



CANADIAN HIV/AIDS LEGAL NETWORK

Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategic Directions, 2006–2010 May 2006

Background on strategic planning process

The Board of Directors and staff of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network formulated a strategic plan for 2004–2008 through an extensive consultative process that began in November 2002. The broad lines of that plan are still relevant, and they informed this document.

In 2004–05, the Canadian government adopted a new framework for the national response to HIV/AIDS, the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS, which replaced the Canadian Strategy on HIV/AIDS. In 2005, the national HIV/AIDS organizations also drew up some joint strategic priorities and general principles of collaboration as part of their common reflection on the role of the non-governmental sector in the Canadian national HIV/AIDS response. Both the Federal Initiative and the joint NGO strategic planning process are responses to the increase in federal funding for HIV/AIDS programs — long advocated by non-governmental organizations, including the Legal Network — from \$42.2 million annually in 2004–05 to \$84.4 million annually by 2008–09.

The Federal Initiative complements an action plan for governmental and non-governmental actors entitled *Leading Together: Canada takes action on HIV/AIDS (2005–2010)*, which was developed in consultation with NGOs. A Legal Network staff member was on the drafting committee for *Leading Together*, and other Network staff made significant contributions in drafting the text of various sections. The action plan contains many important goals and action points of substance; on paper, it represents a significant advance in planning for an effective response to HIV/AIDS in Canada, and importantly includes a significant commitment to Canadian engagement in the global response to the epidemic. The action plan, like the Federal Initiative, proposes wide-ranging activities that address the underlying determinants of HIV/AIDS, including human rights abuse and social marginalization. The Federal Initiative proposes a particular emphasis on “specific populations” — namely people living with HIV/AIDS, people who use drugs, women and youth, Aboriginal people, inmates and people from countries where HIV/AIDS is endemic. (Notably, sex workers are not mentioned among these populations, although as a result of the Legal Network’s efforts, there is some reference to sex workers in *Leading Together*.)

The responsibility and accountability for initiatives specified in *Leading Together*, however, have been unclear. Achieving many of the goals identified in the document will require action by governments, including the federal government. Yet for a variety of reasons, *Leading Together* was not released with the imprimatur of federal government endorsement, but rather as a publication of the Canadian Public Health Association. Shepherding its rollout and the task of building “buy-in” from stakeholders across the country has been handed off to a small committee. As a result, *Leading Together* is not well established as a program for the country, meaning it could be even easier for the new federal government to ignore or contradict its prescriptions for action, particularly since there was never firm political commitment to its implementation even by the previous government.

In light of these new developments, the Legal Network sought resources to update its strategic plan for the period 2006–2010. With the assistance of an independent consultant, the Network in 2005 surveyed front-line AIDS service organizations and legal service providers for an updated assessment of their priority issues and technical support needs. As part of the development of this plan, the Network also developed a scan of the domestic and international environment for work on HIV/AIDS, which was discussed with the Network’s membership at its annual general meeting in September 2005. A draft set of priority strategic issues was also presented and discussed with the membership and the board. The board also had structured discussions on strategic directions for the Network at its meetings in January and June 2005 and February 2006. This plan reflects input from all of those sources. The vision, mission and values statements included here are largely unchanged from the previous strategic plan, having emerged from extensive discussions, particularly among board members.

The intent of this document is to state the principles, strategic directions and major issues that will guide the Legal Network in its work in the period 2006–2010. It is thus an internal document, but the board and staff of the Network hope that it is useful in presenting the foundations and directions of our work to collaborators and other stakeholders in the struggle against HIV/AIDS.

The environment in which we work

The environmental scan that was conducted as part of the development of this plan analyses in some detail a number of political, social, legal and human rights factors that are important to the context of the Legal Network’s work in Canada and abroad. It was reviewed by the Legal Network board and members. Some of the main points in the environmental scan are summarized and updated briefly here.

- **Commitment to rights-based approaches is largely rhetorical:** There is a broad consensus internationally and in Canada, among governments and NGOs alike, that protecting, respecting and fulfilling human rights are essential to an effective response to HIV/AIDS. “Rights-based approaches” are espoused everywhere. But nearly 25 years into the epidemic, HIV/AIDS-linked human rights abuses are rampant. Subordination of women constrains their ability to demand safer sex. Gay and bisexual men are harassed and abused with impunity in many countries. Harsh

laws and social disdain make it hard for sex workers and people who use drugs to assert their rights and participate in HIV/AIDS programs. Prisoners are denied access to HIV/AIDS services and support that are available to others. Indigenous persons and migrants face multiple forms of discrimination that inhibit their seeking of HIV/AIDS services. People living with HIV/AIDS face multi-dimensional discrimination in many settings. In short, in spite of a virtually universal espousal, at least rhetorically, of rights-centered approaches to addressing HIV/AIDS, much remains to be done to safeguard the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and those most affected.

