

**Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)**  
**Conseil canadien de surveillance et d'accès aux traitements (CCSAT)**

# Media Release

## **Time is Running Out: Federal Parties Must Commit to Universal Drug Plan as Part of Platform**

*Canadians needlessly suffering and dying from treatable diseases*

**For Immediate Release**

**April 15, 2011**

**TORONTO** – In a lead up to the federal election, today a coalition of patient groups, researchers, doctors and other healthcare professionals, patient service organizations and activists, led by the Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC), call on all federal political parties to include a universal drug coverage plan (UDC) in their election platforms with a commitment to implement it. This will ensure equal access to life-saving and life-enhancing medicines for all Canadians, regardless of age, wage or location.

Canada's patchwork of public and private drug coverage systems mean that many Canadians fall through the cracks. Louise Binder, Chair of CTAC, challenges the federal parties to step up to the plate. Binder says: "People are essentially suffering and dying because of a lack of political will to change a broken system. It is unacceptable and a disgrace that, in Canada, many individuals spend exorbitant sums, often selling homes or going into debt, in order to pay for prescription medicines. This is just bad healthcare and bad long-term economic policy. The time has come for a universal drug plan."

A UDC must be a publicly legislated insurance plan. Appropriately funded, it must make available to Canadian residents without adequate private or public coverage all required prescription drugs, biologic medicines, medical devices and other treatments prescribed by a regulated health care professional. National universal drug programs have become a standard in developed countries, including in Austria, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Political will is the only barrier Canadians face to having this essential, life-saving program. Reports have recommended that Canada implement such a drug plan. Politicians have not responded with leadership to realize this goal. All Canadians are at risk of financial hardship, or of going without adequate treatment, should they contract with a disease or have a disability for which treatments are not publically or privately paid.

"Canada's multi-tier systems of drug insurance and reimbursement are inadequate and unfair, especially for new and expensive treatments. Many patients do not receive what they may need in therapies due to complicated and inefficient programs which restrict, rather than facilitate drug access. A universal drug coverage plan will change this picture." says Dr. Bill Cameron, infectious disease specialist at The Ottawa Hospital. "In setting priorities, seeking partnerships and making efficiencies, Canada can work towards a drug plan for everyone."

Commitment from federal, provincial/territorial leaders is needed to make UDC a reality. The federal government transfers funds to help pay for healthcare but also provides drug coverage to thousands of Canadians through federal programs. The provinces, territories and private plans are responsible for drug coverage for other Canadians. Good health care and smart health policy require drug coverage that allows people to access the treatments they need when they need them – Canadians deserve nothing less. Negotiations to renew the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Health Accord are underway. The time is now for federal parties to address this critical issue. All parties must demonstrate commitment to the health of Canadians in this election by adding UDC to their platform for immediate implementation.

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**About Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)**

The Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC) is a national non-governmental organization run by and for people living with HIV/AIDS, including those who are co-infected. CTAC promotes informed public policy and builds awareness on issues that impede access to treatment and health care for people living with HIV/AIDS. Treatment is a broad concept, which includes western, traditional, complementary and alternative medicine.

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