



PRESS RELEASE

April 20, 2012

YORK REGION GROUP ANNOUNCES LAUNCH KICKS OFF NATIONAL ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION AWARENESS WEEK

YORK REGION - The York Region Gift of Life Association (YRGLA), whose mission is to promote organ and tissue donor awareness and raise donor registration rates in York Region, held a press conference today at the Aurora Town Hall to announce their official launch and to usher in National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week (NOTDAW) April, 22 - 28.

The Group was supported and endorsed by speakers, Conservative MP Lois Brown, Conservative MPP Frank Klees, Liberal MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek, and Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe who also represented York Region Council. It is the first time a group of this nature has been endorsed and supported by all four levels of government in a non partisan manner in a public forum.

All speakers are committed to the cause and endorsed the new Association with Newmarket Aurora Conservative MPP Frank Klees emphasizing the need for increased awareness stating "I am convinced that the main reason people don't register as organ and tissue donors is that they haven't been given the opportunity to do so. This initiative will help York Region residents realize how important organ donation is and will ensure that the opportunities to register are increased. Lives will be saved and the quality of life will be restored through this program."

Mr. Klees has long been a proponent of organ and tissue donation and has worked diligently in the community and the legislature lobbying for the cause, introducing his Organ Donation Bill, which received unanimous all-party support at every stage of the legislative process. Last year Mr. Klees issued an MPP challenge in to raise donation rates York Region and held a benefit concert featuring local acts in support of donor registration.

Oak Ridges Markham MPP Dr. Helena Jaczek, also a committed proponent, recently introduced a Private Member's Resolution to establish an advisory committee to investigate all possible options for encouraging and improving organ and tissue donation in Ontario. This committee would also investigate ways of increasing the quality of care for organ or tissue donors.

Dr. Jaczek feels that YRGLA can be instrumental in raising awareness and donor registration in the region.. "I am pleased to hear of the formation of the York Region Gift of Life Association. Concentrating their efforts here in York Region, the Association is already hard at work by helping to raise awareness of the importance of organ and tissue donation. For every 1 donor, up to 8 lives can be saved. With approximately 1,500 people waiting for an organ transplant this grassroots effort will go a long way." said Dr. Jaczek

Aurora Mayor Geoff Dawe also voiced his support and that of York Region Council. "Residents in Aurora and across York Region have a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those awaiting transplants," said Town of Aurora Mayor Geoffrey Dawe. "I strongly encourage everyone to help prevent the needless suffering of so many by registering consent at www.beadonor.ca"

Mayor Dawe who has supported previous awareness activities in Aurora made a proclamation earlier this week supporting the YRGLA and NOTDAW that was posted on the Town's web site.

Although a provincial responsibility the Federal government does support and endorse organ and tissue donation, Federal Conservative MP for Newmarket Aurora Lois Brown, committed her support for the Association and spoke about the funds the Federal government has provided to Canadian Blood Services to support a coordinated national effort for organ donation and transplant strategy.

"I am very excited about the launch of the York Region Gift of Life association. I believe this is a great step forward in helping to heighten even more, the need for increased donor registrations and how that one act can save multiple lives." Said MP Brown

The formation of York Region Gift of Life Association was spearheaded by Alyshia Van Veen who was inspired by her father Malcolm who donated his organs. Alyshia, who is passionate about the cause and has been very active as an advocate sought to form a

regional association to provide region wide coverage and better focus on the need for increased awareness and registration.

"Organ and tissue donation is a cause that affects so many in our community. With more than 1,500 people on the wait list and a provincial registration rate of 21%, we need to make a change," said Mrs. Van Veen "The members of the York Region Gift of Life Association have been touched by this life-saving cause and are living proof of its impact. They are our community's donor families, recipients, living donors and advocates. Through our stories, and education and awareness initiatives, we hope to increase the registration rate both in York Region, and province-wide."

Joining with Alyshia and the other members in forming YRGLA was Bruce Cuthbert, who co founded Project Organ Donation Awareness (PODA) with his son Blair and nephew Brent, a group that had a strong presence in the Aurora, Newmarket area,.

Bruce, a transplant recipient, feels that "a larger group with more human resources is the most effective way to accomplish our objectives". Bruce pointed out that the lack of consent registration affects far more people than just the person in need of donation. "The need for organ and tissue donation not only affects the people waiting for a transplant but also their children, parents, spouses and other loved ones who have to endure the traumatic and anxious agony of not knowing whether their loved one will last long enough to receive a transplant. The solution is increased organ and tissue donation. Each person can do their part to rectify the situation by registering their consent. One donor can save 8 lives and enhance 75 others."

One person dies every three days in Canada waiting for a transplant. Canada has one of the lowest consent registration rates of developed countries in the world. Some countries such as Spain have donation rates in excess of 80%. Ontario's organ and tissue donation registration rate is 21%. As a whole, York Region falls significantly below this number and in some areas registration is as low as 7% (see schedule below)

There are many misconceptions about organ donation including the fact that many people think they are organ donors because they carry the organ donor cards. All registration is done through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Registration can be done online at www.beadonor.ca . If the back of your Health Card does not say donor you are not a registered donor.

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Backgrounder

York Region Gift of Life Association is a new organization that has over 20 members from throughout the region. The Association is comprised of individuals and groups from across York Region, recipients, donor families and advocates, who have, up until this point, operated as smaller groups or individuals they have come together under one umbrella in their effort to raise awareness of the need for organ and tissue donation and increase donor consent registration rates in York Region. The association aims to increase registration by participating in and spearheading local initiatives while sharing members' stories to showcase the life-saving and enhancing impact of organ and tissue donation.

YRGLA has established partnerships with various community and service groups in York Region as well as politicians in a nonpartisan effort. Participation in many events throughout the Region is scheduled for the coming months. YRGLA membership is open to like minded individuals seeking to increase awareness and consent registration.

York Region Consent Registration by Town/City

Aurora: L4G

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	43,462	10,062	23.2%

Georgina: L0E, L0C, L4P

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	48,621	11,036	22.7%

Newmarket: L3X, L3Y

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	69,197	17,235	24.9%

Stouffville: L4A

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	26,277	5,587	21.3%

Vaughan: L6A

Card Type	Number of Card	Yes to	Registration Rate
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	Holders	Donation	
All Card Holders	56,013	4,772	8.5%

Markham: L3P

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	37,412	4,702	12.6%

Richmond Hill: L4C, L4E, L4S, L4B

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	164,434	17,817	10.8%

East Gwillimbury: L9N

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	7,200	2,161	30.0%

King City: L7B

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	5,543	1,225	22.1%

Woodbridge: L4L, L4H

Card Type	Number of Card Holders	Yes to Donation	Registration Rate
All Card Holders	86,832	6,435	7.4%

Data Source: RPDB 31/Jan/2012