

PRESS RELEASE

National HIV/AIDS Treatment Group Challenges All Parties to Establish a Catastrophic Drug Plan

Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC) Supports Campaign Promise as Good Medicine for all Canadians Living with Life Threatening and High Cost Disabilities

September 16, 2008 –Toronto: **The Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)** is a national non-governmental organization serving the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. CTAC promotes informed public policy and builds awareness on issues that impede access to treatment and health care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

CTAC has for many years advocated for the establishment of a ***Catastrophic Drug Plan***: one which is publically funded and which covers prescription drug costs for chronic, life-threatening diseases and conditions for individuals who do not have private health insurance or whose private insurance is insufficient to cover their prescription drug costs.

Louise Binder, a retired lawyer who is living with HIV, and the CTAC Chair says: "The Liberal Party of Canada has today made a campaign promise that will benefit the thousands of Canadians living with chronic and life threatening diseases. CTAC urges all parties to make a commitment to establishing a ***Catastrophic Drug Plan*** which will improve the health of Canadians, but will be financially beneficial to their families. No more will Canadian families have to choose between paying for life saving drugs or their rent."

CTAC believes that any ***Catastrophic Drug Plan*** should be based on the following principles:

- **Affordability:**

Assessing the affordability of catastrophic drug plans for individuals with high prescription drug costs including determining whether catastrophic drug plans have provisions for low-income families and what (if any) premiums, deductibles or co-payments are required.

- **Comprehensiveness & Best Clinical Practice:**

Assessing comprehensiveness includes determining whether catastrophic drug plans include prescription drug coverage for a range of conditions, as well as a range of treatment options thus providing for the flexibility of the plan for people living with chronic and life-threatening diseases.

- **Universality:**

All residents of Canada are eligible for the catastrophic drug program on uniform terms and conditions that do not place an unreasonable cost burden on individuals.

Canadian Treatment Action Council (CTAC)
Conseil canadien de surveillance et d'accès aux traitements (CCSAT)

Currently, access to medicines varies greatly from one province to another. A Catastrophic Drug Plan would provide a more equitable ability to access life-saving drugs.

Binder adds, "Our current system leaves too many Canadians vulnerable to provincial drug plans and what a province makes, or doesn't make available on their public drug formularies. A catastrophic drug plan will ensure that Canadians who depend on drugs for their survival will have access."

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