- **Increased funding but new challenges:** Long-awaited funding increases at the federal level are welcome. However, at the same time there are worrisome developments that are of concern to the Legal Network, including apparent regression in several areas where NGOs had succeeded, after much effort, in strengthening the support for effective civil society action against AIDS:
 - PHAC has reconfigured the funds for which NGOs may apply. As a result, operational funding, in the form of the National NGO Operational Fund, of which the Legal Network has been a recipient, now no longer exists as such. All funding is now more akin to project-based funding.
 - It appears that the increase in HIV/AIDS funding at the federal level will not be reflected in major increases in funds available to community-based NGOs. Whereas overall funding has doubled, the funds available to front-line and national NGOs will not come close to doubling, and some of the new funds may not be appropriate to support the kind of work that the Legal Network does.
 - There is no longer any dedicated funding envelope for work on legal and human rights issues. The previous Legal, Ethical and Human Rights Fund supported a number of innovative and important activities of the Legal Network.
- **HIV/AIDS receiving less attention:** Governments and the general public in Canada often do not see HIV/AIDS as a priority issue. At this writing, it is unclear whether the government elected in January 2006 will make HIV/AIDS a priority in meaningful ways. Surveys in Canada continue to show a worrying lack of HIV awareness and knowledge among young people, for example. There is also evidence of a resurgence in new infections among gay men in some parts of the country and continued high levels of transmission in Aboriginal communities, even as the policy urgency of HIV/AIDS appears little perceived.
- **Stigma, discrimination and lack of access to care:** In Canada as elsewhere, these are still major challenges for people living with HIV. A 2003 survey of the Canadian population revealed, for example, that 45 percent of Canadians would be uncomfortable sending their children to school where one of the students was known to be living with HIV/AIDS. Only a little over half of the population was reported to believe that people living with HIV/AIDS should be allowed to work in food service jobs. In Canada, these challenges are in many cases compounded by criminalization

or fear of criminalization of non-disclosure of HIV status by those living with the disease who engage in unsafe practices.

- **Harm reduction advances in drug policy may not be secure:** Some gains have been made in the acceptance and use of harm reduction measures in Canada and abroad, but there is still much to do. There has been, in recent years, a growing willingness on the part of some municipalities and provincial governments, as well as the federal government, to at least experiment with new harm reduction measures (e.g., safer injection facilities, distribution of safer crack use kits, etc.). However, with the government elected in early 2006, it will likely be a challenge to simply preserve existing policy and program gains, given the Prime Minister's statements indicating support for enforcement-based strategies in responding to drugs and hostility toward harm reduction initiatives such as safe injection facilities.
- **Denial of economic and social rights a key driver in the epidemic / diversification of epidemic:** In Canada and globally, it is clearer than ever that economic and social inequalities as well as human rights violations play an important part in the perpetuation of the epidemic. For many marginalized persons — including people of colour, Aboriginal people, linguistic minorities, sex workers, people who use drugs, prisoners and former prisoners — HIV/AIDS may augment the multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion they face.
- **Conservative ideology undermining responses based on evidence and human rights:** International HIV/AIDS programs and policies have been challenged by the rise in extreme conservatism and religious fundamentalism in the corridors of power of many countries, including but not only the United States. HIV/AIDS programs and policies in many countries denigrate the rights of sex workers, people who use drugs, and women and dismiss both science and the lessons of best-practice programs. These factors and the continuing reliance of many countries on repressive measures in the fight against HIV/AIDS pose a challenge for Canada in both its domestic policies and its leadership on rights-based approaches to HIV/AIDS in the international arena.

Vision informing this strategic plan

A world in which the human rights and dignity of people living with HIV/AIDS and those affected by the disease are respected and fulfilled; and where laws and policies facilitate HIV prevention efforts, as well as care, treatment, and support for people with HIV/AIDS.

Mission

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally. We accomplish this through research, legal and policy analysis, education, advocacy, and community mobilization.

