

Annual Report

Canadian AIDS Society

2008-09



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CAS has advocated on behalf of people and communities affected by HIV/AIDS, we've facilitated the development of programs, services and resources for our member groups and provided a national framework for community-based participation in Canada's response to AIDS.

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Funders

Abbott

Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D)

Corby Distilleries

Douglas Elliott LLP

Gilead

GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Shire BioChem

International AIDS Vaccine Initiative

Kiehl Cosmetics

L'Oréal

Merck Frosst

Pfizer

Public Health Agency Canada

Scotiabank

Tibotec

Board of Directors

Gerry McConnery	Chair, Prairie PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
Bill Merryweather	Vice-Chair, Ontario Regional Representative
Patricia Bacon	Pacific Regional Representative
Christal Capostinsky	Pacific PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
Jeffrey Keller	Prairie Regional Representative
Vacant	Ontario PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
René-Pierre Lafrenière	Quebec PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
Laura Delany	Quebec Regional Representative
Rick Johnston	Atlantic PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
Stephen Hurst	Atlantic Regional Representative
Michael Hickey	Youth PLWHIV/AIDS Representative
Louis-Marie Gagnon	Member-at-large
Jamie Myrah	Member-at-large
Bob Leahy (until January 2009)	Ontario PLWHIV/AIDS Representative

Staff

Monique Doolittle-Romas	Executive Director
Kim Thomas	Director of Programs
Bernice Aye	AIDS Walk for Life Assistant (until July 2008) Executive Assistant (Effective July 2008)
Sarah Tremblay	Executive Assistant (Maternity Leave – July 2008)
Nichole Downer	Program Consultant, Youth Project (until September 2008)
Lynne Belle-Isle	Program Consultant
Stephen Alexander	Program Consultant
Shaleena Theophilus	Program Consultant (until October 2008)
Bachir Sarr	Program Consultant (December 2008)
Tricia Diduch	Communications Consultant
Joshua Snider	Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life Coordinator (until September 2008)
John Sharp	Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life Coordinator (January 2009)
Vanessa Herman	Fundraising and Development Coordinator (March 2009)
Rose Anne Sheehan	Book-keeper (part time)
Rick O'Rourke	Accountant (part time)
Gautam Lamba	Coop Student (January to April 2009)
JJ Dayot	Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life, Corporate Sponsorship and Donations Manager

These people could not have accomplished all of the work described below without the extraordinary support of a team of external consultants. Special thanks to Marc-André LeBlanc, Jann Ticknor, Brian Huskins, Anna Maranta, and Gerard Yetman.

Governance

Annual General Meeting

In June of 2008, CAS' membership came together at the Annual General Meeting in Ottawa to review, endorse and direct CAS' work on behalf of the community-based AIDS movement. Highlights of the gathering included a keynote address by one of our movement's early leaders, who received the CAS Individual Leadership Award – Mr. Michael Phair.

The membership remained concerned about the impact of funding cuts and shifts, advising CAS' Board of Directors to continue and enhance its efforts in this area. Other resolutions from the membership guided CAS to respond to criminalization of HIV transmission, begin researching HIV and aging, undertake strategic planning, target prevention campaigns to specific populations, provide adequate interpretation services at the AGM and Forum, respond to needs in ethnocultural communities and improve participation and representation in research initiatives.

People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum

The People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum (Forum) was held two days prior to the AGM in Ottawa. This annual gathering of People Living with HIV/AIDS provides much more than an opportunity for PLWHIV/AIDS to have input into CAS' direction: it is Canada's only national gathering of PLWHIV/AIDS and represents a unique opportunity for PLWHIV/AIDS to share their triumphs and challenges in a supportive environment. Built into this gathering are regional caucuses, opportunities for networking within regions, where board representatives are elected and resolutions discussed. The agenda this year also included capacity building opportunities, including skills building sessions such as Treatment Updates by Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange (CATIE) and an HIV and Criminalization Workshop by HIV and AIDS Legal Clinic (Ontario), and a presentation from the Public Health Agency of Canada on the PHA Status Reports.

