



For Immediate Release
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Conservative AIDS Announcement Recycles Liberal Initiative

Toronto – The announcement by Health Minister Tony Clement today added nothing new to what was previously done by the Liberal government, and does nothing to meet the evolving needs of the International AIDS relief community, Liberal Health Critic Ruby Dhalla said today.

“The fact that Mr. Clement has tried to pass off this announcement as news to a conference full of experts is an embarrassment,” said Dr. Dhalla.

“This announcement is concrete evidence of the lack of understanding and engagement the Harper government has consistently shown towards this important global issue.”

Minister Clement today announced a “new formal partnership arrangement with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS),” when in fact, an agreement has been in place since June 17, 2003.

“It appears that this announcement is merely a restructuring of the existing agreement to reflect the creation of the Public Health Agency of Canada, an agency created by the previous Liberal government,” said Dr. Dhalla.

“Furthermore, the funding mentioned in Mr. Clement’s press release was announced by the Liberal government in 2005. The international community is calling for more money to support vaccine research and affordable treatment, and Mr. Clement and the Conservatives are turning a blind eye.”

On November 21, 2005, the Liberal government announced over \$60 million in funding to fight HIV/AIDS globally over the next six years. Of this, \$15.2 million was intended to enable Canada to meet its commitment to provide four percent of the core component of the UNAIDS budget for 2006 and 2007. Another \$12 million was to support the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative for 2006, as its previous funding expired in December 2005.

In fact, from 2000 to 2005 the Liberal Government committed more than \$800 million to combat HIV/AIDS globally. This includes our contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria -more than half of which goes towards combating HIV/AIDS.

"If Mr. Clement wants to show commitment to fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, he should be looking to renew our support for vaccine research and advocacy, not recycling administrative agreements. And if this issue was a priority for Mr. Harper, he would have taken the time to attend the conference," Dr. Dhalla concluded.

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