Values

The work of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network is rooted in the following values:

Human rights — Promoting, protecting, and fulfilling human rights are central to combating the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Laws and policies are important elements in defining, respecting, and fulfilling those rights.

Focus on and participation of persons living with HIV/AIDS in marginalized populations — The nature of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic demands that we make issues relating to marginalized people the primary focus of our efforts; and that we address the broad health, social, and economic needs of those most vulnerable to HIV. In all of the Legal Network's efforts, we endeavour to keep a focus on the problems of the most marginalized, including Aboriginal people, women and girls, people of colour, people from countries where HIV/AIDS is endemic, sex workers, people who use illegal drugs, prisoners and former prisoners, and linguistic minorities. It is standard practice of the Legal Network, to the best of our ability, to work and consult with persons most affected by the problems we analyze and by the solutions we advocate. Our reports and public statements will continue to be informed and shaped by our partnership with organizations and individuals from affected populations. We are committed to continuing to seek meaningful participation of people living with HIV/AIDS on our board and staff.

Action and activism — Leadership is required to push an action-oriented agenda in dealing with the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada and internationally. We must challenge governments and other decision-makers to address critical issues relating to human rights and HIV/AIDS.

Collaboration and partnership — Fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic requires the combined efforts of many different sectors and organizations. We work in partnership with others who have complementary skills and knowledge. We give priority to partnerships with organizations representing people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Accountability — We are accountable to the people and communities we serve through transparent processes, effective use of resources, and thorough evaluation of the impact of our efforts. At the same time, we challenge governments to fulfill their human rights obligations to people and communities living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

Participation — Persons living with HIV/AIDS and those who are vulnerable have a right to participate in a meaningful way in defining and implementing HIV/AIDS policies and programs. The Legal Network consults affected populations, our members and others who use our work, striving to ensure their participation in determining the nature and content of our work. We endeavour to exemplify meaningful participation of those most affected by HIV/AIDS in all that we do and to encourage our partners to do the same. We are committed to ensuring the meaningful participation of francophone and anglophone Canadians in consultations related to our work and to ensuring that all of our materials on Canadian issues are available in French and English. We will strive to

ensure meaningful participation of others, such as persons from countries where HIV/AIDS is endemic, persons of colour and Aboriginal persons, who may face discriminatory barriers to participation in policy and program discussions because of race or ethnicity. We value formal partnerships, cemented by memoranda of understanding and partnership agreements, with organizations representing the concerns of Aboriginal persons, prisoners and sex workers. We will seek a partnership agreement with the new national organization of people who use drugs as its structure develops.

Global responsibility — It is a moral imperative that Canada increase its contribution to the global response to the HIV epidemic, and a legal obligation that Canada undertake international assistance and cooperation in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights. Canadian partners have insights and resources to offer, but we also have much to gain from the experience of other countries and advocates. The Legal Network has vast experience and expertise that are relevant to our fellow advocates around the world who struggle to remain true to human rights principles in their efforts against HIV/AIDS. We regard that experience and expertise as conferring a certain responsibility to be part of those struggles as much as possible, wherever they are being waged.

Excellence — Our work addresses critical issues, with serious implications for people living with HIV/AIDS and marginalized populations as well as governments. We have a responsibility to base our conclusions and recommendations consistently on sound legal and ethical standards along with evidence gained from comprehensive and rigorous research and analysis.

Strategic directions

Since 1992, the Legal Network has been amassing a body of legal and human rights analysis related to HIV/AIDS that is virtually unparalleled in the world. Our materials are used by organizations and individuals who strive for the protection of HIV/AIDS-related human rights all over the world. The Legal Network receives frequent requests for legal analysis and technical support from partners in Canada and abroad. The Legal Network strives always to offer technical support to all who need it and make its materials and other resources as widely available and user-friendly as possible.

After 14 years of building research and using it effectively for advocacy, the Legal Network sees the need in 2006–2010 for somewhat **greater emphasis on building capacity of front-line service providers, emerging HIV/AIDS and law organizations, and others who work to fight HIV/AIDS in a human rights framework, both in Canada and abroad.** Legal Network staff have always tried to give their best effort to answering technical requests from partners in Canada and around the world, but the Legal Network has rarely had adequate funds to make this activity as central as it should be or to develop other means of technical capacity-building for partners. Front-line service providers who are members of the Legal Network and others who have sought our assistance over the years have continually encouraged the Legal Network to do more workshops and training, activities that have also been limited by resource constraints. We are committed in 2006–2010 to seeking adequate resources to support a greater focus on capacity-building. Greater emphasis on building the capacity of front-line services

providers is also one of the common priorities of the national HIV/AIDS organizations in Canada.

