



MEDIA RELEASE

ON CANADA'S SECOND HIV IS NOT A CRIME AWARENESS DAY, NOTHING HAS CHANGED FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

People living with HIV in Canada are still persecuted and prosecuted for their serostatus

February 28, 2025 — Toronto, Canada — Today, the Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Criminalization (CCRHC) is marking its second HIV is Not a Crime Awareness Day (HINAC Day) by calling on the leaders of all Canadian political parties to commit to reforming the laws that continue to criminalize people living with HIV in Canada.

After promising change for nearly a decade to people living with HIV, the Government of Canada informed the CCRHC last November that it had abandoned its plans for law reform surrounding HIV criminalization.

Now, with Parliament prorogued and an election looming, reform will not happen until a new government is chosen. People living with HIV deserve a commitment from all political leaders that their human rights and dignity will be respected. National consultations have long ago taken place, and overwhelming evidence demonstrating the urgent need for reform has already been presented to multiple governments. Today, the time for discussion is over and the time for action long past.

Truly, it is time for Canadian politicians to commit to the reforms called for in the CCRHC's [2022 Community Consensus Statement](#), which to date has been signed by more than 100 expert organizations in Canada, including:

1. Removing non-disclosure, exposure, or transmission of HIV or other STBBIs from the reach of sexual assault laws, including designation as a sex offender.
2. Enacting reforms to ensure that any other provisions in the *Criminal Code* are not used to further stigmatize and discriminate against people living with HIV and STBBIs. Prosecution under any offence in the *Criminal Code* should be limited to cases of actual, intentional transmission.
3. Ending the deportation of non-citizens following conviction.
4. Reviewing past convictions so that people living with HIV previously criminalized under these harmful and stigmatizing laws no longer have to live with the label of a sex offender and criminal.

“This year’s HINAC Day marks another year people living with HIV in Canada continue to be prosecuted under the laws of sexual assault, resulting in convictions, imprisonment, and registration as a sex offender, even when there is little or no risk of transmission,” says Alex McClelland of the CCRHC. “Despite repeated acknowledgments by successive federal Ministers of Justice in Canada that HIV criminalization is harmful and counter to public health goals, we still today see people being charged for allegedly not disclosing their HIV status to sexual partners.”

HINAC Day started through the joint efforts of the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation and the SERO Project in 2022 to align communities with various stakeholders to stand in unity against the harms and violence of HIV criminalization in the United States. Since 2024, HINAC Day is now acknowledged worldwide.

Canada prides itself on being a leader for progressive social change, but actions speak volumes. And right now, the Government’s inaction tells a story of political foot-dragging and cowardice to do what they know — and have said themselves — is the right thing to do, especially in the face of an HIV response that is failing: Canada is currently at the bottom of G7 countries in terms of reducing new infections. HIV criminalization is known to amplify stigma, which undoubtedly contributes to the alarming rise in cases in this country.

The Government of Canada knows that HIV is not a crime, and that law reform is long overdue, regardless of which party forms the next federal government. People living with HIV — in Canada and beyond — deserve better.

We are honoured to name Colin Johnson as the recipient of the CCRHC’s HIV is Not a Crime Leadership Award.

This award recognizes CCRHC members who are living with HIV and whose advocacy through their lived experience has advanced the work of the Coalition. It is made possible through the generous grant made by The Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation.

Colin is a Black, Gay, person who uses drugs who has lived with HIV for the past 40 years. He is an advocate for the Black community, especially when it impacts Queer folk and substance use. He works as a consultant on a variety of issues ranging from HIV to the decriminalization of drugs.

He is the Co-chair of the Toronto Harm Reduction Alliance (THRA) and sits on the Steering Committee for the CCRHC. For relaxation he is an avid fan of Formula 1 Racing and soccer.

"I really want to thank the Coalition for this honour," says Johnson. "It means a lot to me so many of you have become good friends over the years. I appreciate you all."

The Canadian Coalition to Reform HIV Criminalization is a national coalition of people living with HIV, community organizations, lawyers, researchers, and others formed in October 2016. More information can be found [here](#).

The 2022 Community Consensus Statement, which details the policy and law reform asks of the community following consultations, can be found [here](#).

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