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2006/07

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Annual  
Report

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## INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS, PREVENTION AND COMMUNICATION

The Canadian AIDS Society will take a leadership role in ensuring that effective federal initiatives are in place to raise public awareness of and engagement in HIV/AIDS issues. CAS will work in partnership with other national groups and member organizations to coordinate a national prevention framework that addresses the determinants of health for vulnerable groups.

When necessary CAS will advocate for a renewed federal initiative that provides appropriate resources for the prevention of HIV/AIDS. CAS will develop the capacity to increase its' communications with the Canadian public, the media, its partners and members.

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### AIDS AWARENESS WEEK AND WORLD AIDS DAY

Awareness was front and centre at this year's World AIDS Day, with an extraordinary partnership between CAS and GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Shire BioChem bringing CAS staff to Parliament Hill and the Speaker's Chambers to host a session for Members of Parliament to meet with the Executive Director and get a Red Ribbon pin, centred by CAS' logo. These ribbons were front and centre that night as media scrambled to gain interviews on the issue of Parliament acknowledging Quebec's distinct status within Canada. The exposure did not end there, as the Liberal Leadership race got under way later that week and once again leadership candidates sported CAS' Red Ribbons, lending their support to raising awareness of HIV/AIDS in Canada.

An award-winning poster, designed by McMillan was featured in print magazines *McLean's* and *L'Actualité* and *The Globe and Mail* and *La Presse* newspapers. The campaign's question "AIDS: Do Canadians really get it?" was at the centre of everyone's mind as community and government leaders joined together on World AIDS Day at a breakfast sponsored by the Delta Hotel. Dr. David Butler-Jones, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer, spoke to a group of 120 invited guests, reminding all of the history of HIV/AIDS in Canada and remembering the lives of those whose paths lead our way today.

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### PUBLICATIONS

CAS' two serial publications: *InfoCAS*, and *In Focus* saw a shift in their editorial content this year, once again aligning the information with the organizational mandate of representing the community-based AIDS movement and people living with HIV/AIDS. *InfoCAS* was renewed as an electronic journal, featuring articles targeted for public information, as well as features highlighting the work of CAS and its members. Alternating issues of the online newsletter also featured articles on issues of interest and importance to people living with HIV/AIDS. Encouraging public subscriptions to *InfoCAS* also helps to raise awareness of the issues featured in the publication.

*In Focus*, published biannually, in print and electronically, featured two specific topics – Gay Men and Ethnocultural Communities. The publication provides an opportunity to feature innovative programs from member groups, and explore a single issue more completely.

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## MEDIA PRESENCE

The top stories of the year, without a doubt, were the International AIDS Conference, held in Toronto, August of 2006 and the Federal Government's Announcement of The Canadian HIV/AIDS Vaccine Initiative in February. During the International AIDS Conference, the Executive Director responded to repeated requests for interviews and information about Canada's response to HIV/AIDS and the many social issues attached to it. While media attempted to focus attention on the absence of political leaders, CAS took every opportunity to focus media attention on the real issues of HIV/AIDS – the need for resources, improved prevention methods and the simple message that there is still no cure for this disease. CAS was present at the press conference where Prime Minister Harper and Bill Gates made the announcement about the Canadian HIV/AIDS Vaccine Initiative and spent the rest of the day fielding media calls and providing comment on the impact of the announcement for the AIDS movement in Canada.

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## AIDS WALK FOR LIFE

The 2006 AIDS Walk for Life saw over 2 million dollars raised in communities across Canada. Every cent raised in pledges for the AIDS Walk for Life stayed in the communities to provide programs at AIDS Service Organizations. While these programs vary across Canada, much of the money raised is used to provide direct supports to people living with HIV/AIDS, giving much needed assistance to individuals living on low incomes and facing increased cost of living needs to meet nutritional and quality of life requirements.

