

June 6, 2022

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos,  
Minister of Health, Government of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

**Re: Emergency supports and services in response to monkeypox infection**

Dear Minister Duclos,

The recent transmission of monkeypox in Canada poses an urgent public health threat, and specifically among marginalized communities, including gay, bisexual, and queer men who have sex with men. As of June 3, 2022, there have been 77 confirmed cases in Quebec, Ontario, and Alberta, and the virus appears to be spreading locally within Canada. We are writing to call for the immediate creation of emergency financial and housing supports, as well as wrap-around services (e.g. food and/or medication delivery) for people who need to be isolated for confirmed or suspected monkeypox infection, as part of a comprehensive response by the Government of Canada to this rapidly evolving epidemic.

Containing the spread of monkeypox requires that people who are infectious self-isolate in their home, as well as people who are being tested for suspected monkeypox infection. This means people with confirmed or suspected infections will not be able to work in-person, or enter community spaces to access food and other necessities. Due to uncertainties regarding the duration of transmission risk, some individuals may need to self-isolate for several weeks. For many people in Canada, following this public health directive will mean not being able to pay for rent, food, or medications.

In Canada, most people who do not have paid sick leave earn less than \$50,000 a year,<sup>1</sup> and more than 60% of seasonal, casual, or contract workers have no paid sick leave at all.<sup>2</sup> As we have learned from COVID-19, providing financial support for people to adhere to public health guidelines—particularly self-isolation—is critical for stopping transmission and supporting vulnerable individuals. As of May 7, 2022, special benefits that supported COVID-19 mitigation, including the Canada Worker Lockdown Benefit, the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit have ended.

Resources to enable effective isolation for monkeypox are needed immediately, including those that address finances, food, and housing security. Gay, bisexual, and queer men who have sex with men have long been at high risk of food and housing insecurity due to the structural stigma

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<sup>1</sup> The University of British Columbia. Ability to work from home and paid sick leave benefits by precarious employment and socioeconomic status. Published June 3, 2020. <http://pwhr.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2020/09/GSS-COVID-19-Research-Brief-2020.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada. General social survey: Canadians at work and home (GSS). Published July 12, 2016. <https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=5221>



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and marginalization they face as sexual and gender minorities. These risks are further exacerbated among community members facing additional discrimination due to race, ethnicity, HIV status, disability, substance use, Indigeneity, immigration status, religion, gender identity, gender expression, and/or class.

Below, we provide two recommendations for immediate action:

- 1) Emergency financial support should be made available to individuals with confirmed or suspected monkeypox infection, including via waiver of the one-week waiting period for Employment Insurance benefits, to enable effective adherence with public health directives to self-isolate. This support must extend to anyone required to isolate because of monkeypox infection, irrespective of proven employment status.
- 2) Support should be made available to community-based and frontline service organizations for prompt rollout of wrap-around services to people with confirmed or suspected monkeypox: these include the delivery of groceries, medications, and other essential needs, and temporary housing for those without adequate housing for self-isolation.

Without these emergency support measures, our public health efforts to contain the monkeypox virus will be compromised. Mobilizing resources to support self-isolation will help to contain the spread of monkeypox, and minimize harmful impacts on marginalized communities, including gay, bisexual, and queer men who have sex with men who have been most impacted thus far by the recent spread of monkeypox.

Given the increasing spread of monkeypox in Canada, we respectfully request that a meeting be set up with you and your team at the earliest possible convenience, and that you respond to this letter by **Wednesday, June 8 at 5:00pm Eastern Time**. Thank you for considering these urgently needed interventions and for your prompt attention to this letter, and we look forward to working with your government, public health, and community partners to strengthen the response to monkeypox in Canada.

Sincerely,

Jody Jollimore  
Executive Director

Organizational Endorsements (as of June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022):

2-Spirited People of the 1<sup>st</sup> Nations  
Action Positive VIH/sida  
Advocacy Centre for the Elderly  
Africans in Partnership Against AIDS (APAA)  
The AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo & Area (ACCKWA)



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AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia  
AIDS Committee of Durham Region (ACDR)  
AIDS Committee of Newfoundland & Labrador  
AIDS Committee of Ottawa  
AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT)  
AIRN (Atlantic Interdisciplinary Research Network)  
Alberta Community Council on HIV (ACCH)  
All Nations Hope Network  
ARCH (HIV/AIDS Resources and Community Health)  
Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS)  
Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP)  
Bruce House  
CAAN (Communities, Alliances & Networks)  
Canadian AIDS Society (CAS)  
Canadian Association of Nurses in HIV/AIDS Care (CANAC)  
Canadian Positive People's Network (CPPN)  
CATIE  
CAYR Community Connections  
Coalition des organismes communautaires québécois de lutte contre le sida (COCQ-SIDA)  
Conseil québécois LGBT  
Le DISPENSAIRE centre de santé communautaire  
Downsview Community Legal Services  
Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation  
Durham Community Legal Clinic  
Fife House Foundation  
Halifax Pride Society  
Halifax Sexual Health Centre  
Hamilton Community Legal Clinic  
Hassle Free Clinic  
Health Initiative for Men (HIM)  
Hemophilia Ontario  
HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario (HALCO)  
HIV Legal Network  
Legal Clinic of Guelph and Wellington County  
LetsStopAIDS  
MAX Ottawa  
Neighbourhood Legal Services London and Middlesex  
Nine Circles Community Health Centre  
Northern Healthy Connections Society  
Ontario AIDS Network (OAN)  
PAN (Pacific AIDS Network)  
PARN (Peterborough AIDS Resource Network)  
PASAN  
PEERS Alliance  
Portail VIH/sida du Québec



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Positive Living Niagara

Pozitive Pathways Community Services

Pride at Work Canada

Quadrangle NL

Renfrew County Legal Clinic

Regional HIV/AIDS Connection

RÉZO – Health and wellness of gay and bisexual, cis and trans men

Sherbourne Health

South Shore Sexual Health

The Theresa Group (TTG)

Toronto HIV/AIDS Network

Toronto People With AIDS Foundation (PWA)

Trellis HIV & Community Care

The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1006A

United Steelworkers Canadian National Office

Wellesley Institute

Wisdom2Action

cc: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

cc: The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth

cc: The Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion

cc: The Honourable Karina Gould, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

cc: The Honourable Seamus O'Regan Jr., Minister of Labour

cc: The Honourable Randy Boissonnault, Minister of Tourism and Associate Minister of Finance

cc: The Honourable Kamal Khera, Minister of Seniors

cc: Mr. Michael Barrett, MP for Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes

cc: Mr. Randall Garrison, MP for Esquimalt-Saanich-Sooke

cc: Mr. Luc Thériault, MP for Montcalm