



United Nations Association in Canada
Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Young Canadians propose active solutions to HIV/AIDS in Canada

(15/August/2006) **Toronto-The United Nations Association in Canada (UNA-Canada)** in working with local young advocates from across the nation have created a youth statement on the management of HIV/AIDS to coincide with the XVI Toronto International AIDS Conference.

These engaged Canadians aged 20-29, are members of UNA-Canada's National Team on the **It's time to Act: Mobilizing Young Canadians Around HIV/AIDS** initiative. Each member is working in their community both to identify youth perceptions and to foster an awareness of HIV/AIDS in this vulnerable age group.

This statement, as prepared by the National Team, addresses the multi-faceted nature of HIV/AIDS as well as active solutions and policy recommendations to the current government of Canada.

These youth-perceived policy suggestions include the following key items:

- Access to healthcare is a human right. The federal government must work with provincial and territorial governments to promote and protect universal access to the public healthcare system in Canada, including timely access to healthcare professionals, services, diagnostics, and treatments.
- Smaller communities are an under cultivated resource. The absence of HIV-related testing and services in remote, reserve, and rural communities negatively impacts the number of people willing or able to access HIV testing and services. Provincial and territorial governments should generate and support initiatives that bring mobile HIV-prevention education, testing, treatment, and counselling services into remote, reserve and rural communities.
- Prison cells are not impermeable. The denial of activities that occur within Canadian prisons, including injection drug use, tattooing and sexual activities, has led to an increased risk of HIV and Hepatitis C infection for prisoners. The federal government should work with prison staff and prisoners to implement HIV and Hepatitis C prevention programmes in prisons that include education, testing, counselling, needle exchange services and condom distribution.
- Through international agreements, Canada has committed to providing access to generic drugs. Canada and the global community need to honour these international agreements by supporting a moratorium on any new bilateral and regional trade agreements that include



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provisions involving intellectual property rights and medicines. The Government of Canada should encourage universal targets that ambitiously promote access to generic drugs.

- The key to breaking the cycle of HIV/AIDS and global poverty is the empowerment of girls and women. The international community must guarantee the right to education for girls, which will build their capacity to make informed decisions about their lives, enable them to escape the trap of child labour, and allow them to access information on sexual and reproductive health. The empowerment of girls will build on their abilities as women to earn an income, protect themselves against violence, and participate in decision-making at all levels.

XVI Toronto International AIDS Conference- Is the largest single health issue conference in the world. With over 20,000 delegates ranging from policy makers, infected youth to leading scientists; AIDS 2006 will be a monumental occasion in contributing viable solutions to combat the AIDS epidemic. Such leading experts speaking at the Conference will include Stephen Lewis and the Executive Director of UNAIDS Peter Piot.

It's time to Act: Mobilizing Young Canadians Around HIV/AIDS is an initiative that engages youth who are infected, affected and unaware of HIV/AIDS, in a series of cross-country regional forums, building capacity for action on the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. This project looks at the impacts of the Social Determinants of Health and youth's ability to make informed choices in the face of this epidemic.

UNA-Canada is a national charitable organization celebrating its landmark 60th anniversary. As a 'think and do' organization, UNA-Canada supports a network of seventeen volunteer branches and local contacts with a National office in Ottawa and Western professional office in Vancouver. Our mandate is to engage Canadians in the work of the UN and the critical global issues which affect us all; through innovative projects, policy research, and on-going communications with Canadians.

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