



AIDS
COMMITTEE OF
OTTAWA

CANADIAN
AIDS
SOCIETY



SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
DU SIDA



Ontario
Aboriginal
HIV | AIDS
Strategy

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

December 1, 2021

ACO-CAS-CAAN-Oahas Joint Statement on World AIDS Day and Indigenous AIDS Awareness Day

This year, on December 1st, we reflect on how far this land now called Canada has come in acknowledging the dis-ease of a virus called HIV. We have made important strides in prevention, treatment, testing, and support, but many challenges remain. We know that access to care, systemic racism, stigma, and the reduced funding or closure of many HIV-focused community-based organizations (CBOs), has adversely impacted – and continues to impact - the lives of People Living with, and at risk for, HIV.

Against the ever-present backdrop of COVID-19 and ongoing funding gaps in HIV, hepatitis C (HCV), sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI) support and prevention work, CBOs are struggling with the added responsibilities due to additional workload and strain. COVID-19 has widened the divide of the social determinants of health, with BIPOC communities (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) experiencing a disproportionate burden of marginalization. Canada is facing increasing rates of HIV and other STBBIs. The time for action is now.

Canada is hosting the International AIDS Conference in Montréal next year, and we call on our leaders, policymakers, and elected officials to work more closely with CBOs and people with living experience of HIV. Specifically, we call on the federal government to renew commitments and take action towards delivering an equitable response, which can be achieved by:

- Formally acknowledging and addressing racial inequality in social service and healthcare delivery settings and addressing disproportionate rates of HIV, HCV, STBBI among BIPOC communities.
- Developing a well-funded STBBI strategy for Black, Indigenous, and racialized people in Canada.
- Acting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions' Calls to Action.
- Implementing the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls to Justice.
- Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which address injustices, combat prejudice and eliminate all forms of violence, racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples, including elders, youth, children, persons with disabilities, women, men and gender-diverse and two-spirit persons.
- Addressing disparities and health inequities in small urban/rural/remote settings.
- Supporting additional equitable low-barrier provision of and access to testing, treatment, prevention, education.
- Upholding Federal commitments to intersectionality including GBA+. Gender and complex intersecting levels of oppression and embedding resources and sustainability into CBOs who are positioned to deliver these interventions to align with [GBA+ Action Plan 2019 - 2021](#).

Without adequate funding, CBOs will continue to be limited in their ability to meet Canada's HIV, HCV, STBBI national targets, and deliver a successful national prevention strategy that includes:



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- Widely accessible HIV and STBBI testing
- Linkages to care in rural and remote communities
- Access to a safe drug supply and safer drug use programs and education
- [PrEP availability](#) for at-risk populations
- Primary and secondary prevention strategies scaled to meet population demand
- Delivery of a unified approach addressing key populations disproportionately affected by HIV

COVID-19 has stretched the capacity of Canada's CBOs to address rising rates of HIV, STBBI, and overdoses from the toxic drug supply. These aren't just statistics – these are peoples' lives. We call on the people of Canada to reach out to their elected officials and demand change.

The time to act is now!

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