

LGBT health workers gather to demand a better approach to health care

TORONTO – March 15, 2010 – Hundreds of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) health and social service professionals will gather in Toronto from **March 24-26** for the **Rainbow Health Ontario 2010 Conference: Improving Access and Equity in Health for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans (LGBT) People** at the Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre Hotel to develop solutions to improve access to services and to promote the health of Ontario's LGBT communities. The March 24th opening reception includes a heart-to-heart talk with Toronto mayoral candidate and former MPP **George Smitherman** hosted by comedian Maggie Cassella.

“People are often surprised to learn there is a wide range of LGBT health concerns beyond HIV/AIDS issues,” says Anna Travers, Director of **Rainbow Health Ontario**, a province-wide program based at **Sherbourne Health Centre** (located in downtown Toronto) that works to improve the health and well-being of LGBT people. “This conference fills a gap by providing practical, high quality information on topics as diverse as homophobia in schools, transgender health care, LGBT seniors, gay men and prostate cancer, reaching out to LGBT newcomers and understanding sexual risk taking.”

Hosted by Rainbow Health Ontario, the conference will showcase the latest developments in research, health promotion, clinical practice and policy analysis related to health and wellness issues of LGBT communities in Ontario; it will provide an opportunity for mainstream health care workers to receive training on often ignored LGBT health care issues. (Four of the 36 workshop sessions are accredited by College of Family Physicians of Canada.)

LGBT people often face barriers when attempting to access health care. Recent studies from across Canada point to unmet health needs, inadequate treatment and a lack of appropriate policies, standards of competence or even basic awareness in the care of LGBT people. **Most health care providers are not educated about LGBT communities and these health needs.** As a result, they may lack sensitivity, be uncomfortable or not have the appropriate knowledge to serve LGBT people competently.

Workshop and speaker information can be found at www.RainbowHealthOntario.ca/conference.

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For further information please contact:

Philip Wong, Communications Consultant

E: pwong@rainbowhealthontario.ca PH: (Office) 416.324.4100 x5322 (Cell) 416.509.9278