The strategic priorities for the Legal Network in 2006–2010 are as follows:

1. Strengthen and sustain the Legal Network’s capacity for excellent research, analysis, and writing on legal, ethical, and policy issues related to HIV/AIDS.

The Legal Network has a well-established reputation for producing comprehensive reports and papers on legal, ethical, and policy issues related to HIV/AIDS, based on rigorous research and analysis. In recent years the demand for the work of the Legal Network has increased significantly, both in Canada and internationally. We are committed to meeting this demand, while maintaining the high standards for which we are known, through seeking to sustain a team of legal and human rights experts at least at the staff level of March 2006 (that is, six full-time lawyers or human rights policy experts who conduct research, policy analysis and cutting-edge advocacy for the Legal Network and provide technical support to our partners).

In 2006–2010, to enable expansion of capacity-building activities, the Legal Network will **focus less on the lengthy reports it has produced in the past and more on updates, short reports, information sheets, and other succinct and user-friendly outputs.** Where longer and more detailed analyses are needed of new issues, the Network will seek the resources necessary to produce them. But for many issues it will be possible instead to build on, adapt and update existing materials. Members and front-line service providers have remarked on the need for shorter, more user-friendly products to assist their advocacy efforts. The Legal Network will continue to try to tailor its written reports to current advocacy and policy development needs. The strategy of producing model legislation, which the Legal Network will pursue for at least part of the 2006–2010 period, represents another way to “package” state-of-the-art legal and human rights research into a user-friendly tool for legislative change.

2. Undertake sustained advocacy in critical areas.

The Legal Network has learned that simply providing conclusions and recommendations, however well developed they may be, does not usually result in necessary change in critical areas. Change comes as a result of sustained follow-up and advocacy. The Legal Network is committed to improving its capacity for sustained advocacy, including by more **strategic use of media and communications efforts** and seeking always to increase our ability to work with and **influence key government and community stakeholders.** The production of more succinct policy analyses should free up some of the time of the research and policy staff to participate in advocacy activities and to engage with policy-makers toward concrete objectives. There is a need to sharpen our ability, together with partners and front-line organizations, to anticipate reactions and backlash to our advocacy and thus to develop more effective advocacy strategies.

In 2005 and early 2006, the Legal Network began laying the groundwork for a more creative and effective use of media by more systematically monitoring media accounts of legal and human rights issues related to HIV/AIDS and keeping a more complete database of interested journalists and broadcasters. The Legal Network is committed to continue to improve our appropriate outreach to the media and to make the most of the numerous opportunities we have to speak to the public through mass media. We will intensify our efforts to write and place opinion pieces in major media outlets as well as to react to media inquiries. We will continue to strive to ensure that the web site of the Legal Network, which is very widely used by HIV/AIDS advocates and experts worldwide, is as clear and user-friendly as possible. Model legislation modules, which will be produced with respect to some of the priority issue areas noted below, are also excellent advocacy tools and will be accompanied by advocacy guidelines.

3. Mobilize and build the capacity of others to take action on legal and human rights issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Recognizing that widespread, long-term change requires broad participation, the Legal Network commits itself — in close collaboration with those who seek technical support from the Network — to developing and implementing **capacity-building mechanisms** on AIDS-related legal and human rights issues. These may take the form of **on-line course modules, more in-person workshops or other training events, teleconference or video-conference mini-workshops on key issues, or other formats**. We are committed in 2006–2010 to make every effort to ensure that as many as possible of those who are struggling to advance the human rights of those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS will be further enabled in that struggle by the Legal Network’s materials, analyses and experience. We will seek to raise funds toward this end.

We also envision that in 2006–2010, there may be issues where conventional advocacy methods are not sufficient to advance human rights-based policies. In such cases, if **litigation** is initiated by organizations or lawyers with standing to do so, the Legal Network will seek to support these efforts with technical analysis and in other ways. Given the change in the federal government, it may be that litigation offers the only realistic hope of effecting positive policy change. For example, advocacy efforts have been underway for years to get Correctional Services Canada to implement needle exchange programmes in federal prisons. In the political reality of early 2006, it seems that continuing such advocacy is unlikely to bear fruit, and litigation may be a more propitious strategy for the coming months or years.

