

Liberal Party of Canada
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Richard Elliott
Executive Director
The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
600-1240 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5R 2A7

Dear Mr. Elliott,

Enclosed, please find the Liberal Party response to your questionnaire.

For more information on the Liberal Party of Canada's vision for Canada, please take a moment to review our platform online at www.liberal.ca. This document provides details on Liberal goals and priorities.

On behalf of our Leader, Stéphane Dion, and the entire Liberal team, thank you for writing to identify the major concerns of your membership. We appreciate your interest in the Liberal Party's policies as they relate to the issues which affect you.

Sincerely,

Doug Ferguson, President
Liberal Party of Canada



A Liberal Response to the The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

1. Funding HIV prevention research

Currently, for every two people with HIV who go on treatment, five people become infected. In 2007, the Global HIV Prevention Working Group projected that 60 million new cases of HIV will occur by 2015 unless comprehensive HIV prevention is sufficiently increased. Poverty, violence and inequality put women at increased 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 other sexually transmitted infections that women can control even if they cannot ensure their male partners use condoms. Canada has previously provided important funding to support coordinated global research efforts via the International Partnership for Microbicides and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. Canada can take leadership to stem the spread of HIV and support the development of new prevention technologies.

Will your party increase funding for Canadian and international research on new HIV prevention technologies, including microbicides and vaccines?

A Liberal government would take a comprehensive approach to addressing HIV/AIDS that focuses on prevention, care, treatment and support, as well as building capacity in developing countries to fight HIV/AIDS. This includes strengthening health systems and capacity building in developing countries, as part of the global response to the epidemic, and research and development related to the development of an HIV/AIDS vaccine.

As well, a Liberal government would support with funding and other resources coordinated global research efforts in partnership with international organizations to improve research on prevention technologies such as microbicides and vaccines.

2. Strengthening health systems in developing countries

Achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals, including halting and reversing the HIV/AIDS pandemic, requires robust health systems. Canada can help strengthen publicly-funded health systems in developing countries to support HIV treatment, prevention and care by living up to its commitment to increase its official development assistance to 0.7 percent of our gross national income.

Will your party set a binding timetable to deliver on this commitment?

The Liberal Party remains committed to making progress to achieving the 0.7 per cent Millennium Development Goal target. Budget 2005, the last Liberal budget, provided an increase of \$3.4 billion in Official Development Assistance (ODA) over five years and committed to doubling our ODA budget to over \$5 billion by 2010. Our goal was to maintain an 8 per cent annual increase beyond 2010 and accelerate the projected growth rate as our fiscal situation continued to improve.

Unfortunately the Conservative government has cut back on Canada's ODA – so that it has fallen to 0.28 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) in 2007, down from 0.34 per cent in 2005. At the same time, they have reduced the \$12-billion surplus they inherited from the Liberal government in 2006 so that now Canada is on the verge of a deficit. Liberals are committed to getting Canada back on track with our international commitments, but we are also committed to responsible fiscal management

3. Supporting the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Canada is the eighth largest contributor the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the most effective and innovative multilateral funding mechanisms for scaling up HIV prevention, care, treatment and support in the developing world. The Global Fund supports country-led initiatives approved through a rigorous technical review process. Overcoming the epidemic requires a long-term, sustained effort in these areas. The Global Fund needs to be able to provide ongoing, multi-year support for developing countries' efforts. Canada's support for the Global Fund from year to year must be consistent and predictable.

Will your party commit Canada to contributing, in each of the next five years, five percent of the resources needed to fund developing countries' efforts as identified by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria through its technical review process?

The Liberal government played a key role in creating the Global Fund in 2001, and Liberals remain strongly committed to it, given the enormous human devastation that diseases such as AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria cause, especially in Africa. At the time the Liberal government left office, our total commitment to this fund was \$525 million.

As of today, the Liberal Party has not announced new funding beyond existing commitments, but we continue to view the Global Fund as an essential part of Canada's international aid contribution.

4. Fixing Canada's Access to Medicines Regime

The World Health Organization and humanitarian organizations have highlighted that access to lower-cost, generic medicines — including fixed-dose combination products that simplify complicated AIDS treatment regimens — is critical to scaling up access to AIDS treatment for the millions in the developing world currently lacking access. In May 2004, Parliament unanimously passed legislation creating Canada's Access to Medicines Regime to enable export of lower-cost, generic medicines to developing countries. But it has taken four years to reach the first breakthrough: the Government of Rwanda will soon receive delivery of a key AIDS drug from a Canadian generic manufacturer under this Regime. However, all indications are that this could be the last such use of the law unless it is made more user-friendly. The Regime must be simplified, including replacing the current case-by-case process for licensing and instead require only a single compulsory

license authorizing export of lower-cost generic medicines to any of the eligible countries covered by the existing law.

