



**For Immediate Release
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Stephen Lewis and Dr. James Orbinski applaud Parliamentarians for helping to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS and TB

Ottawa – Nearly 200 advocates, parliamentarians, community leaders and stakeholders united on Parliament Hill to participate in the inaugural launch of the HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis (HAT) Parliamentary Caucus.

Recently initiated by Member of Parliament for Brampton-Springdale Dr. Ruby Dhalla, the all party Caucus is co-chaired by Dhalla, Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown from the Conservative Party, Laurentides—Labelle MP Johanne Deschamps from the Bloc Québécois, and Halifax MP Megan Leslie from the New Democratic Party to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS & TB in parliament and to create a forum within parliament for the exchange of ideas to help support and increase access to care and treatment for those living with HIV/AIDS and TB.

"It was refreshing to see so many parliamentarians and senators in attendance last night who put partisanship aside and united in their support for fighting these global health challenges of HIV/AIDS and TB. The creation of the HAT caucus is a tribute to the survivors, volunteers and advocates who have worked tirelessly to develop solutions and raise awareness. Change for the better can be achieved through our collective and collaborative efforts." said Dhalla.

The HAT Caucus was launched with internationally renowned guest speakers Stephen Lewis: former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa and Dr. James Orbinski: founder of Dignitas International and former President of Doctors Without Borders. "The emergence of the HAT Caucus is a significant development on the Canadian political scene." said Lewis.

"The HAT Caucus has emerged because Canadian Parliamentarians recognize that HIV/AIDS and TB are critical global health challenges that must be addressed, regardless of political affiliation. My hope is that through a greater awareness of the challenges faced, our government can take informed, practical and equitable action for the benefit of the global community" said Dr. Orbinski.

Dhalla thanks the HAT Caucus event sponsors including the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, the Canadian Treatment Action Council and the Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development as well as all the co-chairs, volunteers and parliamentarians who helped make the HAT Caucus inaugural launch a success.

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