4. Increase the Network’s contribution to the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

Since its inception, the Legal Network has recognized that domestic and international responses to the HIV epidemic are necessarily connected and that Canada has a responsibility to increase its international contribution. The Legal Network will **continue to undertake sustained international work** and to communicate our messages internationally, promoting responses to the global HIV/AIDS epidemic that

respect, protect, and fulfill human rights through research, policy analysis, writing, advocacy, technical assistance, and collaboration as appropriate with international agencies. For example, we will continue to work with NGOs across the world for a United Nations declaration on freedom from discrimination based on sexual orientation. We will work in coalition with others to ensure that HIV/AIDS and human rights issues are prominent in the deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on illicit drugs in 2008. We will continue to follow the UN General Assembly meetings on HIV/AIDS.

5. Maintain a focus on combating marginalization and encouraging meaningful participation of those who face exclusion and discrimination.

Though already noted in “values” above, it bears repeating that no strategic activity in the Legal Network will be undertaken without making every effort to ensure that the concerns of the most marginalized persons are of highest priority. We will do everything possible to ensure that **people who are affected by HIV/AIDS and also by social exclusion and discrimination will be consulted meaningfully in our work** and that their interests will be foremost in our activities. Among other efforts, we will seek systematic and productive **working relationships with Aboriginal organizations and communities** and will seek to ensure that **concerns of francophone populations are addressed**. The human rights of people who have come from countries where HIV is endemic will continue to be a concern of the Legal Network. We will do all that we can to support the national network of people who use drugs that had its first official congress in May 2006.

6. Focus on organizational issues to effectively support the work of the Legal Network.

The Legal Network has grown quickly over a relatively short period of time. To address a steady increase in workload, the Legal Network will maintain an organizational structure and office space that best facilitate our efforts, and will strive to **diversify the sources of funding** that support our work.

Priority issues

The Legal Network’s work throughout its history has been characterized by a willingness to take on a very broad range of issues. It is always risky to suggest that our work over a period as long as 2006–2010 will be limited to a few priority issues, but that is the nature of strategic planning. Particularly in light of a changing funding environment, it is important for us to have internal clarity about the issues for which resources must be mobilized for us to remain true to our mission. In this strategic planning process, we have sought to identify priority issues for 2006–2010 that meet the following criteria:

- The issue responds to an urgent and continuing need in Canada or abroad.
- The issue offers opportunity for real impact in Canada and/or abroad in the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights of people living with or vulnerable to HIV/AIDS.

- The issue reflects urgent concerns of front-line service providers and others who benefit from the Legal Network's services.
- The issue builds on existing work and technical strengths of the Legal Network.
- The issue reflects the values of the Legal Network, particularly our concern for the most marginalized persons.

The list of issues that follows was presented to and approved by the Legal Network's membership at the annual general meeting in September 2005. The Legal Network recognizes that other urgent issues may arise in the period of this plan, and also that the importance of some of the issues below may ebb somewhat, but this list represents our best attempt to identify priority concerns for the period.

1. Drug policy, harm reduction and the rights of people who use drugs: The Legal Network is arguably the most important national organization undertaking advocacy on harm reduction and drug policy issues in Canada, and it has become an important actor in legal and human rights analysis related to harm reduction globally. We unfortunately do not foresee a diminution of the difficulty of protecting the human rights of people who use drugs in the coming period. In Canada, harm reduction issues are of particular concern to Aboriginal people, marginalized urban dwellers and young people.

2. The human rights of prisoners related to HIV/AIDS: Canada remains in violation of the basic human rights principle that prisoners should have access to the same health services as the population at large. Prisoners in Canada still do not benefit from access to clean syringes, though many other countries have established sterile syringe programs for inmates. Interruption of antiretroviral treatment for people in detention is an urgent problem. Aboriginal populations are disproportionately affected by these problems. The Legal Network is the national organization that has for years been the most active advocate at the national level for human rights-based prison policies and programmes to address HIV/AIDS. Beyond Canada, the Legal Network hopes to continue to work with a range of partners to promote access to comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support services for people in prison.

