

October 19, 2021

Jill Norman
Director
Programs and Partnerships Division
Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control
Public Health Agency of Canada, Government of Canada

Sent via Email: jill.norman2@canada.ca

**Re: Regional feedback
Letter of Intent (LOI) Process and Results
Community Action Fund (CAF) and Harm Reduction Fund (HRF)
PHAC 2021 Funding Cycle**

Dear Jill:

Hope this finds you very well. As previously mentioned, I am writing on behalf of the membership of PAN to provide feedback from the BC (and Yukon) region regarding the LOI phase of the 2021 funding cycle for the PHAC Community Action and Harm Reduction Funds. This feedback highlights PAN's ongoing concerns about the sustainability of vital "on the ground" harm reduction, HIV and hepatitis C community-based programming.

Shortly after the results of the LOI process were announced, PAN conducted an online survey with our members and allied organizations to see how they fared in the national CAF and HRF funding calls. Based on our survey results, we wish to flag that some geographic regions in BC will have no, or very little, funding come April 1st, 2022. As far as we can ascertain from the information gathered via the survey, the entire Interior health region will have no funded projects; the Island and Northern health regions will each have a single project. And, while we do not have a complete picture of the Yukon, we are aware that Blood Ties Four Directions underwent a particularly challenging and complex application process as the Yukon was the only territory or province without an allotted funding envelope. This resulted in their organization receiving significantly less funding moving forward. To add to this complexity, they were not informed of the lack of a funding envelope for the territory until two weeks prior to the funding submission deadline.

In terms of populations, with regards to people who use drugs (PWUD), we are concerned that our survey results indicate there was no HRF awarded in the Fraser health region, given that this is the region with the highest rates of overdose deaths in BC – nor was there a successful HRF project in the Island health region. With regards to 2SGBTQMSM, we note that both the CBRC, as well as AVI on Vancouver Island, will have their CAF funding level reduced moving forward. It is our understanding that funding will also be reduced for the UBC CCPHE project, one of the few projects we are aware of in Canada that focuses on people who are federally incarcerated. Finally, we are also not aware of any new projects that will be specifically addressing hepatitis C in BC.

We were however pleased to hear from one of our PAN members, Afro-Canadian Positive Network of BC (ACP-Net), that they will be receiving funding to support a new project focused on newcomers and the ACB population. This is the first time that ACP-Net has been successful in the PHAC CAF funding call and we applaud the decision to dedicate funding for this key population – while noting that they were only awarded three-year as opposed to five-year funding. We also welcomed the news that the Vancouver Sex Work Community Alliance will be funded again, supporting their efforts to involve more peers in the critical work of combatting stigma and the harmful criminalization of sex workers. We also celebrated the success of YouthCO which has a long history of working with youth across the province including via Yúusnewas, their highly regarded Indigenous youth-led program. Finally, we were very happy to hear that Positive Living

North No khēyoh t'sih'en t'sehena Society (PLN) was also successful in their CAF application, with their focus on Indigenous people and communities throughout northern BC.

I also want to take the opportunity to express appreciation for PAN's own successes in the CAF LOI process, with regards to the BC regional capacity building project and the national PLDI community alliance project. We appreciate PHAC's commitment to continued funding for both projects which are dedicated to supporting capacity building and sustainability for PAN member and allies, as well as leadership training for people living with HIV (PLHIV). These investments by PHAC are key to supporting community-based response and community-based leadership.

Nonetheless, based on our survey results, it is clear that the demand for funding in BC and Yukon, outpaced available funds. Many of the organizations that presently received PHAC CAF or HRF, if successful in securing funds for new projects, had their funding significantly reduced – in some cases up to 40% - which calls into question their long-term sustainability and will likely result in gaps in service delivery come next fiscal. These are realities that have been observed across Canada, based on conversations with colleagues and national partners.

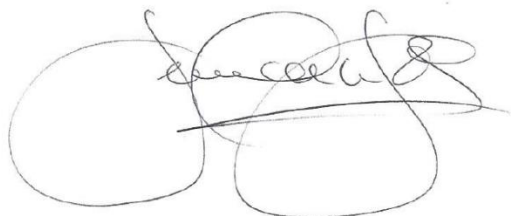
All told, the outcomes of the latest PHAC funding cycle once again underscores PAN's long-standing position, that the total federal funding envelope for HIV, hepatitis C, and other STBBIs - as well as for harm reduction - must be increased. Never has there been a more urgent time to do so, given the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the ever-worsening overdose crisis here in BC and across Canada. We also reiterate our position, that additional resourcing is also required to effectively address stigma, and to provide sufficient culturally safe programs and services for Indigenous, Black and other racialized people.

As you know, PAN as part of a national coalition of 15 other community-based and human rights organizations and networks have begun to explore, with you and other PHAC colleagues, moving forward with a "gaps analysis". Such an analysis is key to guide the successful implementation and evaluation of Canada's Five Year STBBI Action Plan, the timeline for which is now halfway expired. Integral to the analysis will be an understanding of the outcomes from the current CAF and HRF funding cycle, where available federal funds will be directed come April 1st, 2022, and what communities will not be served and/or populations that will be not be addressed. Therefore, at this time, on behalf of PAN members, I would like to request the following information:

- A BC/Yukon breakdown for both CAF and HRF – how many applications were submitted – how many successful – total funding amounts for both (requested and granted)
- Additional budget reduction justification information for organizations whose LOIs were successful but subject to budget reductions and cuts

I am happy to answer any questions and to continue to partner with yourself and PHAC in this important work. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request for additional information, and for the commitment to transparency about the LOI process and outcomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Evin Jones", written over a large, faint circular stamp or watermark.

J. Evin Jones
Executive Director