

Media Release



For Immediate Release
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FAITH LEADERS LAUNCH PUBLIC CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION *Faith-specific pro-donation brochures to be distributed across the GTA*

NEWS

Today, Trillium Gift of Life Network (TGLN) in partnership with the Canadian Council of Imams, the Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto and the Toronto Board of Rabbis, launched an unprecedented coordinated awareness building effort on the need for organ and tissue donation that demonstrates common ground amongst diverse faiths. It's a major step to encourage more Ontarians to register consent for organ and tissue donation at a time when approximately 1,700 people are waiting for organs and thousands more are waiting for tissue.

This is the first time multiple faith groups in Canada have distributed brochures to their respective faith communities to support consideration of organ and tissue donation. In addition to distributing pro-donation brochures, faith leaders will be speaking to their congregations over the coming days and weeks on the topic.

QUOTES

"Today we saw three faith leaders stand together to support one cause and today they asked their communities to stand with them, learn about and register consent for organ and tissue donation," said Frank Markel, President and CEO of TGLN. "Disease recognizes no religious affiliation, no ethnic background, no ideology. Just as disease knows no preference or targets no one group, no one community is responsible for donation. For donation to work it must be a shared endeavor of all."

"The Catholic community will be distributing 200,000 copies of a brochure that provides important information on organ and tissue donation from a Catholic perspective. We hope this resource will lay the foundation for discussion among loved ones and spark our community to action as we work to foster a culture of life for all," said Moira McQueen, Director, Canadian Catholic Bioethics Institute.

"Muslims must not be afraid of consenting to donate or feel they will not be rewarded by Allah for doing this act of organ donation. This intention to save a human life is well

founded in the Sharia and the kindness is a true sadaqa jariya (perpetual charity), the reward of which will manifest in society and the Day of Judgement,” said Imam Habeeb Alli.

“Saving a human life is of paramount importance in Judaism. Our tradition teaches us that whoever saves a life is considered as if he or she saved an entire world. This duty to save a life is so important that it takes precedence over most other religious obligations. It is a mitzvah in both senses of the word: Saving a life is a commandment and a good deed. The Toronto Board of Rabbis urges members of the Jewish community to register their consent to become organ donors. We also encourage families to help in life-saving transplant procedures by consenting to a loved one's post-mortem organ donation when a request is made by hospital staff.”

QUICK FACTS

Working in partnership with faith leaders, TGLN has developed and implemented initiatives to encourage and empower donation in faith communities. Initiatives include: masses in honour of donor families, faith focused pro-donation brochures and sermons supporting organ donation.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto is distributing 200,000 new brochures in support of organ and tissue donation to 235 parishes across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) on September 20th. The Catholic Archdiocese have also dedicated a page on their website to organ donation: <http://www.archtoronto.org/organdonation/>

The Canadian Council of Imams, in partnership with the North American Muslim Foundation, has mailed brochures about the Islamic perspective on donation to 45,000 Muslim households in the GTA. Also, prayer calendars for Ramadan include pro-donation messages and GTA Imams have been encouraged to speak about the issue during Ramadan.

The Toronto Board of Rabbis is releasing an updated version of its brochure supporting organ and tissue donation targeting Toronto's Jewish community. Also, many Rabbis across the GTA will include pro-donation messages at their synagogues.

In February 2009, TGLN, in partnership with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, launched a pro-donation brochure that was distributed to 49 First Nations communities in June.

You can register your consent to donate your organs and tissue by visiting your local Service Ontario Health Card Services – OHIP office or outreach centre where you renew your health card. You can also register by downloading and filling out a Gift of Life Consent Form from www.giftoflife.on.ca and mailing it to the address on the form.

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