

## News Release

### Canada's Health Minister Fails AIDS 101 at Vienna Conference

Vienna, Austria (July 20, 2010) - Canada's Minister of Health, *Leona Aglukkaq* yesterday failed to confirm her support of clean needle distribution to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Minister was questioned on the subject at the XVIII International AIDS Conference taking place in Vienna Austria.

"Clean needles, along with condoms, are internationally recognized as core HIV/AIDS prevention tools," says Maxine Davis, Executive Director of Vancouver's Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation. "When I asked Minister Aglukkaq if she agreed clean needles were an HIV prevention tool, she repeatedly failed to confirm her support."

In their speeches yesterday, both former US President Bill Clinton and former Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates were unambiguous and clear that clean needles are essential to stop the spread of AIDS. Clinton noted that the Clinton Foundation is now paying for clean needles. Gates encouraged the adoption of a multi-pronged approach, including clean needle distribution that could cut HIV infection rates by 90 per cent by 2020.

In Canada, new HIV infection rates among aboriginal people are 3.6 times higher than for the general population. At the Dr. Peter Centre, a HIV/AIDS health care facility in Vancouver, approximately 45 per cent are aboriginal and most contracted HIV through injection drug use.

"Urban and rural aboriginal communities are struggling to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS. But the health minister refuses to be a voice of leadership on this matter," said Davis. "While treatment services are important, so are clean needles. They save lives. Minister Aglukkaq's refusal to endorse clean needle distribution is bizarre considering the medical consensus around the issue."

For more information or to arrange an interview with Maxine Davis in Vienna:

Kurt Heinrich  
Peak Communicators  
[kheinrich@peakco.com](mailto:kheinrich@peakco.com)  
604-689-5559