

June 6, 2011

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Dear Minister,

We are writing to congratulate you on your recent re-election and on your reappointment as the Minister of Health. We appreciated the time that you gave to attend the Vienna International AIDS Conference and the opportunity that some of us had to meet you informally during the Canadian reception.

In sending this letter we are mindful that June 6, 2011 marks the 30th anniversary of Canada's and the world's fight against HIV/AIDS, which continues to be a serious public health threat. This somber anniversary adds urgency to our efforts to prevent new infections, educate the public about AIDS and to support scientific and community-based research that will reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on our communities.

Thanks to the ongoing support of the Canadian people and the commitment of every one of Canada's elected political parties, Canada's AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) have made a difference in fighting HIV/AIDS on the front lines in communities across Canada.

Together we have made significant progress. Since the HIV/AIDS epidemic first began, in response to emerging and urgent needs, community-based ASOs have provided services and programs that have been flexible, timely, innovative and creative, often with minimal financial resources. We have also brought the lived experiences of persons living with HIV/AIDS and those most at risk "to the table". We have acquired the expertise necessary to deliver effective prevention messages to diverse communities, educate people who are most at-risk and to connect people who are HIV positive to treatment and care.

Our work in communities is supported by the Regional AIDS Community Action Program (ACAP) funding provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada as part of the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS. Currently \$13.3 million of the \$72.6 million in annual Federal Initiative funding is directed to support ongoing work on the front lines. This represents less than 20% of the total funding for the Federal Initiative. As you know this funding envelope has already been reduced from the \$84.4 million that was previously announced by the Government.

Minister, we are asking for your commitment that the ACAP Regional funding will remain at least at its present levels without any further reductions, in order to ensure that the work being done on the ground with Canadians in addressing the epidemic continues. This assurance would be in keeping with your Government's statements that it will not be making cuts to health funding. It would also respect the Regional ACAP funding priorities and allocations that were determined after extensive consultation with community-based AIDS organizations, other community-based groups addressing HIV/AIDS issues, persons living with HIV/AIDS, and representatives from provincial/territorial HIV programs. According to the information provided on the Public Health Agency of Canada's website, "This allocation formula will guide regional distribution of Grants and Contributions (G&C) resources under the regional AIDS Community Action Program, beginning April 1, 2006." (1) As you know, the funding allocations that support the HIV prevention and education on the front lines have been reduced by more than 13% in recent years. They continue to be insufficient to address the goals outlined in the Federal Initiative. Further cuts would seriously reduce HIV prevention efforts, impede our ability to reach populations at risk and erode our ability to link people to treatment and support.

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We are also requesting your assistance in providing us with a copy of the final report prepared by the consulting firm of Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton and submitted to the Public Health Agency of Canada's HIV/AIDS Policy, Coordination and Programs Division Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control in March 2011. When we were invited by the Public Health Agency of Canada to participate in this consultation, we were advised that the "The purpose of the study is to obtain data and advice. The study is also intended to find solutions for aligning the funding structure to keep it relevant and effective and reflective of the federal government's role in public health, trends in the epidemic, community needs and the latest information on best and promising practices in Canada and elsewhere." It would be very helpful for us as your partners in this work to have an understanding of the solutions that emerged as part of this consultation. We would encourage you to also consider inviting the Federal Ministerial Advisory Council on the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada to express its views as part of the consultation process.

Although this consultation did not ask us to comment on the size or effectiveness of the administration within the Public Health Agency of Canada and the various departments that support the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS, it is our understanding that your government intends to ensure that no further expansions occur and that costs will continue to be contained. We applaud this commitment. During the consultation we identified that we are well served by our regional staff, however they seem to be working in a large and complex bureaucracy.

Minister, we thank you for your ongoing support and we look forward to working together in the fulfillment of the goals of the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS.

Sincerely,



AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador



PARTNERS FOR POSITIVE CHANGE



AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador

AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia

AIDS New Brunswick

AIDS PEI

Alberta Community Council on HIV

AIDS Saskatoon

Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida

Nine Circles Community Health Centre

Ontario AIDS Network

Pacific AIDS Network

PLEASE NOTE Address for correspondence in care of:

Ontario AIDS Network, 468 Queen Street East, Suite 201, Toronto ON M5A 1T7

**cc: Federal Ministerial Advisory Council on the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada
Marsha Hay Snyder, Interim Director, HIV/AIDS Division, Public Health Agency of Canada
Dr. David Butler Jones, Chief Public Health Officer**

(1) <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/aids-sida/funding/index-eng.php>