

Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister

Dear Mr. Harper,

The Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Nurses in AIDS Care (CANAC) is the national organization representing and supporting nurses who work in HIV/AIDS care. We were shocked by your absence from the International AIDS Conference. This indicates a lack of understanding of the effect HIV/AIDS has had on the health, physical and social wellbeing of all members of the Canadian public.

Canada can and should have a leadership position in the international fight against HIV/AIDS. Initiatives to export Canadian medical expertise around the world are highly successful. The ability of Canadian medical personnel, especially nurses, to witness what is happening locally and globally, integrating the two viewpoints with unparalleled compassion and access to excellent research, training and experience is highly regarded. As some examples of this, CANAC has members teaching and providing care in Lesotho, Botswana and various regions of Africa. Our members have taught in Bosnia and lectured at other international conferences in Dubai and Bangkok.

Nursing has always had an essential role to play in HIV prevention, care, treatment and support. As nurses, we strongly advocate for the promotion of health, human rights and dignity for all persons affected by HIV and AIDS. Nurses work with all members of society, to decrease obstacles and remove barriers, to care for people and promote health.

The International Conference has ended and an important chance for your government to show its commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS has been missed; we urge you to learn about the effect this disease is having in Canada and globally, to take a stance to support the efforts of communities, nurses and other professionals who are trying to meet the challenges of HIV/AIDS and to show that this is a priority. We are very happy to talk to you about how we may be able to assist you.

What we need from you is action on your own initiatives and support for our work and that of our colleagues in Canada and throughout the world. Leaders such as you hold the power to help, to educate and to bring into the light issues that must be resolved before the fight can be won. We need you to assume your role as leader in the fight *against* HIV/AIDS and *for* all those affected.

Our members are bravely on the forefront, walking hand-in-hand with people living with HIV/AIDS, and with their families and communities. The question must be asked
.Where are you?

Sincerely,

CANAC Board of Directors