3. The human rights of sex workers: The Legal Network sees the period 2006–2010 as a time when decriminalization of sex work, long overdue, must be a priority for our efforts. The Legal Network will build on its 2005 analysis of the harms, including elevated HIV risk, deriving from the criminal law on sex work in Canada. We will network with others around the world who strive for a legal framework based on respect for the rights of sex workers as workers and as human beings. In Canada, Aboriginal populations, especially women, are disproportionately affected by the negative impact of criminalization of sex work. The Legal Network will work side by side with sex worker organizations in the fight for decriminalization of sex work.

4. The rights of women related to HIV/AIDS: In Canada and abroad, subordination of women is complex and entrenched and limits their ability to protect themselves from HIV and to have equal access to treatment and support. In Canada, the Legal Network will continue to work with a coalition of civil society organizations to push for rights-based programs designed intelligently and urgently to ensure women's equal access to services

and support and women's broader economic and social equality. Globally, as part of its project on model legislation on women's rights and HIV/AIDS, the Legal Network will continue to work, in collaboration with local country partners, for legislative reform that cements women's equality in the law in areas most closely related to HIV risk.

5. HIV testing and human rights: In recent years, the centre of gravity in policy thinking both in Canada and globally has begun to shift away from voluntary, confidential, client-initiated HIV testing with counselling and informed consent toward other models less linked to protection of the rights of the person tested, such as routine "opt-out" testing policies. The Legal Network has produced some of the only human rights analyses of this shift and sees the need to continue strong advocacy for human rights-based HIV testing policies.

6. Legal and human rights aspects of access to HIV/AIDS treatment, care and support: The Legal Network played a leading role in mobilizing civil society support for Canada's 2004 legislation enabling compulsory licensing of pharmaceuticals to permit generic exports, and will continue to be sought after for advice from other countries seeking to expand access to antiretroviral drugs in resource-poor countries. The Legal Network will also, of necessity, play a key role in keeping the Global Treatment Access Group (GTAG) active and in advocating for follow-through on using the legislation. Access to uninterrupted and high-quality antiretroviral treatment and other support remains a challenge for many people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada as well, and the legal and policy aspects of this challenge will remain priority concerns for the Legal Network (although CTAC, whose mandate is national treatment advocacy, should be seen as the lead organization on this issue).

7. Criminalization of HIV transmission/exposure: Since the Supreme Court's *Cuerrier* decision in 1998, the criminalization of non-disclosure of HIV status continues to be one of the central legal challenges for front-line service providers and organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS in Canada. The Legal Network will continue to be called upon to help front-line services providers interpret this decision and related jurisprudence and policy, and will surely be called upon by media to comment on cases as they arise. Early in the 2006–2010 period, the Legal Network hopes to find ways to conduct some intensive capacity-building on this subject with front-line service providers in the hope that by the end of the period, others will be better able to handle both the service delivery challenges and the media requests that inevitably arise from *Cuerrier*-related criminal cases. The Legal Network also hopes to engage journalists in a discussion of how these cases are covered. Both these efforts will be informed by consultations with people living with HIV/AIDS.

Risks and opportunities

As with any plan that projects strategies over several years, strategies suggested in this plan could be undermined by a number of factors. Since the issues at the heart of the Legal Network's work are inherently political, changes in the political environment both in Canada and abroad can be important. There is no foolproof protection from political changes in a less progressive direction, but it will be crucial for the Legal Network to

maintain its strong partnerships with organizations and individuals that base their work on scientific evidence and a commitment to human rights. This plan depends on some degree of diversification of the Legal Network's funding base, which is not completely within our control. The Legal Network's staff will continue to seek funding from appropriate diverse sources. We believe that such areas of work as model legislation related to women's rights and harm reduction, for example, will prove of interest to a range of funders.

The period of this plan is also rife with opportunities. In the early part of this planning period, the XVI International AIDS Conference in Toronto and follow-up to it will provide an exceptional opportunity to challenge the government of Canada to articulate human rights-based policies in a global spotlight. The prospect of the conference has inspired a reinvigoration of joint strategic planning among the national HIV/AIDS civil society organizations in Canada, which must be sustained beyond the conference. The Legal Network is encouraged by the opportunities that have come especially from strengthened partnerships with organizations representing Aboriginal people, sex workers, prisoners and people who use drugs early in the period covered by this plan. The Legal Network also plans to use the unusual opportunity of the Toronto conference to solidify a plan for better networking of HIV/AIDS legal organizations around the world, which we hope will have benefits for the entire period of the plan.