

September 25, 2015

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, PC, MP  
Prime Minister of Canada

The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, MP  
Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition

Mr. Justin Trudeau, MP  
Leader of the Liberal Party

Ms. Elizabeth May, MP  
Leader of the Green Party

**Re: Your party's position on four (4) key questions on HIV and AIDS**

Dear Sirs and Madam:

The Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit charitable organization based in Ottawa, representing over 100 Canadian member organizations and individuals, including frontline AIDS service organizations, international development organizations, faith-based organizations, unions, and people living with HIV.

We are writing on behalf of our coalition members to request your responses to four key questions on how Canada should be addressing HIV and AIDS domestically and at the global level.

**1. Reducing women's risks of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections (STBBIs).**

Over the years, women have increasingly carried the burden of HIV and AIDS. According to reports from the WHO and UNFPA, HIV/AIDS is now the leading cause of mortality among women of reproductive age globally. When this statistic is unpacked, we see that HIV doesn't just impact a woman – it impacts her entire family. In fact, according to studies conducted by UNICEF, in many places around the world, within two years of a mother's death her children are 10 times more likely to die themselves. What's more, women are a driving force for economies. This is equally true for countries like Canada as it is for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Women and girls traditionally bear an unequal responsibility for the work of caregiving for those who are sick or orphaned due to HIV and AIDS. What happens to their families when they are too sick to work? Poverty, violence and inequality continue to put women and young girls at

heightened risk of HIV infection. Women require new ways to protect themselves, including microbicides, a class of products designed to reduce the transmission of HIV and/or sexually transmitted infections that women can control even if they cannot ensure their male partners use condoms.

Canada has previously provided important funding support to coordinated global research efforts via the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI). It is critical to the search for multi-purpose prevention technologies (MPTs) and HIV vaccine research that global initiatives be adequately and consistently resourced, and that wealthy nations share in this global responsibility. Canada can take leadership to stem the spread of HIV and other STBBIs and support the development of an effective, affordable and accessible HIV vaccine and multi-purpose prevention technologies.

**How will your party increase support for Canadian and international research on new HIV prevention technologies, including multi-purpose prevention technologies, microbicides, and vaccines?**

## **2. Supporting the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.**

Impressive gains have been made worldwide over the past 5 years in improving treatment access for people living with HIV. Global talks now speak to universal access and universal health care coverage, yet 18 million people are still awaiting access to antiretroviral treatment, and still for every 2 people put on treatment, 5 become infected.

The successes of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria have been well documented – 13.7 million lives saved by programs for HIV, TB and malaria from 2002 to the end of 2013, 8.1 million people on anti-retroviral therapy, 13.2 million people on anti-tuberculosis treatments and 548 million anti-malaria bed nets distributed<sup>1</sup>. The Global Fund is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities, and is often referred to as the “gold standard” for international health financing. Overcoming these three global health issues requires a long-term commitment and sustained action.

A \$650 million dollar commitment in 2013 for the 2014-2016 period represents a 20 percent increase in its contribution and makes Canada the seventh largest donor to the Global Fund. We urge Canada to continue its strong leadership in support of the Global Fund through a minimum of an additional 20 percent increase in its contribution during the 2016 Global Fund Replenishment.

**Will your party renew Canada’s leadership role at the Global Fund through a minimum of a 20% increase in its contribution for the 2017-2019 period?**

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. **The Results Report 2015.** <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/blog/2015-09-21-17-Million-Lives/>

### **3. Meeting our foreign aid commitments.**

Canada faces the challenge of using taxation to address domestic issues while continuing to maintain its contributions to international efforts. Recognizing that Canada can't halt the HIV epidemic at home without helping to stop it worldwide, in June 2005, MPs in the House of Commons unanimously passed a resolution calling on the government to increase Canada's foreign aid to the United Nations target of 0.7% of gross national income by 2015. However, despite these commitments, we continue to under-perform in contributing our fair share of resources to global efforts aimed at stopping disease and suffering. Instead of reaching for the UN goal of 0.7% of gross national income (GNI), we have unfortunately been witness to a steady decline in ODA levels from 0.34% of GNI in 2010/11 to 0.26 % of GNI in 2014/15.

**What will your party do to reverse this trend and set a binding timetable to deliver on this commitment?**

### **4. Leadership through a renewed Canadian strategy on HIV and related co-infections.**

We are at a critical juncture when it comes to curbing the HIV epidemic and addressing related development challenges. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being ushered in this month, providing ambitious targets for the global community to address a range of universal health and development challenges. UNAIDS has put forward a global Fast-Track target of reducing HIV infections to less than half a million people per year by 2020.

The recent 8<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Society Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia (19-22 July, 2015), highlighted many success stories from around the global community with some of the greatest advances coming from Africa. Yet conference reports illustrate room for improvement in Canada's domestic response to HIV and AIDS. Canada has no national estimates of engagement in HIV testing and care, more commonly known as the "treatment cascade"<sup>2</sup>. As a representative of the country, British Columbia, which has provincial estimates, shows Canada falling well behind much of Western Europe and some low and middle-income countries<sup>3</sup>.

In order for Canada to successfully achieve global targets of 90-90-90 by 2020 (90% of all people living with HIV will know their status, 90% of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained anti-retroviral therapy (ART), 90% of all people receiving ART will have undetectable viral load)<sup>4</sup> Canada must renew its national strategy on HIV and AIDS. Canada's Federal Initiative on HIV and AIDS<sup>5</sup> expired in 2009. Renewal of the national strategy will reinvigorate Canada's response with ambitious goals, targets and increased investment for HIV

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<sup>2</sup> CATIE. **The HIV Treatment Cascade.** <http://www.catie.ca/en/hiv-canada/8/8-2/8-2-1/8-2-1-1>

<sup>3</sup> CATIE. **Changing the Narrative: Why HIV prevention work in Canada needs to embrace HIV treatment.** <http://www.catie.ca/en/pif/spring-2015/changing-narrative-why-hiv-prevention-work-canada-needs-embrace-hiv-treatment>

<sup>4</sup> UNAIDS (2014). **Fast-tracking the AIDS epidemic by 2030.** [http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/JC2686\\_WAD2014report](http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/documents/2014/JC2686_WAD2014report)

<sup>5</sup> **Federal Initiative to Address HIV and AIDS in Canada:** <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/fi-if/index-eng.php>

prevention, treatment, care and support helping to ensure that Canada meets the challenge of 90-90-90 by 2020.

**How will you ensure that Canada demonstrates leadership at home and abroad in meeting global HIV targets of 90-90-90 by 2020?**

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these important issues and we thank you in advance for your response by October 9, 2015.

We look forward to sharing your answers with our members across Canada in advance of the October 19 election. Your responses will undoubtedly inform their choices as they go to the polls.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robin Montgomery".

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