



May 8, 2017

LaRon E. Nelson, PhD, RN, FNP, FNAP  
Centre for Urban Health Solutions  
Li Ka Shing Knowledge Institute  
St. Michael's Hospital  
209 Victoria Street,  
Toronto, ON M5B 1T8

Dear Dr. Nelson:

Thank you for your letter of April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017, wherein you raised a number of very important concerns. This letter is written by the CAHR Board of Directors in response.

***Apology for words used during the meeting (Item #1)***

We apologize for the harms created by our actions at the CAHR Annual General Meeting on April 7, 2017. All CAHR members, and especially new members, should feel welcome, included and heard. We apologize for any actions that led instead to feelings of exclusion.

As you identified, at one point during the AGM there was a motion put on the floor to not serve alcohol at the meeting. There was immediate and vocal opposition from many in the audience to this suggestion. Regretfully, in a misguided effort to introduce levity into a tense situation, I (Curtis Cooper) said, "You guys really like your alcohol". I said this to the entire room and certainly did not mean to single out any one group or groups of people. That said, I immediately recognized that the comment was careless and was interpreted as a statement meant to hurt or insult individuals. To that end, I offer a formal apology for my regretful words:

*I offer a complete and unreserved apology for my careless remark. I understand the hurtful impact that this comment had on some members of the CAHR membership. I can state with complete honesty that the statement was not directed at any specific individual or group but I understand how it was taken as a directed statement meant to hurt or offend.*

***Posting this letter on the CAHR website (Item #2)***

The Board agrees that this response letter shall be posted on the CAHR website. The response can be found at: <https://www.cahr-acrv.ca/cahr-board-response/>

***Request for an Accountability Process (Item #3)***

The Board agrees that a transparent accountability process should be developed for Board members. As an initial step, the CAHR Board has reaffirmed the decision taken at its March 2017 board meeting to provide anti-oppression training at the face-to-face board meeting in fall 2017. Additional steps will be taken in the coming months to clarify an accountability process related to diversity for the Board.

***Board Member Recruitment (Item #4)***

The Board has considered your demand that the Board make it a priority to recruit actively and designate Board positions to ACB, Indigenous, Black MSM, sex workers and trans individuals moving into the future. The current Board members agree that the issues you raise require review



and consideration. The Board will continue discussions on how to move forward on this issue (including a review of best practices by other organizations and consulting with its membership) to determine how the Board can promote diversity among Board members and the membership at large.

***Restructuring the Annual Conference (Item #5)***

Finally, the Board has considered your demand that the CAHR Conference model be restructured. The Board agrees that the model should be reviewed and in particular should be reviewed to ensure that key affected populations are better represented and that the scientific content reflects the landscape of the Canadian HIV epidemic and all its stakeholders. This review of the CAHR Conference model (which will include working with the Conference planning committee and discussions on the bestowing of the Red Ribbon Award) will take place in the coming months with an aim to having improvements in place for the 2018 CAHR Conference in Vancouver.

In closing, we hope that we can move forward in the spirit of collegiality and collaboration to effect positive change through the commitments noted above.

Sincerely,

Dr. Curtis Cooper, CAHR President  
Dr. Carol Strike, CAHR President-Elect  
Dr. Michael Grant, CAHR Past President  
Dr. Marissa Becker, CAHR Board Member  
Dr. H  l  ne C  t  , CAHR Board Member  
Dr. Shariq Haider, CAHR Board Member  
Terry Howard, CAHR Board Member  
Dr. Angela Kaida, CAHR Board Member  
Maureen Owino, CAHR Board Member  
Dr. Ciann Wilson, CAHR Board Member  
Dr. Stephanie Nixon, Past CAHR Board Member

Cc:

Idil Abdillahi, PhD(c), Ryerson University  
OmiSoore H. Dryden, PhD, Thorneloe University  
Rinaldo Walcott, PhD, University of Toronto  
Leo Wilton, PhD, MPH, Binghamton University

**About CAHR**

CAHR is the leading organization of HIV/AIDS researchers in Canada. CAHR encourages Canadian researchers to be leaders in knowledge translation and to effectively respond both to the Canadian and global HIV/AIDS epidemics. CAHR's mission is to: promote excellence in HIV research; foster collaboration and cooperation among HIV research communities, including basic science, clinical science, epidemiology & public health and social science; promote education and the development of new researchers; and provide a unified voice for Canadian HIV researchers. CAHR also engages people living with HIV/AIDS and AIDS service organizations in ongoing dialogue and information exchange to ensure that HIV/AIDS research remains responsive to the epidemic and its stakeholders.