

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Peel HIV/AIDS Network Launches We Belong Campaign to Drive Change and Inclusivity of LGBTQ Community in Peel Region***

MAY 17<sup>Tst</sup>, 2017 –BRAMPTON, ON – On Tuesday, May 16, 2017 Peel HIV/AIDS Network (PHAN) hosted an inaugural breakfast event to commemorate the **International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT)** and officially launch PHAN's **We Belong** campaign, which aims to raise awareness about LGBTQ inclusion in the region. With the **We Belong** campaign, the agency aspires to advance LGBTQ initiatives in Peel by bringing LGBTQ inclusivity to the forefront of collective conversations in the community.

"I can't believe that this is finally happening in Peel! It's about time. We need this," Neil B., event attendee, remarked, echoing a common refrain that was heard throughout the course of the morning event. The sentiment was shared by the Hon. Mayor Allan Thompson of Caledon, who spoke optimistically about a future in which "each and every person felt like they belonged."

The seminal event marked the first occasion on which a diverse and expansive cross-section of influential thought-leaders and stakeholders in Peel convened in affirmation of a shared commitment to support LGBTQ inclusion. Attendees were entreated to push for change in their respective spheres, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Nearly 200 leaders from across corporate, political, healthcare, and social service sectors affirmed their commitment to carry the messages of the day throughout their daily lives. With this commitment comes the promise of great change, and a turning of the tide in a region that is still considered by many to be bereft of LGBTQ positive spaces and programming.

The breakfast was hosted by Daniel Pillai (He/She Project), noted media journalist, and included addresses by the Hon. Mayor Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga, the Hon. Mayor Allan Thompson of Caledon, Ron Puccini, Senior Manager, Diversity, TD Canada Trust, and Jennifer Evans, the Chief of Peel Regional Police. Attendees voiced a firm commitment to continue the work of supporting LGBTQ inclusion in their respective spheres.

PHAN is committed to ensuring that the issue of LGBTQ inclusion is propelled to the forefront of public consciousness, and celebrated the success of the event with an eye towards the future. The agency promises that there is much more to come in the year ahead. In the words of Phillip Banks, PHAN's Executive Director, "Together we will celebrate the diversity of the human experience and strive to build communities where we all feel that we belong."

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**About We Belong**

The year-long We Belong campaign focuses in on the uniquely compelling stories of local members of the LGBTQ community, with the aim of promoting LGBTQ inclusivity in the region. With this initiative, we will break down barriers, change the conversation, and celebrate diversity.

Educational resources, promotional materials, social media toolkits, and more will be posted on an ongoing basis to the campaign [website](#) throughout the duration of the project, which will run through May of 2018.

For more information please visit [webelonginpeel.com](http://webelonginpeel.com) or contact (905) 361-0523.

**About Peel HIV/AIDS Network**

PHAN is committed to serving diverse people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS and to limiting the transmission of the virus through support, education, advocacy and volunteerism.

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:  
Julie Shultz at [julies@phan.ca](mailto:julies@phan.ca) or (905) 361-0523.