice breaker activity when I was the minute taker for the RHAC (then ACOL) board, I was quickly put at ease with how kind and thoughtful you were. You always greets folks with such kindness and empathy. I am excited for what is next for you Brian, all the best in your retirement, you will be missed! Take care and enjoy your next step in this journey we call life.

Lilka Young

Dear Brian,

It has been a privilege to work with you. Since the day I arrived in London, you have been the model of courageous and compassionate leadership. I am so grateful for the kindness you have shown me, and am humbled by the way you extend that kindness to all around you. I wish you all the best in your retirement!

Alex Summers



Thank you Brian for everything you have given RHAC, the community, the board and me. You serve as an excellent example of dedication, humility, and quiet leadership that I admire & look up to - especially as a quieter person: :). I'm so grateful for the Kindness you have shown me over these past 6 years. I have always felt comfortable & safe on the board and you are a big part of that. I hope you can rest & retire easy knowing you made such a profound legacy on our community.

Kelsey Adams

CONGRATULATIONS ON  
YOUR RETIREMENT  
BRIAN. BEST WISHES ON  
YOUR NEXT JOURNEY.  
PATTY BURTON

*Dear Brian,*

*Although I arrived fairly late to the party that was your career, I still got to witness this master in action! It was a privilege to work under your leadership, and to learn from you what courage and compassion are all about. During my time at RHAC, I got to learn of your legacy and triumphs for our community, and we all owe you so much for having the courage to do what is right. Enjoy your retirement, it is well earned!*

*Cheers,*

*Luke Nocent*

Thank you, Brian, for all your kindness, guidance and leadership over our shared tenure with RHAC! I know the agency, the community and all of us involved with it will miss you but we are sending our best for an enjoyable and easy transition into retirement!

Cheers, Stolat!

Greg Owens

Brian, you have been a beacon in many dark days over the years. Your vulnerability and humanity made you the type of leader that you are, helping those around you to be all they could be. Your drive to bring services to the community, some the first in Canada, speaks to your vision and passion. May your retirement be gentle, and filled with many wonderful memory making moments. Blessings!  
Gloria Aykroyd

Brian,

I'll always remember how warm and welcoming you made my first introduction with you, and how friendly and approachable you've always been throughout my time at RHAC. I can only hope our send off does you justice.

All the best to you on this new journey and chapter - you will be so missed!

Tina



Dear Brian,

Each of us aspires to do meaningful, consequential work that positively impacts the world around us. I think you've done just that.

I've always appreciated your perspective – thoughtful, direct, and kind. Your voice has weight because of your integrity and commitment to the work.

When I became an ED, it was your style of leadership I wanted to emulate. Thank you for making yourself available to me when I was a 'newbie ED'. Our time together left me feeling more prepared and less alone. I've learned so much from you, and if I can be half the leader you've been, I'll be very proud indeed.

As you start this next chapter, I wish for you all of the good things!

Gilles Charette

Dear Brian,  
Congratulations on your retirement. Wishing you the very best as you begin this new chapter of your life!

Isaac Luginaah

*Dear Brian:  
Please accept my heartfelt congratulations on your retirement! Wishing you lots of joy and many interesting adventures as you enter this next chapter of your life!*

*Lisa Jakubowski*

Dearest Brian,  
The world is a better place because of you. Thank you for your tireless service and support for our community. Wishing you all the best in your retirement.

Love from

Susan Hocking



*Dear Brian*

*Thank you for your amazing, thoughtful, reflective, compassionate, and fierce leadership. And your sense of humour. I have learned so much working alongside you and am endlessly grateful for your willingness to have hard conversations with me (and others), and step into hard spaces with a commitment to change. I will miss you deeply!*

*Molly*

*Brian, I still recall our first meeting (at the Health Providers Alliance) and how welcome you made me feel. Since that time, I've appreciated every conversation we've had and every opportunity to collaborate. As you look toward this next chapter for you, do so with the knowledge that you have made a lasting impact on so many people and on our community. All the best for whatever comes next.*

*Michael Oates*

Brian, Your exceptional knowledge and compassionate understanding of the community always shines through. You lead with humility, heart and integrity and will be deeply missed. All the best!

Lori Runciman

Brian – I may no longer be in London, but I will never forget what an incredible community partner you were while I was at LIHC. I always knew that we had each other's back through our unique partnership to deliver the HEP C program. I could count on you to always be transparent with me and I always knew there would be no surprises. You are an incredible leader, who inspired so much good work in our community. You remain one of my touchstones of what I look for in a partnership with other community agencies. Thank you for being all of who you are... I hope that you enjoy this next stage of your life. With much appreciation for having had the opportunity to work alongside you...

Michelle Hurtubise

Brian, Congrats on this huge milestone. I will always remember how you put 'the courage to do what is right' into action despite the many obstacles RHAC has faced. Your leadership will be missed by many and I hope your legacy will live on in future EDs.

Geoff Bardwell

Now starts the  
adventure ... 1st stop  
Amsterdam!!! Happy  
retirement!

Rob Newman

Brian! Even though our times together at RHAC have only barely overlapped, I consider it a great privilege that I've been able to share space with you in this office, this sector, and this incredible community. Your absence will be sorely felt, but your legacy will continue to permeate this important work. Thank you for all you've done, and for all you do.

Jackson

Brian, you are an incredible force and I count myself fortunate to have worked under your leadership. You are a man of great integrity who has given so much of himself for a cause in which you believe so deeply. Congratulations on this milestone. I wish you great happiness in with your future endeavours!

Darlene Pratt

Brian-You have been a stellar and compassionate leader to this community for so many years. You will be missed by too many to imagine. Everyone who has had you in their corner knows how lucky they are. Thank you also for the role you played in my working life while at the Health Unit and then at RHAC. Here's to the fun, challenges and adventures of retirement!

