



Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network - Green Party of Canada

Question 1: Fully funding a renewed strategy on HIV and AIDS

Will your party commit to collaborating with leading HIV organizations in Canada to envision a new, fully funded strategy to end HIV and AIDS in this country and globally?

The Green Party is fully committed to working with HIV organizations to develop an updated and federally-funded strategy to end HIV/AIDS in Canada and globally. Green Party Elizabeth May has called for a national HIV/AIDS strategy in Parliament.

There is no excuse for Canadian inaction on HIV/AIDS, especially in the view of the tremendous medical advancements in the global effort to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, and all-party consensus on the need for greater funding in Canada. Thousands of Canadians continue to be diagnosed with HIV every year. The federal government's responsibility to act is glaring, given that Aboriginal Peoples are 3.5 times as likely to contract HIV as the rest of the population. We must recognize these elevated risk factors and allocate increased funds to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS.

A national HIV/AIDS strategy should include a focus on:

- Reducing the stigma associated with having HIV, as it is a significant barrier to delivery of effective, non-judgmental prevention and treatment programs;
- Dedicating greater resources to the treatment and delivery of antiretroviral therapies to HIV-positive drug users, a marginalized group in Canada that currently receives inadequate medical support;
- Dedicating greater resources to harm reduction, prevention, and education efforts directed towards high-risk populations;
- Eliminating bureaucratic barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice for HIV-positive foreigners who wish to visit Canada; and
- Becoming a world leader in providing low-cost AIDS medicines and medical services for HIV-positive people in the developing world.

Question 2: Saving lives through supervised consumption services

Given the Supreme Court of Canada's clear direction, and the overwhelming evidence that supervised consumption services save lives, will your party work to repeal Bill C-2 and facilitate access to life-saving supervised consumption services in Canada?

The Green Party is a strong advocate for harm reduction policies, including life-saving safe injection sites. The scientific evidence, social policy research, and public health results prove unequivocally that supervised consumption sites save lives and make all Canadians safer.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May fought vigorously against the reckless Bill C-2, which flies in the face of the Supreme Court's clear decision. This bill, and other Harper Conservative crime bills, have shifted our legal system away from meaningful rehabilitation and crime prevention. No administration has demonstrated such disdain for evidence-based decision making as the Harper Conservatives. The Green Party is committed to reversing these harmful and ideological pieces of legislation, like Bill C-2, and returning to reasoned policies that provide long-term solutions to our social challenges.

Greens will immediately repeal Bill C-2, and boost funding for safe injection sites and treatment facilities.



Question 3: Protecting prisoners' health to protect public health

Given the overwhelming evidence supporting the effectiveness of prison needle and syringe programs, and their benefit in protecting the health of prisoners, prison staff and public health more generally, will your party support their implementation in Canada's federal prisons?

Yes. Harm reduction practices work - and they are desperately needed in our increasingly overcrowded prisons. Prisoners' rights are human rights. Prisoners do not forfeit their right to health care just because they have committed a crime. In fact, their unique needs and risk factors for addiction and other health challenges warrant specialized health services, including prison needle and syringe programs in Canada's federal prisons.

As violent crime declines in this country, we should be focused on removing all regressive mandatory minimums, integrating restorative justice and focusing on harm reduction practices that will cease the overcrowding of existing institutions and lead to lower rates of recidivism. Practices like double-bunking and solitary confinement are not only misguided criminal justice policy, they create toxic and violent relationships between prisoners and correctional officers. We should be focused on education and meaningful work for offenders while they are incarcerated, so that they can become better prepared for reintegration into society upon their release. The Green Party also believes that where possible, we should restore the prison farm system.



Question 4: Protecting the health and human rights of sex workers

In keeping with the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling that sex workers are entitled to health and human rights, will your party support the repeal of Bill C-36, and will your party meet with sex workers to discuss ensuring their rights, safety and dignity?

Bill C-36 is similar to Bill C-2, in that the Harper Conservatives have again rejected a very clear Supreme Court decision, and further endangered a marginalized population at increased risk for addiction and HIV/AIDS. This pattern of ignoring the courts and harming marginalized groups in the name of ideology must end.

The Green Party would immediately repeal Bill C-36 and work constructively with sex workers to draft legislation that ensures their rights, safety and dignity. Bill C-36 targets sex workers, a disproportionate number of them transgender and Indigenous, forcing them into greater secrecy and leaving them more vulnerable. We need laws that ensure the safety of sex workers, rather than endangering them further. Greens will undertake legal reform in Canada based on the New Zealand model. We must provide more robust funding for social services focused on harm reduction, and assistance for those who wish to disengage from sex work.



Question 5: Protecting and promoting the human rights of LGBTI people

Will your party support full legal protection in Canadian law against discrimination and hate crimes based on gender identity or expression? Given Canada's influential role on the world stage, will your party endorse the Dignity Initiative's Call to Action and work to implement its recommendations?

One of Canada's core ideals is that all Canadians have the right to live free from discrimination, and both the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act enshrine this right in law. The Green Party was the first federal party to officially support the legislated and full inclusion of same-sex couples in civil marriage, and we strongly affirm the prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These pieces of legislation form an important foundation for LGBTI rights in Canada. However, marginalized groups such as the LGBTI community continue to face disproportionate levels of discrimination in practice. We must strengthen existing legislation, and create new protections where necessary, to ensure that the rights of all citizens are truly protected.

The Green Party will amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code to explicitly prohibit gender identity and gender expression as grounds for discrimination, and include them in Canada's hate sentencing and hate propaganda provisions. We will also repeal the shockingly homophobic section 159 of the Criminal Code.

The Green Party endorses the Dignity Initiative's Call to Action, and will seek to use all policy tools at our disposal to uphold the rights of LGBTI people around the world. Our efforts must include building relationships with activists and defenders of LGBTI rights, exerting diplomatic pressure where necessary to ensure LGBTI rights are respected, and supporting LGBTI refugees. Greens will continue fighting to ensure Canada advocates internationally for an end to state-sanctioned discrimination and violence against LGBTI people.



Question 6: Ensuring equitable access to affordable medicines

Question: Will your party support the reforms previously before Parliament in Bill C-398 to fix Canada's Access to Medicines Regime, so that we can get low-cost, generic medicines to people in need? With respect to the TPP, will your party refuse to sign and ratify any agreement that includes any intellectual property standards exceeding those already adopted at the World Trade Organization?

Elizabeth May voted in favour of Bill C-398, and the Green Party strongly supports global access to low-cost, generic medicines. Bill C-398 attempted to fix an Canada's ineffective Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) to provide generic and cheaper versions of life-saving drugs to the poorest of the poor. The costs of anti-viral and AIDS drugs are prohibitive in the countries where they are most needed. Canada must amend the flawed CAMR and fulfill our commitments for the provision of HIV/AIDS retroviral drugs to developing nations.

The Green Party is the only federal party in Canada standing against the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), along with the Greens in New Zealand and Australia. The TPP is a poorly negotiated agreement that will increase the influence of large pharmaceutical corporations and impede access to affordable medicines at the expense of Canadians and those around the world. Large pharmaceutical companies could use the intellectual property rights enshrined in the TPP to deny state drug-buying agencies access to reliable, low cost medicines.

The Green Party does not support deals like the TPP, which are negotiated in secret and allow corporations to sue governments over laws that reduce their profits such as environmental, labour and consumer regulations. Greens will refuse to sign and ratify any agreement that elevates corporate interest over the public interest, and establishes intellectual property standards that deny the poor access to lifesaving medications.

