

For Immediate Release

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## **AIDSVAX Trial Results: Canadian Organizations Ask Canadian Government to Step Up HIV Vaccine Efforts**

OTTAWA, ONTARIO – Preliminary results of the first large-scale (Phase III) efficacy trial for a preventive HIV/AIDS vaccine (AIDSVAX) were released yesterday. The main objective of the trial was to determine the degree to which this candidate vaccine is effective (or ineffective) in preventing HIV infection among human volunteers from Canada (Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver), the United States and the Netherlands. The results showed little reduction in HIV infection among the volunteer samples, however a great deal of knowledge and experience was attained through this trial.

Officials from the Canadian AIDS Society and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network feel that the results are encouraging and emphasize that HIV/AIDS vaccine research must continue. “Today’s announcement offers evidence that a vaccine can work,” says Michael Yoder, chair of the board of directors, Canadian AIDS Society (CAS). “Research into a HIV vaccine must continue and be stepped up. However, it is also important to state that no vaccine for any virus is 100 percent effective. When a HIV vaccine is discovered and made available in the future, prevention education and HIV/AIDS awareness measures currently used against HIV will still be necessary.”

“As one of the richest nations in the world, Canada has a moral obligation to contribute generously to the international effort and play a leading role to ensure global coordination of HIV vaccine development and delivery,” says Ralf Jürgens, executive director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. “Failure to intensify vaccine efforts at home and abroad could be considered a violation of the rights to life and health proclaimed in international human rights covenants to which Canada is a signatory.”

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian AIDS Society have called on Health Canada to coordinate and provide funding for a Canadian HIV vaccine plan, and to implement this plan as quickly as possible in consultation with the community-based AIDS movement. Health Canada has indicated its intention to carry out this recommendation, but the Plan is still forthcoming. The need for a Canadian HIV Vaccine Plan in one of the issues examined in a background paper and series of info sheets on *HIV Vaccines in Canada: Legal and Ethical Issues*, available at [www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm](http://www.aidslaw.ca/Maincontent/issues/vaccines.htm).

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“Much has been learned that will help in follow-up research,” says Yoder. “The AIDSVAX trial has provided important lessons about how best to carry out community-based, human trials of potential HIV vaccines. Congratulations to VaxGen, and many thanks to the volunteers and community groups who have participated in this clinical trial!”

According to recent statistics it is estimated that approximately 50,000 Canadians are living with HIV/AIDS. An estimated 4,000 Canadians are infected each year.