The AIDS Walk for Life serves a dual purpose, as this annual event helps to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS in Canada and this year we were pleased to have our new Public Service Announcement approved by the Television Bureau of Canada. This facilitated having the advertisement broadcast as a public service announcement, free of charge, on cable and satellite companies such as Cogeco, EastLink, Rogers, Shaw, and Star Choice Satellite. The announcement was also run in Cineplex theatres in Canadian cities and featured on many other local television networks.



## ADVOCACY AND PUBLIC POLICY

The Canadian AIDS Society will continue to strengthen its role in serving as the lead organization in providing a strong, collective voice on behalf of the Canadian HIV/AIDS movement.

Advocacy will continue to be linked with effective and thorough policy analysis and be based on broad consultation. This work should involve effective partnerships with member groups, provincial networks and national partner organizations.

CAS will diversify its approach in order that advocacy goals are met through a broad range of coordinated strategies. CAS will work with members and stakeholders to identify 3-4 key themes that will serve as the focus for its advocacy work. This work will include opening doors in other key government departments to achieve a pan Canadian response that involves an increased number of Federal ministries.

CAS will increase its capacity to provide comprehensive and specialized public policy analysis and to conduct professional lobbying efforts on its member's behalf. CAS will build its skill base to provide in-depth and focused policy analysis. CAS will expand its role in order to provide increased support to member groups and to integrate its approach at the regional and provincial level. CAS will play a role in supporting members on these issues where resources and infrastructure for provincial networks is lacking. Strategic alliances with other national organizations and active provincial networks are an effective way to create a stronger collective voice.

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### FEDERAL INITIATIVE ON HIV/AIDS IN CANADA

Balancing the need to respond, with learning to work with a new government and a new political ideology has proved to be one of CAS' strengths for its members and people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS this year. We have had the opportunity to address the Minister of Health and his advisors several times, raising our concerns with funding formulas and processes impacting our membership. While the process is slow, the Ministry of Health has committed to reviewing the *Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada* and has repeatedly stated that they will not cut the funding to this essential program. CAS remains vigilant in its attention to this issue, as it is clearly a priority for the community-based AIDS movement.

Beyond this we have developed responses to the Blue Ribbon Panel looking at Grants and Contributions Processes and participated in public consultations hosted by the federal government that focus attention on the needs of the movement when it comes to federal funding programs. Consultations such as these set the standards by which grants and contributions are made to not-for-profit groups, and it is important that the experiences of CAS' members help inform this process. From time to time we have put out calls to member groups, featuring guides to key issues, to facilitate their participation in these processes, further strengthening the voice of the community-based movement.

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## GOVERNANCE

The Board of Director's Advocacy Committee has been working closely with the Executive Director to plan measured responses to programs and announcements in the political arena. This committee has been monitoring and assessing different advocacy methods and their impacts on the federal government and use this information to inform their decision-making process.

Other board committees, including the Planning and Priority Committee and the People Living with HIV/AIDS Committee, meet regularly to inform the development of the work-plan with responses to resolutions passed at the Forum and AGM and to plan these annual gatherings. The People Living with HIV/AIDS Committee also worked closely with staff at CAS to develop resources identified as needed by the People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum resolution process.

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## POSITION STATEMENTS

CAS' position on the Age of Consent has put us front and centre for inclusion in some important debates about the age of consent/protection for youth to engage in sexual activities. Our primary concerns lie with the fact that the proposed legislation change does nothing to define the term sexual act, leaving the legislation open to varied interpretation, nor does it add anything to existing laws preventing sexual predation, the supposed reason behind the law and it does not address the issue that the age of consent is still different for anal sex (a decision that has been struck down by several provincial supreme courts as unconstitutional). This position has been share with the Standing Committee on Justice with the House of Commons, where the topic has been debated. The legislation is likely to pass, but politicians have been made aware of some of the challenges identified above and there is movement in some parties to respond to these issues.



## PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

The Canadian AIDS Society will affirm its role as a leader in the Canadian HIV/AIDS movement and within the Global response. CAS will continue to develop its strategic niche in the areas of Communication, Coordination and Community Development.

CAS will take the initiative in developing and maintaining effective strategic alliances with the other national partners, provincial networks, at the regional level and with networks of PLWHIV/AIDS when appropriate.

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### OVERVIEW

The Canadian AIDS Society operates as a generalist organization, representing our membership at the national level on a broad range of topics. As our understanding of HIV/AIDS grows, we recognize that there are many areas that are impacted by HIV/AIDS and that we need to represent our memberships' interests within. We have also learned that strategic partnerships help to strengthen our voice as we champion issues that reach beyond HIV/AIDS or beyond our borders to effect people living with, and affected by, HIV/AIDS in other countries.

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### CAS MEMBERSHIP

CAS was pleased to add the British Columbia Compassion Club Society to its associate membership this year. While its mandate extends beyond people living with HIV/AIDS, this group felt it was important to lend their support and endorsement to the work carried out by CAS.

This year also saw the development of a Member Relations Officer Position on the paid staff of CAS. The incumbent of this position works with the Board of Directors to recruit new members and to oversee the maintenance of member files, as well as coordinating the Annual General Meeting and the People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum.

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### NATIONAL HIV/AIDS ORGANIZATIONS

There are nine organizations working at the national level in different areas of HIV/AIDS. Each of these groups have their own unique mandate and serve distinct interests within the HIV/AIDS response in Canada, yet it is essential at times for this group to act as a body, often, informally referred to as "The National Partners". As a coalition we worked throughout the year on issues of importance to all of these groups. The national partners collaborated and brought together press releases during the International conference that showed a shared vision on specific topics such as universal health care and Canada's role in International Development. Also throughout the year the national partners responded to challenges facing the Insite Safe Injection Site in Vancouver and responded to inquiries around the criminalization of HIV/AIDS transmission.

- CAS also participated on advisory committees and groups with these organizations and their projects.

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## SUPPORTED PARTNERSHIPS

CAS houses several project funding envelopes and/or memorandums of understanding which define specific pieces of work that are carried out by CAS.

The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) supports the work of CAS to provide regional training opportunities on vaccines and the development of tools to promote awareness of the research process and the progress towards developing a HIV Vaccine.

The Global Campaign for Microbicides provides support for the work of the Microbicides Action Group Network (MAG-Net), which is mandated with setting the stage for community preparedness and awareness of the development of microbicides.

In 2006-07 the Canadian Harm Reduction Network and CAS partnership project finalized a funding agreement with Health Canada's Drug Strategy Community Initiatives Fund to carry out a project examining the delivery of harm reduction programs in smaller cities and communities across Canada. This project brought together service providers for a consultation late in the fiscal year. The results of this project will help to define the varied needs of the community in settings outside of major urban centres and the diverse programs and activities that fall under the "harm reduction" banner.

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## NATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

The Federal Government houses various committees, advisory groups, working groups that have varied mandates and terms. As the voice of the community-based AIDS movement, CAS is often asked to participate and bring the perspective of the community to the discussion. This perspective is gathered through ongoing engagement of our membership through advisory committees, networking groups and shared resources and communications. A small team of program consultants work to remain up-to-date on current literature and programs in the community, linking local realities with a push for systemic change at the national level. Areas where this expertise has been called upon during the last year include: international issues, the development of The Canadian Microbicides Action Plan, and the Canadian HIV Vaccine Action Plan, the Leading Together Championing Committee, and population-specific status report working groups (women and men who have sex with men) at the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Of equal importance is the development of new partnerships within the broader voluntary sector. These partnerships represent opportunities to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS issues within various communities and build strategic alliances within both the HIV/AIDS movement and the broader voluntary sector. For example, the Adult Learning Committee of the Canadian Council on Learning has identified HIV/AIDS as an adult learning priority and is developing targets for knowledge transition within this field. The National Association of Children and Youth is helping to promote the health education priorities of children and youth including priorities related to HIV education. The Blueprint for Action on Women & Girls and HIV/AIDS is a coalition co-founded by CAS to address inequality of response to HIV/AIDS as it relates to women.