As always, the Forum Dinner, was well-attended and offered the opportunity to renew friendships and meet new people from across Canada. It also featured a presentation that was replicated later in the year: "Can We Talk?" This presentation modeled best practices for working with health care providers and individuals to develop beneficial and meaningful relationships to provide holistic responses to the spectrum of needs associated with living with HIV/AIDS.

Resolutions put forward from this gathering included issues related to funding and treatment.

Board of Directors Meetings

The Board of Directors was able to come together for two face-to-face meetings, in addition to the AGM, during the year. These meetings consisted of full agendas for all in attendance and offered the opportunity to work together on priorities set within various board committees and on responses to resolutions put forward at the Forum and AGM.

In addition, the Board of Directors held monthly conference calls to review the work of the agency and financial statements, and to address emerging policy issues. Sub-committees also made frequent use of teleconferences to plan for the 2009 Forum and AGM, address membership needs and provide guidance on advocacy priorities and setting agendas for board meetings and work.

Strategic Planning

As directed through the 2008 resolution process at the AGM, the Board of Directors began the strategic planning process, reviewing resources and developing a course of action to ensure there is a plan in place to guide the work of the agency. Working in a field with significant change and shifting supports, the Board has elected, as many other groups have, to work on a three-year strategic plan for the agency. During the winter 2009 Board Meeting, the Board worked through a facilitated process to identify needs and prepare a plan to be presented at the 2009 Forum and AGM.

Activities

Advisory Committees and Projects

CAS' team has the unique opportunity to communicate with our member organizations and provide a voice for the issues our members bring to our attention. The translation of these issues from concerns at a local level to trends that inform policy and decisions at the national level is a challenge that CAS staff enthusiastically undertake on behalf of members.

Throughout the year, your representatives have brought to various policy and consultative tables the experiences that you have shared. These are just a few examples of the committees that CAS participates in to represent your interests:

- Leading Together Championing Committee
- Ministerial Advisory Council
- Meta-ethnography Research Project
- Testing Committee
- Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) Meetings
- Population-specific reports (women, PLWHIV/AIDS, drug users)
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research Consultations
- Research Ethics Guidelines.

Advocacy on Funding Issues

One ongoing challenge facing CAS and its members is the impact of changes to the funding programs provided through the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada. Despite a promise, which was never delivered, to double the overall strategy, community-based AIDS service organizations continue to feel the impact of funding cuts and shifts in the programs that provide essential supports for people living with and at risk of HIV/AIDS in Canada.

Efforts to address this very serious issue have focussed on all federal parties, seeking policy-level support for *real changes* that will result in securing the required financial resources. Throughout the year, the Board of Director's Advocacy Committee has been working with the Executive Director and a lobbyist engaging all parties in endorsing a return of the promised funding under the Federal Initiative. CAS is also seeking a guarantee that these resources will finance the community-based response which has helped create healthier communities and generate supportive responses to the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Throughout the Federal Government, the impact of the financial downturn has resulted in cuts. Yet, the current amount of AIDS funding remains untouched and all parties are continuing to meet with CAS representatives to discuss needs that begin with funding and consistently branch out to reflect the broader requirements of community-based groups. One of the most significant successes of the year was a CAS and Legal Network joint press conference, which resulted in four political parties (Liberal, New Democratic Party, *Bloc Québécois* and the Green Party) announcing their support for restoring Federal Initiative funding. Our objective remains to build support among all parties.

This year, many sectors supported CAS and served as champion to convey this message of need. Government relations groups, pharmaceutical companies, and national medical and research bodies have all stepped up to speak to elected officials about the need faced by the community-based AIDS movement. Our presence on this issue was so strong that CAS' Executive Director was named one of the top 100 lobbyists on the federal scene by the *Hill Times*, a national publication tracking trends and issues making waves on the political front.

Until funding is restored and all parties support policies that ensure funding is directed to meet community needs, this issue will remain CAS' primary objective, and it will be met.

AIDS 2008 – International AIDS Conference

Once again, CAS played an important role in representing the Canadian response to HIV/AIDS at this bi-annual gathering of researchers, activists and communities. In addition to representing our work through presentations and networking opportunities, CAS was recruited to develop the Canada booth for the conference, pulling together various levels of government, research and community response to HIV/AIDS in Canada. The Canada booth featured a short video of people living with HIV/AIDS from diverse communities talking about their lived experiences in Canada. This poignant video provided an essential centre-piece to the booth, which was built around the theme *Canada Takes Action*.

