

Alberta Doctors' Digest

Mr. Harold James

In 1995, the hospital in Lamont, Alberta, burned down. The monumental responsibility of negotiating the insurance claim, selecting the architect and engineering services and working with various government departments to rebuild it fell to Harold James. As CEO of a small organization in a small town, he didn't have access to enormous resources; nevertheless, he not only made sure that Lamont replaced what it had lost in the fire, he made it better. He imagined not just a hospital but an integrated health centre – with acute care, continuing care and assisted living all under one roof, a daring vision at a time when, in former premier Ed Stelmach's words, "services were stovepiped in their delivery and everyone was embedded in protectionist and territorial ideals." The success of that undertaking, which provided a model for other rural Alberta communities, exemplifies Harold James's will, commitment and vision.



Harold James (Photo credit: Bryan Cooper of Cooper & O'Hara Photography)

With training in laboratory technology and health services administration (received in St. Lucia, Jamaica, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Michigan), Harold became administrator and CEO of Archer Memorial Hospital in Lamont, the town where he and his wife Josie made their home and raised their family for more than four decades, then he became Executive Director and CEO of Lamont Health Care Centre (LHCC). In addition to

managing the construction and operation of the facilities, he was instrumental in recruiting physicians and specialists to the staff. Managing a staff including family doctors, ophthalmologists, general surgeons, orthopedic surgeons, a gynecologist/obstetrician, ENT specialists, an internal medicine specialist, anesthesiologists, a podiatrist, podiatric surgeons, physiotherapists, dental specialists and an optometrist, in addition to provision for public health, mental health, social work, and home care, Harold has achieved his vision of comprehensive care in a small rural health centre. Due to his skilled negotiations and collaboration with different levels of government, LHCC survived the major cuts and reduced services and closures that faced many rural hospitals in the 1990s.

As CAO of the Lamont County Housing Foundation from 1995, he coordinated initiatives in planning and building appropriate housing and associated services for the aging residents of other towns, too, allowing them to remain in their communities, close to their families, friends and neighbors, unlike so many others who have had to be uprooted due to a lack of services and programs in their communities.

In testimonial after testimonial, people speak of Harold's integrity, his kindness, his determination, his wisdom and his commitment to service. For more than 40 years, he has stayed true to his vision of offering compassionate and excellent care to all, especially to the vulnerable and the marginalized, and the people of his community and of this province have many reasons to be grateful for his service.