All the best,

Muriel Abbott

Congratulations Brian, on  
your retirement!

Best of luck with your  
next adventure.

Veronica

I'm genuinely happy for you in so many ways as you retire and enter into new explorations, joys, contributions and experiences. Yet at the same time, I struggle at a significant sense of loss. Professionally, you have that rare natural ability to balance passionate advocacy with strategic thinking and working at an issue from inside the systems that frame and influence much of our work and the lives of those we serve. Your insight, commitment and skills have served not just in London but across the province, country and well beyond an HIV specific response. You've shared, supported and challenged many of us to do and be better. You have left an incredible legacy and will be greatly missed.

Murray

Brian – on behalf of the team at AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs we wish you well on your retirement.

You have a lengthy history of strategic and insightful leadership that has supported significant change within your own communities and the broader HIV sector. You have built a strong team at RHAC which has demonstrated a real commitment to harm reduction, ensuring RHAC responds holistically to people where they are and without judgement; promoted and valued peer voice and putting MIPA/GIPA into practice in a real way throughout RHAC; and embraced meaningful collaboration – across health and community partners – to drive real change.

Continued.....

Joanne & AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs Team

*Continued message from MOH:*

*We thank you for your seven years of service on the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, contributing to key policy advice to several health ministers that supported progressive advancements related to many issues, including criminalization of HIV non-disclosure and PrEP.*

*Finally, It is easy to see this evening and over your career...that you have changed the response to HIV in your community and changed lives. Bravo. We celebrate you as you walk into your next chapter...take in all the accolades that are coming your way.*

*AIDS and Hepatitis C Team (all of us!)*

*Pat Brown*

Congratulations on this new milestone. I enjoyed our short time collaborating together. I hear that retirement is the best stage of life. Keep in touch,  
Nuno Da Silva  
ndasilva1@outlook.com

It has been a long time since Goodwill. Congratulations on an epic career and all the change you have been instrumental in implementing. You were always destined for great things and I am honored to have worked with you. Best wishes for your retirement. Maybe we can meet for lunch once you have free time.  
Sus Hrovat @  
salimar@sympatico.ca



Congratulations Brian, on your retirement! Your 16 years of service with RHAC are so appreciated. The London community is fortunate to have benefited from the work that you have done - thank you and best of luck in your next chapter!

Arielle Kayabaga

*Brian, it has been such a pleasure to work with you over these years. We will miss you and your advocacy, experience, and focus on those most marginalized in our communities. Above all, we will miss your inclusive leadership that was always filled with integrity and passion. I learned a great deal from you, and count it as a life-blessing to have had the opportunity I did to work alongside you. The very best on the next amazing chapter of your life!*

Maria Sanchez-Keane

Brian,  
You've made an amazing contribution to this organization and to so many vulnerable communities. You've been a tremendous leader and role model for many. I've really enjoyed my board experience so far and have appreciated getting to know you and learn from you. My sincerest congratulations on your retirement!

Megan DePutter

Brian,  
It has been an absolute honour working with you over the past several years. The passion, compassion, and steadfastness that you have brought to your role and work with the community has been an inspiration. You have truly impacted lives.

Now its time to say "Congratulations on your retirement". Wishing you nothing but the best in the exciting new adventures ahead !!

Rhonda Brittan

Dear Brian,

It is hard to imagine doing this work without having your positive, ever passionate energy in the community. There are few more respected leaders than you and I will miss your warmth and calm presence at the various tables we sit at. It was such a pleasure doing the CDAS work with you and Rhonda!

Be well and enjoy a long and rich retirement.

With love and great respect,

Karna

Karna Trentman

BRIAN,

FOR A PERSON WHO USUALLY HAS (TOO) MANY WORDS (IF YOU KNOW, YOU KNOW!) , I'M STRUGGLING TO FIND SOME THAT WILL EVEN BEGIN TO GIVE SHAPE TO MY PROFOUND GRATITUDE FOR THE LAST 12 YEARS OF MENTORSHIP, LEADERSHIP & FRIENDSHIP. I FEEL LIKE THE LUCKIEST UNICORN TO HAVE SPENT TIME IN YOUR ORBIT – WITNESSING AND EXPERIENCING YOUR PROFOUND KINDNESS, YOUR OPENNESS, YOUR COURAGE, YOUR EMPATHY, YOUR COMPASSION, YOUR INTEGRITY, YOUR HONESTY, YOUR TRANSPARENCY, AND YOUR CARE AND LOVE OF THE RHAC FAMILY AND COMMUNITIES WE EMBODY AND CONNECT WITH. MAY YOU CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE THE LOVE, JOY AND CARE YOU'VE SO GENEROUSLY SHARED WITH OTHERS AS YOU EXPLORE WHERE YOUR HEART LEADS YOU FUTURE-FORWARD.

MER

Dear Brian,

Congratulations on your retirement! Thank you for your leadership and steadiness over the past 16 years. It has been a pleasure to work with you as we mixed in great conversations about what we were watching.

Remember the Scandal/Olivia Pope years! 😊 As you journey ahead, enjoy the long walks, new adventures and exciting travels.

Until soon...warmest,

Dionne

Dear Brian,

Congratulations on your retirement! What an exciting time for you as you leave behind a personal and working legacy that has greatly impacted so many in our community in the most positive ways! In short, the RHAC mission resonates so deeply within you and radiates into the community... you always have the "courage to do what is right". I feel beyond fortunate to have worked with you, learned from you, laughed with you and cried with you, but most of all to watch you lead and push forward the work of RHAC and beyond that is human centered and focused on kindness and compassion. What an honour it has been to get to know you and work alongside you! All the best and much love!

Melissa Whaling