

## PRESS RELEASE

### Canada's Federal Government Guilty of Seven Deadly Sins in Its Approach to HIV/AIDS Epidemic

*Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC), Other Canadian Advocates, and Dr. Julio Montaner Call on the Federal Government to Live Up to Commitments in the Federal Initiative*

**August 7<sup>th</sup>-Mexico City** Canadian HIV activists and Dr. Julio Montaner, President of the **International AIDS Society (IAS)** and Director of the **BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS** are calling on the federal government to live up to the commitments made under the Federal Initiative.

**Louise Binder**, Chair of CTAC and host of today's press conference, likens the government's failure to **Seven Deadly Sins**. Binder says, "The failure of the government to live up to its commitments is tantamount to turning a willful blind eye to the critical issues that are presented by HIV/AIDS in Canada".

Activists and many in the medical community are increasingly worried by the government's response to this disease.

**Dr. Julio Montaner**, newly elected president of the IAS and a leading Canadian HIV/AIDS physician is concerned that the federal government fails to be guided by solid evidence-base science. Montaner says, "This government clearly ignores the sound science behind harm reduction measures. As an HIV physician I can tell them, this is not an effective way to manage this disease. We need political leadership, not a government that shops around for the science it wants."

While the government has recently apologized to the Aboriginal communities, it needs to take additional steps as laid out in the Kelowna Accord. **Kevin Barlow**, Executive Director of the **Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN)**, continues to watch HIV/AIDS exact a horrible toll within the Aboriginal communities across Canada. Barlow says, "Aboriginal people continue to be over represented in all aspects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic: its youth, women, injection drug use, prisoners, and lack of access to adequate health care and housing. These are just some of the things that put all people at risk for HIV/AIDS. But these are of greater risk to Aboriginal Canadians because we have less access to prevention and care measures. This government needs to

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

seriously address the needs of Aboriginal peoples living with HIV/AIDS and to put in place meaningful and targeted prevention measures”.

**Michael O’Connor**, Executive Director of the **Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD)** argues, “The federal government has not done nearly enough to enable Canadian generic drug makers to supply developing countries. It put in place legislation to make it possible but the legislation is too cumbersome to adequately allow cheaper generic drugs to save the lives of millions of people in lower income countries”.

Binder urges the government to keep promises made through the national HIV/AIDS Strategy. She adds, “Cutting money from a dedicated strategy and placing it in areas like vaccine research will only serve to make matters worse. Investing in a vaccine manufacturing plan when we are decades away from a vaccine is a double sin because the government is taking money for this from the national HIV/AIDS strategy when it was supposed to be new money.”

Binder concludes with, “We need an effective HIV/AIDS vaccine and there should be new and adequate money directed to this invaluable research. But this government’s cut to the HIV strategy is also taking away needed money to address the needs of prevention, care and treatment initiatives that are needed today”.

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