



# News Release Communiqué

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## **CANADA'S NEW GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE ACTION ON HIV** ***Five key HIV-related issues facing Prime Minister Trudeau and his government***

**November 30, 2015** — In a briefing paper released to parliamentarians in advance of World AIDS Day (December 1), the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network is calling on the new federal government to take decisive steps to address the HIV epidemic, both in Canada and abroad. Laying out five key areas and recommending associated actions, the document enjoins Canada's government to heed research and evidence, and uphold a human rights-based approach to HIV-related policy-making — including following through on several commitments made during the recent federal election.

During the election campaign, the Legal Network sent a questionnaire to the federal parties represented in Parliament, asking their positions on each of the key areas outlined in the backgrounder. Four out of five of the parties responded, largely committing to correct Canada's course on HIV-related policy-making, and to do so in consultation with civil society organizations and members of communities affected by HIV.

The briefing paper, "Action Required," provides a roadmap for making those promises a reality. Through straightforward and feasible recommendations, it asks the federal government to

1. reinvigorate the federal strategy on HIV and AIDS;
2. promote harm reduction and reform drug policy;
3. defend the human rights of LGBTI people, both domestically (by upholding trans and intersex rights) and globally (by foregrounding LGBTI human rights in immigration and foreign policy positions);
4. protect sex workers' rights; and
5. promote access to medicines, including by ensuring that the secretly negotiated Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal does not put life-saving medicines even further beyond the reach of those who most need them.

"It is time for Canada to recommit to the global project of ending HIV, starting within our own borders," says Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Legal Network. "For too long, a climate of ideology and obstructionism in Ottawa has been producing misguided and harmful laws and policies. By ignoring scientific evidence and violating universal principles of human rights, such laws are endangering the lives of those most affected by HIV."

While HIV is a public health concern for all Canadians, it has particular importance for certain "key populations" that have historically been more vulnerable to stigma, discrimination and human rights violations and who are bearing the brunt of the epidemic. Among these populations are gay men, Indigenous people, people in prisons, migrants, women, LGBTI communities, and people who use drugs.

Elliott highlights two recent pieces of legislation — pushed through the last Parliament in direct contradiction of Supreme Court of Canada guidance on the issues at hand — that have lethal

consequences for many of these people. The first, Bill C-36, extended laws criminalizing sex workers, their clients and their workplaces, replicating the same harms created by previous laws already struck down as unconstitutional. The second, Bill C-2, imposed near-insurmountable obstacles for supervised consumption services (SCS), such as Insite in Vancouver, despite ample evidence of the benefits of these health interventions. Not only have SCS been shown to save lives, they are also cost-effective, as revealed by a new study conducted by the Toronto-based St. Michael's Hospital, and published today in the journal *Addiction*.

"The new government has the opportunity to undo the harm imposed by these ill-conceived measures, and restore Canadians' faith in their political system," says Elliott. "Guided by this briefing paper, and by listening to the needs of those most affected by the epidemic, Canada will be prioritizing an evidence-based approach to public health policy that, at the same time, respects, protects, and fulfills the human rights of all its constituents."

To read "Action Required," visit [www.aidslaw.ca/5ways](http://www.aidslaw.ca/5ways).

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### **About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research and analysis, advocacy and litigation, public education and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

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