Staff participation in this conference included presentations on the results of CAS' evaluation of the Skills Building Symposium, findings from research on harm reduction, vaccines, microbicides, and leadership of people living with HIV/AIDS.

Blueprint for Action of Women & Girls and HIV/AIDS

CAS continued its leadership and support roles for this coalition of groups which seeks to respond to issues impacting women in Canada. The year was a busy one, involving preparation for the International AIDS Conference. This included developing the Women's Networking Zone and Women's March, as well as the second Report Card ranking Canada's response to issues set out in the Blueprint Manifesto. The coalition did not rest after the conference, though. Since then, this group has secured funding for the development of a web tool to help international groups develop their own report cards and secured resources to hold a planning meeting for the next Canadian Conference on Women and HIV/AIDS. In addition, an ad hoc group was brought together in February of 2009 to discuss the need and direction for a national women's conference. Subsequently, CAS has been working with a small committee to develop proposals and secure funding for this project. Production of the web site and hosting the meeting was made possible by the support of Abbott.

Communications

The past year has seen some significant communications success. In 2008-09 CAS received 38 media requests, and provided an interview and/or background information for 27 of these requests. The remaining requests were either dropped by the media outlet, or CAS referred them to a more appropriate partner. Topics for these requests included: funding, the Polar Ice Vodka promotion, AIDS 2008, female condoms, the Pope's comments on condoms, and World AIDS Day.

CAS also continues to offer communications tools for members and the general public. Our monthly mail-outs to members disseminate CAS materials and resources, as well as relevant information. Our website features regular updates and links to new and helpful resources, plus we make use of various list-serves to provide information on specific topics to groups and individuals on a subscription basis. Our newsletter has seen a major revision late in the year and is being re-launched as *HIVolume* this spring. It will focus on the work of CAS' staff each month, providing updates on CAS activities to members and supporters.

Ethnocultural Communities

CAS developed the Ethnocultural Network List Service to provide ongoing email communications to individuals and organizations seeking information related to ethnocultural communities and HIV/AIDS. There are currently approximately 35 members of this moderated list. In addition, we have been able to start providing teleconference training opportunities to participants in this network. While still in its beginning phase, we are looking forward to identifying priorities for action within this community through the development of this network.

Gay Men and MSM

CAS continues to participate in GayNet, a national coordinating group seeking to develop a strategic response to the needs of gay men as they relate to the continuum of issues around HIV/AIDS. As a long-standing national partner, CAS supports communications and helps respond to issues identified in the network's work plan.

One area of ongoing work for CAS' staff on this issue is the exclusion of MSM from giving blood and blood products through Canada Blood Services (CBS). CAS is lobbying the CBS board to adopt an approach we presented to them that looks at risk behaviour, rather than sexual identity, to help protect the blood supply from outcomes similar to what we have seen in HIV and HCV transmission.

Additionally, CAS represents gay men and men who have sex with men (MSM) on a number of government committees. Given the fact that so much of CAS' response to HIV/AIDS in various communities examines the impact through an MSM perspective, it is essential to remain connected to the many voices of the community and to make communications a main activity of the consultant responsible for this area of work.

Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GIPA) Training Tool Kit

Revisions of this tool followed the presentation of its first draft at the 2008 PLWHIV/AIDS Forum. We also continued to promote its use and refine the document throughout the year. Modules in this kit

include: *Community-based Groups, Assessing Your Agency, Leadership, Boards and Governance, Resources and Research, What About Me?* and *Is that All There Is?* The tool kit was sent to design and printing at the end of the fiscal year and dissemination of this resource has just begun. Workshops on the tool were presented late in the year to participants in Alberta, with more training opportunities to follow. This tool kit was also featured in a poster presentation abstract submitted to CAHR 2009. Development of this tool kit was made possible by the support of Pfizer.

Harm Reduction Project Dissemination

Publication of the final report *Learning from Each Other: Enhancing Community-Based Harm Reduction Programs and Practices in Canada* from the CAS and Canadian Harm Reduction Network partnership project prompted a lot of demand to share the results of this project. The team responsible for this initiative has presented posters and lectures across Canada, receiving an incredible response. Building on the results of this project, we have also seen a second printing of the resource document and demand for more training.