Will your party streamline Canada's Access to Medicines Regime to create a simple one-license process so that developing countries have access to life-saving medicines through a sustainable and straightforward process?

A Liberal government would be in favour of improving Canada's Access to Medicines Regime in order to improve accessibility for those in need of life-saving medicines, particularly in developing countries.

5. Funding the response to HIV/AIDS in Canada

Canada needs an adequately-funded federal strategy on HIV/AIDS, including funding critical for many frontline services and programs that offer HIV prevention and provide care, treatment and support to people infected with HIV and their families and communities. In 2003, all parties in the House of Commons recommended that Canada's federal strategy on HIV/AIDS be enhanced with funding of approximately \$85 million annually. Scaling up over five years, that target was to have been reached in 2008–2009. However, cuts to this funding have been implemented in the last two years. In addition, some funds for strengthening existing and planned programs and services have been diverted to a new initiative on HIV vaccines, an important effort but one that the Standing Committee on Health recognized five years ago warranted separate, additional funding. As a result, funding of the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada is now almost 15% below the level agreed upon by all parties several years ago.

Will your party commit to restoring full funding, at the level of at least \$85 million per year, to the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada?

The Liberal Party of Canada firmly believes that an adequately-funded federal strategy to address HIV/AIDS is a critical step in addressing and preventing the spread of the disease in Canada.

In 2005, the previous Liberal government launched the *Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada*. We doubled the investment in HIV/AIDS programs from \$42 million to \$84 million annually by 2008-2009. In 2005-2006, funding was expected to increase by \$13 million to \$55 million.

The Liberal party of Canada is committed to ensuring that federal funding helps strengthen surveillance, research, and community response and to help to raise public awareness of the seriousness of this disease. We believe that these funds should help ensure that those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS receive the support that they require.

A Liberal government would be willing to engage in discussions and consultations with the provinces and territories, as well as key stakeholders, concerning options for stable, long-term funding for Canada's Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada.

6. Harm reduction services to protect and promote health

Contrary to previous federal policy, Canada's new National Anti-Drug Strategy, launched in October 2007, does not include a commitment to harm reduction, one of the key pillars of a comprehensive response to drugs. In May 2008, a British Columbia court issued a decision granting a constitutional exemption to allow the continued operation of Vancouver's supervised injection site without risk of criminal prosecution of users or staff, and declaring parts of Canada's drug laws unconstitutional to the extent that they prevent people who use drugs from having access to health services that can prevent death and disease.

Will your party commit to supporting harm reduction services, including supervised injection facilities, as one important component of an overall federal strategy on drugs and as part of efforts to prevent the spread of HIV and hepatitis C (HCV) associated with unsafe injection drug use?

The previous Liberal government had invested \$237.7 million over five years to renew Canada's Drug Strategy, which was based on four pillars: prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction.

In 2003, the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority (VCHA) was granted an exemption under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* to launch the supervised injection site (SIS) pilot research project. We also provided \$1.5 million to support the evaluation of the three-year pilot project.

The safe injection site is an example of how harm-reduction and treatment can help the safety and well-being of Canadians at large. We would like to see continued support for the site and its success replicated in other regions across the country where there is desire and support from local communities.

The Liberal Party will continue to encourage and support all levels of government, law enforcement agencies, and professional associations to reduce the harm associated with substance abuse.

7. Protecting prisoners' health to protect public health

Across Canada, federally-funded needle exchange programs successfully reduce the spread of infectious diseases. These programs do not, however, exist inside Canadian prisons. Yet federal government research shows drugs get into prisons despite efforts to block them, that many people in prison have addictions and inject drugs (including by sharing makeshift injection equipment), and that there are high levels of HIV and HCV in prisons. People in prisons have a right to health services needed to protect themselves

against such diseases. Because most prisoners eventually return to the community, the health of prisoners is also a broader public health concern. Numerous other countries have had needle exchange programs in prisons for years. Based on numerous studies of such programs, the World Health Organization, the Canadian Medical Association and the Public Health Agency of Canada, have all recommended such programs.

Will your party implement needle exchange programs in Canadian prisons to stop the spread of deadly viruses and to protect public health?

Needle exchange programs, as part of a greater harm reduction strategy, are not only domestically and internationally recognized through scientific studies and reports, but absolutely necessary to address the spread of infectious diseases in Canada.

A Liberal government would support needle exchange programs in our prisons because they don't just help addicts - they also help the broader public health concern.