



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Alberl Street, Suite 920
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6M8

Parti libéral du Canada

350, rue Albert, bureau 920
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6M8

September 8, 2021

HIV Legal Network

Via email: tgould@hivlegalnetwork.ca

Dear Sandra Ka Hon Chu and Janet Butler-McPhee,

Enclosed, please find the Liberal Party of Canada's formal response to your questionnaire.

On behalf of our Leader, Justin Trudeau, and the entire Liberal team, thank you for writing to identify the major concerns of your membership.

We appreciate your interest in the Liberal Party of Canada's policies as they relate to the issues which affect you.

Sincerely,

Liberal Party of Canada



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Albert Street, Suite 920
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6M8

Parti libéral du Canada

350, rue Albert, bureau 920
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6M8

1. Will your Party commit to collaborating with HIV organizations in Canada to restore the diverted and lapsed resources needed to address the gaps in Canada's HIV response and adequately fund the federal action plan on HIV?

Every year the Government of Canada invests more than \$87 million to tackle HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood borne infections. In 2020, we launched the HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund and the Harm Reduction Fund, which will invest a combined \$33.4 million annually. This funding supports the work of community-based organizations to reach key populations to decrease the number of people who are unaware of their HIV status, to increase the number of people who are accessing treatment, and to reduce stigma toward populations affected by HIV and other STBBI.

Additionally, the Government of Canada authorized the first HIV self-test kit in Canada. The HIV self-test kit was part of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's investment of \$6 million over 5 years to support research to investigate the introduction of new HIV and STBBI testing technologies in Canada.

Our government was also the first to officially endorse the Undetectable = Untransmittable campaign to help recognize that people who maintain a suppressed viral load through HIV treatment have effectively no risk of sexually transmitting the virus to someone else. These investments and actions are part of Canada's ongoing commitment to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, and to reduce stigma.

The latest numbers show that today in Canada, 87% of people living with HIV know their status and 85% of people diagnosed are on treatment. We have also surpassed the last target with 94% of those on treatment having suppressed viral loads.

Though there has been much progress, there remains a lot of work to be done – especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. To help reach the global goal of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, governments, stakeholders and affected populations across Canada developed the first ever Pan-Canadian Framework for Action on Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections and work is underway to identify specific targets with provinces and territories and indigenous organizations.

A re-elected Liberal government will continue to work with people living with HIV and AIDS as well as community and advocacy organizations to create supportive networks that ensure no one is left behind, invest in harm reduction, encourage people to get tested and connect them with treatment.

We will also assess our plan and investments as part of a broader review of public health in Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada once we are through the current crisis.



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Albert Street, Suite 920
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6M8

Parti libéral du Canada

350, rue Albert, bureau 920
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6M8

2. Will your Party adopt the following necessary steps to address the overdose crisis?
 - a. Fully decriminalize activities related to simple drug possession, removing criminal sanctions and all other penalties (administrative or otherwise) for personal drug use and for splitting and sharing drugs
 - b. In meaningful consultation with people who use drugs implement various options for ensuring a safe supply of controlled substances to those who are otherwise at risk of potentially fatal overdose or other serious injury from a toxic illegal drug market

Responding to the overdose epidemic has been a key priority for the Liberal government. We have taken significant action to help people living with problematic substance use, investing more than \$600 million in our response to the crisis including providing \$182 million to community organizations through the Substance Use and Addictions Program, removing barriers to treatment and investing in targeted measures to expand access to harm reduction services and increase access to safer drug supplies.

Our government knows that problematic substance use is a health issue, not a moral or criminal issue. We recognize that to save lives we need a whole-society approach to the opioid epidemic that addresses the main causes and supports people who use drugs with the respect and dignity they deserve. That is why we have also invested billions of dollars to improve access to mental health services, reduce poverty, and increase access to supportive housing. We have also engaged with the City of Vancouver and the Province of British Columbia on their requests for section 56 exemptions to decriminalize simple possession in their jurisdictions. A re-elected Liberal government will continue to take an evidence-based approach to problematic substance use so that Canadians have access to the care and support they need including the following:

- Introduce a comprehensive strategy to address problematic substance use to end the opioids crisis;
- Invest \$25 million for public education to reduce the stigma associated with problematic substance use;
- Invest \$500M to support the provinces and territories in providing access to a full-range of evidence-based treatment, recognizing that successful treatment is not determined by immediate, long-term abstinence.
- Support provinces and territories in creating standards for substance use treatment programs so that Canadians can access quality and evidence-based support when they need it most.
- Support the many lower-risk and first time offenders by reforming the Criminal Code to repeal relevant mandatory minimum penalties, and requiring police and Crown prosecutors to consider diverting individuals out of the criminal justice system.



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Alberl Street, Suite 920
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6M8

Parti libéral du Canada

350, rue Albert, bureau 920
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6M8

This builds on our track record of investing in and delivering a compassionate and evidence-based approach to problematic substance use so that we can eliminate the tragic and unnecessary deaths caused by the opioid epidemic

3. **Given the overwhelming evidence regarding the effectiveness of prison-based need and syringe programs, will your party:**
 - a. **Support their continued implementation in Canada's federal prisons**
 - b. **Promote transparency about the status of PNEP operations; and**
 - c. **Commit to consulting with prisoners, researchers, and community organizations with expertise in prison health to fix fundamental problems with the current program so that prisoners who need this health service can gain effective access?**

The Liberal party knows that problematic substance use is a health issue, not a moral or criminal issue. Since the 2015 election, the Liberal government has consistently advanced Canada's drug policies to be more progressive and compassionate including legalizing cannabis, removing barriers to access to treatment and harm reduction, and investing in safe supply. The Correctional Service of Canada began implementation of the PNEP in its institutions in June 2018 and introduced overdose prevention sites in 2019.

A re-elected Liberal government will continue to take an evidence-based approach to problematic substance use and to engage with partners about the continuing implementation of these important harm reduction programs in federal correctional institutions.

4. **Does your party committee to implementing the recommendations of the Standing Committee to:**
 - a. **Reform the Criminal Code in consultation with the HIV sector (including removing HIV non-disclosure from the reach of sexual assault laws); and**
 - b. **engage with provincial counterparts to develop improved and consistent, prosecutorial policy across the country?**

A re-elected Liberal government would work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to achieve lasting law reform in this area.

5. **Will your party support the repeal of all sex-work-specific criminal laws, including the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act, and consult with sex workers to develop a holistic vision of law reform that will improve their health and safety?**

With respect to the current laws, we support the commencement of the five year Parliamentary review of the former Bill C-36. The review will serve as the appropriate forum for Parliamentarians to examine the full range of effects that this legislation has had since its coming into force. It will also



Liberal Party of Canada

350 Alberl Street, Suite 920
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6M8

Parti libéral du Canada

350, rue Albert, bureau 920
Ottawa (Ontario) K1P 6M8

provide an opportunity for sex workers, stakeholder groups, and civil society more generally to share their perspectives. At the conclusion of the review, the committee will have an opportunity to provide recommendations to the government based on their findings.