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NATIONAL AIDS ORGANIZATIONS CALL ON OTTAWA TO GUARANTEE CURRENT FUNDING FOR LOCAL AIDS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

***Money for new vaccine initiative must not come at expense of existing
research, prevention and treatment programs***

TORONTO / OTTAWA, November 29, 2007 — The federal government should ensure that essential community-based HIV prevention programs and services for people living with HIV/AIDS remain available by guaranteeing their funding, said nine of Canada's national AIDS organizations today.

"Across Canada, there are hundreds of local programs and services that help thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS stay healthy and active, both at home and at work," said Monique Doolittle-Romas, Executive Director of the Canadian AIDS Society. "But without a clear commitment from the federal government to maintain their current funding, these programs will cut back or shut down, and people will be left without the help they need."

In 2004, Ottawa announced that annual federal HIV/AIDS funding would reach \$84.4 million by 2008–2009 through the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada. Now, say the national AIDS organizations, the government should ensure that Federal Initiative funding to community-based programs and services, as well as to existing research programs, will not be cut.

"We're obviously pleased that Minister Clement has committed to reaching the \$84.4 million target, but we also know that he's under pressure to find money to fund a new vaccine initiative and to achieve savings under a government-wide program review," said Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "Our message to him is simple: Funding vaccine research and cutting costs shouldn't be done at the expense of existing research, or effective programs that help prevent new cases of HIV and help Canadians living with the disease to remain active in our economy and in our society."

Earlier this year, the federal government announced it would commit up to \$111 million to the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative. It also directed certain federal government departments, including the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), to review programs and identify possible savings. Health Minister Tony Clement has not yet announced where money for the vaccine initiative will come from, or what PHAC funding will be cut to achieve the necessary cost savings.

“There’s no question that we support the new vaccine initiative,” said Louise Binder, Chair of the Canadian Treatment Action Council. “All we’re saying is that we want to work with Minister Clement to make sure that vaccine funding doesn’t take money away from existing HIV research, prevention and treatment programs that improve the health of Canadians.”

Canada’s national AIDS organizations (“the National Partners”) include:

- Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (www.caan.ca)
- Canadian AIDS Society (www.cdn aids.ca)
- Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (www.catie.ca)
- Canadian Association for HIV Research (www.cahr-acrv.ca)
- Canadian HIV Trials Network (www.hivnet.ubc.ca)
- Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (www.aidslaw.ca)
- Canadian Treatment Action Council (www.ctac.ca)
- Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (www.hivandrehab.ca)
- Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (www.icad-cisd.com)

– 30 –

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