Housing

The link between housing and harm reduction was one that was made repeatedly in researching *Learning from Each Other: Enhancing Community-Based Harm Reduction Programs and Practices in Canada*. Recognizing this important link, CAS' Board of Directors endorsed the 2008 International Declaration on Poverty, Homelessness and HIV/AIDS. The declaration demands that policy makers address the lack of adequate housing as a barrier to effective HIV prevention, treatment and care, and that governments fund and develop housing as a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In response to this pressing issue, CAS also produced "*Bring Me Home*": *The Canadian AIDS Society's Position Statement on Housing and HIV/AIDS*. This position statement, accompanied by a background document, is a call for action to address housing as part of the response to HIV/AIDS in Canada. Building on this and the results of *Learning from Each Other*, CAS has begun work on further research into housing and homelessness.

Can We Talk? Video Production

Response to this presentation made at the 2008 Forum was so great that the partners who collaborated in the development of the interactive learning session reunited to film it for a video to be launched at this year's Forum. The video promotes the development of good relationships with health care providers, in this case a medical pharmacist who counsels PLWHIV/AIDS on treatment issues. Production of this video was made possible by the support of Tibotec.

Microbicides Advocacy Group Network

CAS continues to coordinate a vibrant community response to build support and knowledge about the development of microbicides. The exhibit *In Her Mother's Shoes/Giving Women Power Over AIDS* has continued to travel Canada, raising the profile of this issue through building public awareness. Our advocacy network has also continued to grow, with over 90 members participating in a moderated list service and regular conference calls. Continued demand from various communities for information about research, advocacy and development of microbicides all make this issue one of great concern for

CAS and its partners. Unfortunately, efforts to support the work of the Implementation Group for Canada's Microbicide Action Plan have encountered some barriers; however, the support and partnerships continue and one day we will know success in developing this essential prevention option.

Real Cost of HIV

This essential piece of research has been conducted by a student of economics from Wilfred Laurier University. The research examined the impact of illness and the cost of medications, treatment and medical care in an attempt to present an economic argument supporting the need for prevention in our communities. This report will be released in 2009 and is already eagerly anticipated by many different sectors and groups. Funding for this project was provided by Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D).

Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life

Canada's most important HIV/AIDS fundraising and awareness event is the annual Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life. During the national event, cities and communities from across the country will host Walks to raise funds for local services and programming and to increase awareness about HIV/AIDS. This event represents a partnership among CAS, the AIDS Committee of Toronto and the British Columbia Persons with AIDS Society, who work together to manage this national fundraiser.

To date, more than half a million Canadians have participated in the Scotiabank AIDS Walk for Life from coast to coast to coast. Together, we have raised close to \$28 million to support programs and services for people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS in their communities. In 2008, over 50 communities participated in the Walk, raising approximately \$2 million for community-based AIDS service organizations across the country.

2008 marked our first year with an event title sponsor: Scotiabank. With their support we were able to provide all walk sites with print materials and t-shirts. Many sites benefitted from the use of an on-line walkers' registration and a donation site, as well as from the launch of a national print media campaign supported by Scotiabank's *Scotia Cares* program.

Skills Building Symposium

Late in the fiscal year, CAS signed off on the agreement that would support the development of the 6th Canadian HIV/AIDS Skills Building Symposium. Working with a refreshed format that incorporates findings from an extensive evaluation of the conference model, the 6th Symposium will feature *Leading Together* as its theme and will explore the features of this national plan as they relate to the community-based response to HIV/AIDS in Canada.

Vaccines

CAS' ongoing partnership with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) will continue to build community capacity and preparedness around HIV vaccines, enabling CAS and its members to participate in prevention planning and awareness at the grassroots level. In addition to providing training opportunities and disseminating information about vaccines research to community-based organizations, CAS has assisted by providing insight into federal government relations gained through

CAS' own lobby efforts. This was considered such a priority that IAVI provided an opportunity for CAS' spokesperson to participate in this year's media planning and training workshop. This has resulted in CAS incorporating messaging around vaccines into its communications efforts.

