

# Leading Together: What we can do to overcome AIDS at home and abroad

A message from leading Canadian organizations

Canadian AIDS Society  
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network

Canadian Association of HIV Research  
Canadian Treatment Action Council

Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange  
Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development

For nearly three decades, HIV/AIDS has exacted a terrible toll of human suffering and economic burden. There have been great achievements in both HIV prevention and treatment, including the very significant increase in recent years in the number of people globally now receiving life-saving AIDS medicines. Yet serious challenges remain. For Canada and the world, 2010 is a year of opportunities that can and should be seized by Parliament and the Government, working in collaboration with community organizations, to make real progress in saving lives and making a healthier nation and world.

In 2005, the federal government released *Leading Together*, “a blueprint for Canada’s response to HIV/AIDS to 2010.” Developed with input from hundreds of people and organizations, this consensus document laid out a bold series of initiatives to move us toward ending the epidemic. Yet, despite important progress on a few fronts, much of what was billed as Canada’s AIDS action plan has stalled or simply never been implemented; as a result, the actions remain as relevant and necessary in 2010 as when the plan was first released. The Government’s forthcoming Throne Speech and budget provide an opportunity to deliver the political will and resources needed to breathe life into this action plan for health.

This year is also the deadline for achieving the global goal of “universal access” to measures for preventing HIV and caring for those living with HIV — a target first adopted by the G8 countries at their 2005 summit and later by all UN member countries. As host of this year’s G8 and G20 Summits, will Canada ensure the global AIDS crisis is on the agenda? And what will Canada do to make the promise of universal access a reality? Let 2010 be the year in which Canada makes significant commitments to supporting developing countries bearing the worst brunt of the global AIDS crisis. Without such commitments from the G8 and other wealthy countries, there is virtually no chance of meeting by 2015 the Millennium Development Goals adopted by Canada and all UN countries at the turn of the century, and promises of “universal access” are empty. The G8 Summit and upcoming replenishment conference of Global Fund donors would be key opportunities for Canada to show leadership with clear, firm commitments.

Through a combination of wisely invested resources and smart policies, Canada can make significant progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS, at home and abroad. As national organizations responding to AIDS, we join together in urging the Government and all Parliamentarians to take the following actions in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS.

## Addressing AIDS here at home

- **Restore funding removed or redirected in recent years from the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS** and commit to funding Canada’s national AIDS strategy at a minimum of \$85 million annually, as recommended unanimously more than six years ago by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health.
- Lead the way in **creating a national catastrophic drug program as part of a national pharmacare program**, as recommended in the report of the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada.
- Develop **national HIV treatment standards** that will ensure greater consistency in HIV care across the country.
- Support the expansion of comprehensive **HIV prevention and health services based on evidence and tailored to the needs of particular communities** disproportionately affected by AIDS in Canada.

## Addressing AIDS globally

- **Fix Canada’s Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR)** by passing Bill C-393 when Parliament resumes, so that lower-cost, generic medicines can get to developing countries.
- Commit to increased and sustained funding for the **Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**, as recently recommended unanimously by the House of Commons Finance Committee.
- Establish a firm timetable for reaching the long-promised target of allocating **0.7% of our gross national income (GNI) to official development assistance**.
- **Renew investments in researching and developing vaccines and microbicides** that would help dramatically reduce new HIV infections globally, and provide additional options for women in particular to protect themselves against infection.

Canada is blessed with world-class researchers, dedicated community organizations and the resources to make a difference in the struggle against one of the worst public health threats in human history. Working together, guided by evidence and by a commitment to human rights, we can protect and promote the health and well-being of all Canadians and of our planet’s fellow citizens. We ask the Government and Parliament to join us in meeting the challenge.

