



Improving the Sexual Health of East & Southeast Asians

MESSAGE FROM ACAS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

March 13, 2020

Dear friends,

Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) is monitoring the rapidly changing situation with COVID-19 (Coronavirus). As a community-focused organization, we believe in collective efforts, action, and responsibility. Everyone can play a vital part in reducing virus spread and looking out for the more vulnerable members of our communities.

ACAS is postponing its 25th anniversary banquet on March 27, 2020. In coming to this decision, we considered the recommendations from public health agencies, the projected number of attendees, and the fact that people would be sharing food, drinks, and conversation in close proximity to each other. We would like to recognize the hard work and dedication that has already been invested in planning, supporting, and preparing for the 25th anniversary banquet. Thank you to all those who have purchased tickets and to ACAS staff, volunteers, and community members who have contributed a great deal of time and energy into the event. We look forward to hosting our banquet at a later date and will send an update as soon as there is more information.

We also denounce the racist attacks, discrimination, and blatant xenophobia that have occurred in light of the coronavirus. We are aware of numerous instances of people of Asian descent being harassed and subjected to racist attacks, and of Asian-owned businesses experiencing a marked decline in customers. We know that there is a long, shameful history of Asians in Canada being perceived of as a threat to public health and safety. We urge everyone to focus on the facts of the virus and to quell the misinformation or fear-mongering that you may encounter in your daily lives or on social media.

As we collectively face the coronavirus, ACAS stands in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, Black, and other racialized peoples. We urge the municipal, provincial, and federal governments to account for the disparate impact that Indigenous peoples and racialized people will likely experience from the coronavirus and the measures that are being taken to curb its spread. Black, Indigenous, and racialized people are more likely to work in low-paying, precarious jobs with long commutes, no benefits, and limited options to take time off or to work from home. Black, Indigenous, and racialized peoples are also more likely to experience vulnerabilities with food and housing insecurity, poorer access to quality childcare, higher incidences of chronic health conditions, and disproportionate rates of detention in crowded incarceration facilities.^[1] In these unprecedented times, government must not forget these disparities as it continues its public health and emergency preparedness plans against the coronavirus.

^[1] See, for example, <https://ocasi.org/new-fact-sheets-show-growing-racial-disparities-canada>