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## MEMBERSHIPS

CAS maintains memberships with all of the National HIV/AIDS organizations and other national coalitions and groups. These memberships provide CAS staff members with information and resources related to their work as well as help to strengthen our services to our membership.

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## AIDS WALK FOR LIFE

The national branding and promotion of the AIDS Walk for Life has developed through partnerships with walks hosted in Toronto and Vancouver. This national platform has brought forward many new opportunities for promotion and national support for the activity. Perhaps most important, though, is the partnership entered into each year between CAS and community hosts of AIDS Walk for Life. Participation in this national event and the partnership between AIDS Service Organizations and CAS help to raise the profile of this event to a national level, allowing CAS to secure national media coverage and promotional opportunities.



## COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

The Canadian AIDS Society will champion the determinants of health approach to HIV/AIDS issues within the Canadian community based movement. CAS will model this approach at all levels of the organization and will promote and support its membership to do the same.

CAS will serve as a leader in reaching out and engaging the full breadth of people affected by HIV/AIDS including people using injection drugs, women, gay men, youth, new Canadians, and aboriginal people. The membership and governance structure of CAS will be addressed to accommodate the increasing diversity of those affected.

All programs and structures will ensure consideration for this diversity and for the inclusion of different voices. CAS will increase its capacity to offer fully bilingual services in order that all its members may participate equitably in the organization's work.

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### NATIONAL PROGRAM – ISSUE SPECIFIC RESPONSES

A team of creative and intelligent individuals work on issues grouped generally under the title of *Programs*. This team provides member supports through capacity building, networking, supporting alliances with other groups and facilitating communications both in formal and informal settings. Additionally this group is responsible for carrying out policy analysis and development of positions, background information and development of learning modules for use in the community. The approaches for populations and issues are as varied as the topics covered, but this team seeks to remain on top of issues and respond to topics of concern to our membership in a proactive way. With this significant task, interaction with our membership is essential – to help identify trends and issues, as well as to ensure the relevance of the information prepared for our members.

Focussing on population specific responses helps CAS to frame a number of issues through this specific lens. We recognize that topics such as hepatitis C co-infection and poverty reach across all populations, so staff members often collaborate on responses to issues of concern. While it is impossible to capture the full spectrum of content covered by the programs team, issues of great importance this year included:

- Housing and Homelessness – after a threat to cut the Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) in August, staff met with senior bureaucrats to communicate the importance of programs such as SCPI to our membership. The announcement of a new homelessness initiative addressed some of these concerns.
- Medicinal use of cannabis remained an issue of great importance to CAS following the release of our report in June. Ongoing meetings with government and monitoring of the access program and needs identified by people living with HIV/AIDS have remained central to our ongoing attempts to see these programs improved.
- HIV Testing, Disclosure and Prevention issues have remained of great interest and importance to our membership. The complexities of the issues related to different communities and cultures make this issue a challenge for a simple, single position,

however CAS continues to listen to the diverse opinions within our membership and respond to the needs identified in this area.

- New Prevention Technologies are on everyone's minds – the potential for a vaccine or microbicide within the next decade look hopeful, and we continue to hear reports on the impact of cervical barriers and circumcision. To help answer some questions about these new methods, CAS developed a short information sheet on the topic of New Prevention Technologies and disseminated it to our membership through a mail-out and on the web site.

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## NATIONAL PROGRAMS – POPULATION-SPECIFIC RESPONSES

People Living with HIV/AIDS are at the centre of much of CAS' work and activities. While represented in all of the work that is done at CAS, the consultant responsible for this portfolio has also developed linkages with The Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, North America (GNP+ NA) and worked with the People Living with HIV/AIDS Committee to draft a Physician-Patient (client) Bill of Rights.