World AIDS Day Campaign

Once again, CAS worked with M^cMillan to develop an innovative World AIDS Day campaign. This year's campaign, entitled *Positive you're not positive?*, incorporated a web site into the project, driving people to the site rupositive.com to determine where they fall on the continuum of risk. From this site, visitors were directed to resources and information developed by CAS member groups.

Beyond providing an exciting campaign this year, M^cMillan offered CAS the opportunity to work with their entire team in a truly innovative way, engaging in a creative process that brought together thinkers from within the agency to develop the theme and content of the campaign in collaboration with CAS' communications team.

The campaign included the distribution of promotional material to schools, public health units and AIDS service organizations across Canada, and advertisements in four national publications (two each in French and English).

World AIDS Day Gala

This year saw the development of CAS' first annual World AIDS Day Gala. Moving from a breakfast to a dinner event provided CAS the opportunity to engage with political leadership at a new level by liaising with the many elected representatives, corporate leaders, senior bureaucrats and community members in attendance. This event also provided an occasion to celebrate the leadership of people working in Canadian society who have played a role in responding to HIV and AIDS in Canada. It also included a live and silent auction, raising much-needed resources for the organization.

The CAS Corporate Leadership Award was presented at this gathering to Pfizer Laboratories for their generous and ongoing support of CAS and our members. We also took this opportunity to launch the new gold and ruby leadership pin that was designed by Canadian Jeweller Roy Dean and commissioned by Douglas Elliott on behalf of CAS. This exclusive pin will be given to recipients of CAS' leadership award at both the individual and corporate levels.

Resources and Planning

Fundraising and Development

CAS, like its members and so many other voluntary sector organizations, has been faced with the reality of a changing world of corporate responsibilities and partnerships. As the amount of resources available through public sources (government funding) remains the same, the demand for services and responses grows. Beyond this, we are faced with limitations when accepting government funding, which at times counters the directions provided by our membership. This, combined with the cuts that CAS has already faced in the past three years, has resulted in our board and leadership making a concerted effort to build a strong private sector fundraising program. Our Executive Director has invested a lot of energy and provided direction in developing relationships with various sectors, which has helped to strengthen the agency through gifts of cash and in-kind support.

Corby Polar Ice Campaign

The 2008 special edition bottle featured artwork designed especially for Polar Ice® Vodka by British Columbia artist Morgan McConnell. Its message, embodied in McConnell's design, is that AIDS affects each and every Canadian. McConnell says of his work, "The design speaks in visually-direct terms of HIV-positive people in everyday life. We can be an invisible minority; the same exterior with a remarkably different interior." The success of this campaign is widespread. Recently, it was recognized by Pernod Ricard in their report to the United Nation's Global Compact as one of their top "10 Best Practices", adhering to the UN's ten principles on Human Rights, Environmental, Labour and Ethics standards.

Kiehl's Cosmetics

Kiehl's donated a portion of its sales from a popular lip balm during its second year of supporting CAS through a World AIDS Day campaign. With a specially designed package, this lip balm was featured at stores and cosmetic counters across the country.

L'Oréal Professional

L'Oréal designed special packaging for its entire line of Professional Quality Hair Care Products as a part of its support for CAS. With a portion of product sales going to CAS, the campaign helped to raise awareness among hair care professionals, as well as within its broad client base across Canada.

Pharmaceutical Partners

As with many AIDS organizations, CAS works closely with its many pharmaceutical partners. Our collective commitments to ethical and responsible partnerships are evidenced by CAS' partnership with Canada's Research-Based Pharmaceutical Companies (Rx&D). Working with this coordinating body, CAS has brought the voice of the community to regulations governing pharmaceutical partnerships with community and promoted the excellent partnerships modeled in the community-based AIDS movement.

Government Relations

With an ambitious advocacy agenda established by CAS' membership, CAS has developed an excellent reputation within the government relations community. Working with lobbyists in related fields, as well as with larger lobby firms, CAS depends on the support of these groups to share information and assist in moving our agenda forward. While many of these commitments are made by individuals and are identified as "in-kind", it would be impossible to make the connections that CAS has made during the past year and represent the community needs at the federal level without their support. In support of these partnerships, the Executive Director is now on the Board of the Government Relations Institute of Canada.