



HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' UNION

NEWSLETTER

PLEASE POST

CUPE news: World AIDS Day - December 1

Another year has passed and we continue to mark World AIDS Day. HIV and AIDS remain a worldwide epidemic. This is especially appalling as HIV and AIDS can be eradicated. According to the United Nations, there are 33.4 million people living with HIV and numbers are rising in almost every region.

Globally, women account for about 50 per cent of people infected with HIV. In 2008, around the world, 430,000 children were born with HIV, bringing to 2.1 million the total number of children under 15 living with HIV. For every two people starting treatment for HIV, a further five become infected. AIDS-related illnesses are still a leading cause of death globally.

Canada is not immune. Rates of infection went from an estimated 57,000 in 2005 to 65,000 in 2008 (a 14 per cent increase). Men who have sex with men continued to comprise the greatest proportion (44 per cent) of new infections in 2008. Infections continue to rise for injection drug users. Aboriginal persons continued to be over-represented and comprise 12.5 per cent of all new infections in 2008, an increase from 10.5 per cent in 2005.

We need to do more to ensure universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for those with HIV and AIDS and for those who work with infected persons. Millions who have HIV and AIDS worldwide do not have public health care, access to drugs, a drug plan or adequate community-based services. In Canada, access to treatment needs to be improved for people with additional challenges related to drug dependency, mental illness, limited education and unstable housing. Particularly affected are Aboriginal peoples, whose rates of HIV and AIDS infection are rising disproportionately to other groups.

Universal access to prevention, care and support remains a distant goal in Canada and internationally. Governments have been long on talk and promises, but have failed to deliver on the commitment to universal access by 2010. In fact, Canada has been chastised for its low level of financial contribution relative to its economic output.

Those with HIV and AIDS continue to face discrimination and sometimes criminalization. Testing and privacy are among the most pressing human rights issues facing those living with HIV and AIDS. There are good reasons for people to have concerns, as many who have HIV and AIDS have been denied treatment by medical practitioners, as well as housing and jobs. They have been turned down for insurance coverage and refused entry into foreign countries. Canada is one of the nations leading the way in adopting laws and policies that make matters worse. The Harper government has fueled the spread of the virus in Canada through a moralistic war on drugs that criminalizes drug users, and by

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opposing safe injection sites. These measures fly in the face of growing evidence that harm reduction strategies have a proven track record of reducing the rate of HIV and AIDS transmission.

Clearly there is much work to be done and on this World AIDS Day, we urge all of CUPE to commit to take action on December 1 and beyond.

Be in contact with your local AIDS organizations, wear the red ribbon, and participate in marches, vigils and demonstrations. Then continue the fight by supporting the HIV and AIDS work of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). Take up political activism in conjunction with other groups. Consider a focus on how HIV and AIDS intersect with respect to issues such as violence and discrimination against women, Aboriginal health, homophobia and social and economic injustice. Think about what you and your local can offer that would be most valuable and relevant such as resources, funding and/or capacity building.

December 1, 2010