



EGLSF PRESS RELEASE

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## **PRIDE House opened historic doors at Olympics**

As the Winter Olympics began last week in Vancouver, the LGBT community has had a very special reason to celebrate. Media from all over Canada and the world were present to witness the opening of the first ever 'PRIDE House' associated with an Olympics.

PRIDE House is unofficial welcome centre for LGBT athletes whose aim is to educate as well as provide a safe and welcoming venue for gay and lesbian athletes, coaches, friends and families. Based in Vancouver's gay village, PRIDE House is located approximately 20 minutes from the Olympic Village.

Whilst neither the Vancouver Organizing Committee nor the IOC is partners in the project and the group is being careful to tell sponsors that their rights will only be displayed within the house itself, organisers have said that Vanoc staff have offered moral support.

Mark Tewksbury, former Olympic swimmer, who visited PRIDE House during the Games' opening weekend, said such a venue would never have been tolerated when he was competing. Tewksbury, who announced he was gay in 1998, won gold and bronze medals in the 1992 Barcelona Games and a silver medal in Seoul in 1988.

"Being at the Olympics was like being in an occupied country where you're never sure who you can talk to," said Tewksbury, who published the book *Inside Out: Straight Talk from a Gay Jock* in 2006. "If I made a mistake, it could have been the end of my livelihood and that climate is definitely [still] present." Life for gay athletes is still difficult, but the climate is changing, Tewksbury said.

"These Olympics have turned out to be very magical because I'm a very openly gay athlete and I was invited [by Vancouver's Olympic Organizing Committee] to speak to the Canadian team before they walked into the [opening ceremony], as who I am ... as a gay athlete."

The opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics also included a performance by K D Lang, the internationally acclaimed lesbian singer songwriter.

EGLSF asked Stephen Frost, Head of Diversity and Inclusion at London 2012 how the London Olympics would be furthering this spirit of inclusion - "For us at London 2012, Diversity & Inclusion is a defining aspect of the Games. We actively encourage LGBT people to take part, whether as an employee or a volunteer, by going for business or through being a spectator. For the many ways to get involved, check out [www.london2012.com](http://www.london2012.com)."

More about PRIDE house: <http://www.pridehouse.ca>

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