Men who have sex with men (MSM) remain the most impacted in the North American epidemic. The Pan-Canadian Gay Men's Health and Wellness Network (GayNet/RéseauGai) was established to get gay men's health on the Canadian health agenda; building capacity in our community by networking and sharing resources and information; speaking with one voice on gay men's health and wellness issues; and developing partnerships and strategic alliances.

Women know that gender plays a role in a person's vulnerability to HIV infection and CAS has committed substantial time and resources to supporting the work of *Blueprint for Action on Women & Girls and HIV/AIDS*. This coalition invested a lot of energy in preparing for the International AIDS Conference, but continued its efforts by launching a campaign to meet with provincial and territorial leaders to ensure they are responding to HIV/AIDS in their own jurisdictions.

Youth represent the next generation of our society; they also represent all of the populations with which we work, making our response to youth issues a microcosm of the society we work in. This year's work focussed on the delivery of the Youth Program at the International AIDS Conference. Taking a leadership role as a co-chair of the Youth Pavilion Task Force, staff worked to ensure the inclusion of youth on an international stage. Following the conference, efforts returned to following up on commitments made during the conference and continued work on the issue of HIV/AIDS education needs for school-age youth.

People who use drugs and harm reduction are the focus of a major project started this year. Of equal importance has been CAS' ongoing response to the apparent trend of the current federal government to exclude harm reduction from their drug policies and public health priorities, and call into question evidence that harm reduction programs work. CAS supports the lead of other national groups and brings the experience and brings the voice of the community-based AIDS movement to bear in responding to this issue.

People from countries where HIV is endemic face a variety of issues when immigrating to Canada and integrating into a foreign culture. CAS has attempted to provide a forum for sharing experiences for AIDS Service workers by establishing an Ethnocultural Networking Group. Additional attempts to establish projects focussing on the needs of these communities have not met with success.

Prisoners and people who have been in the prison system represent a population that, at the national level, is the responsibility of Correctional Service Canada (CSC). Given the change in government and the increased resources allocated for CSC under the Federal Initiative, CAS has determined that we need to be involved in discussions and planning with CSC, despite previous experiences. A meeting with Dr. Françoise Bouchard, CSC's director general opened the door for renewed dialogue and we are keeping these lines open, ensuring the voice of the community-based HIV/AIDS movement is heard on issues like methadone access and safe tattoo parlours.

Aboriginal communities are impacted by HIV/AIDS at levels that are alarming to say the least. Of equal importance to responding to this impact is respect for self-determination and self-governance, results of a legacy of abuse of Aboriginal peoples in their history of interaction with European-dominated cultures. As such, the board has elected to respect the requests of Aboriginal Leadership in HIV/AIDS, represented by the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network and allow the response to be lead by Aboriginal Groups and Aboriginal People. This does not mean that we should not follow and lend our support and this is exactly what we seek to do. This year CAS has supported the development of a human rights resource guide for Aboriginal Youth and has participated in a steering committee on a Harm Reduction project.

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## AIDS 2006

The International AIDS Conference provided an excellent opportunity for network and programs to showcase the efforts of Canadian community-based HIV/AIDS groups, while developing partnerships with others working in similar fields. The Canadian AIDS Society also had the extraordinary honour of representing the community-based HIV/AIDS movement as a co-organizer of this event. While the hard-working staff of the Local Host Offices in Toronto carried out the hard work of coordinating logistics, CAS worked alongside AIDS organizations from across Canada to deliver our welcome to the international community, and share information, resources and experiences with groups from around the world. Highlights of the work carried out during this very productive week include:

- Assisted with the demonstration, satellite, women's networking zone and press conference for the release of the report card for Blueprint for Action on Women & Girls and HIV/AIDS.
- Involved with planning a MSM pre-conference event held before AIDS 2006.
- Hosted a new prevention technologies panel at the youth pre-conference and in the Global Village.

- Poster presentations on: the Global Campaign for Microbicides, HIV Transmission Guidelines and Income Support Programs in Canada.
  - Planned a reception for MAG-Net sponsored by MaRS and Polydex.
  - "Our Right, Our Choice", a policy report on Cannabis as Therapy for People Living with HIV/AIDS, was featured at the Complementary Therapy/Healing networking zone in the Global Village.
  - The Speakers Bureau filled over 30 media requests. An addition 40 media requests from sites including The Globe and Mail, CBC radio and television, *Radio-Canada*, *La Presse*, Canadian Press and The Sun were handled by CAS representatives.
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## GREATER INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

The Canadian AIDS Society will strengthen its role as the lead organization in promoting the Greater Involvement of People with AIDS Principles within the Canadian HIV/AIDS movement. This will include reaching out and promoting the empowerment of vulnerable groups including people using injection drugs, women, gay men, youth, new Canadians, people involved and engaged with the justice system and aboriginal people

CAS will take the lead in facilitating a stronger, more independent and diverse PLWHIV/AIDS Forum that will serve as an authentic national voice for all people living with HIV/AIDS. Whenever possible CAS will work to increase the resource base for the PLWHIV/AIDS Forum and ensure that the response at the national level is being informed by the grassroots.

CAS will facilitate a broad based discussion regarding the potential of the formation of a PLWHIV/AIDS network that would be independent; broad based and could be involved in setting the agenda for PLWHIV/AIDS in Canada.

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### PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS FORUM

The annual PLWHIV/AIDS Forum is a unique structure in Canada and is considered a critical component of CAS. The Forum fulfills many important roles within CAS; it helps keep the organization connected to the grassroots, it plays an essential role in empowering future leadership and it informs CAS' policy and advocacy work.

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### AIDS 2006

CAS hosted a satellite and panel discussion on the Greater Involvement of People Living with HIV/AIDS. While these events were on the opening day, they set the stage for an ongoing dialogue throughout the conference about the role of people living with HIV/AIDS in paid and unpaid positions within the HIV/AIDS movement.

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS PLWHIV/AIDS COMMITTEE

The board committee assisted with drafting the bill of rights and model memorandum of understanding between a patient and doctor which will be presented at the 2007 People Living with HIV/AIDS Forum.

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## STRENGTHENED INFRASTRUCTURE

The Canadian AIDS Society will strengthen its role in advocating for and supporting the infrastructure that exists within the AIDS movement to deliver effective prevention, awareness, education, treatment, care and support programs. CAS will support its members to capacity build in order to attract, and sustain appropriate financial and human resources. CAS will take a leadership role in partnership with other national organizations in monitoring and influencing the level of Government resources available to respond to HIV/AIDS.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTS

CAS maintains its finances and books in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and is directed in its financial decision making by a financial policy and procedures manual and the Finance and Audit Committee of the Board. The management team oversees the organizational workplan and carries out financial and narrative reporting as required by funders.

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## MEMBER RELATIONS

In addition to the opportunities to participate in programs and CAS activities, CAS has a member relations officer who is a primary contact at the national office for members seeking information and contacts within the organization. This individual also works with the board to conduct a regular review of member files, including ensuring that we have up-to-date documents and contact information for each organization.

CAS, with support from Pfizer, publishes an annual Membership Directory which is provided free of charge to each member organizations.

Our monthly mailings to members include documents and resources developed by CAS and its partners.

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## MEMBER ENGAGEMENT ON FEDERAL INITIATIVE REVIEW AND REPORTING TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON FUNDING REALITIES

The results of a member survey last year have been compiled and will be used in the development of a submission to the Federal Initiative Review Committee. While the findings are currently unpublished, copies of the report will be sent to all members once it is submitted to the Public Health Agency of Canada.