



Use Your Voice: Five questions for federal candidates on inclusive health care

Canada votes on Monday, September 20, 2021! In addition to voting, you have an opportunity to raise issues you care about with all candidates vying for a seat in parliament. To help you engage with political hopefuls in your community, Casey House is sharing five questions to ask any candidate about issues related to HIV, harm reduction, and compassionate, socially-just health care.

1. Canada's blood donation policy continues to exclude the 2SGBTQ/MSM community

In order to donate blood in Canada, men who have sex with men must be abstinent for three months before donating. As Casey House's chief medical officer [Dr. Ed Kucharski explains](#), *"This thinking is not only outdated and discriminatory, it ignores science. The current evidence makes it clear why 2SGBTQ/MSM should be eligible to donate blood in Canada"*. While Canadian Blood Services intends to recommend this policy change by the end of the year, the federal government can and must act sooner.

Question for candidates: Will your party mandate Health Canada to immediately end Canada's discriminatory blood donation policy?

2. HIV continues to be highly stigmatized in Canada

[One in five](#) people living with HIV are denied health services because of stigma and discrimination. This affects people's willingness to be tested and then to seek treatment and support, and fuels misinformation about HIV and the impact it has on those who live with it. [Speaking up](#) against HIV stigma makes a difference, and we need more people to know the facts, correct misinformation, and [use language that empowers people living with HIV](#).

Question for Candidates: How will you correct misinformation and insist on language that empowers people living with HIV?

3. Canada's overdose epidemic is a national crisis

More than 21,000 Canadians have died of overdose since 2016 due to the toxic drug supply. Providing access to [harm reduction](#) services (such as safer drug use and consumption services) and a safer supply of regulated drugs, as part of comprehensive mental health and addictions care, is essential to reduce the risks of drug use, save lives, and improve health care for people who use drugs.

Question for Candidates: What will your party do to ensure that harm reduction services and safer supply programs are more available, as part of mental health and addictions care?



4. Racialized communities are disproportionately impacted by HIV infection rates

Systemic barriers to health equity and access to health care mean that disparities exist in HIV diagnoses and outcomes. [In 2019](#), almost half of new HIV infections were among Black people (25.5%) and Indigenous peoples (24.7%), despite these communities accounting for a much smaller percentage of the country's overall population.

Question for candidates: How will your government formally acknowledge and address racial inequality in health care, and address disproportionate rates of HIV in Black, Indigenous and racialized communities?

5. Canada's fight against HIV is chronically underfunded

Since 2003, community-based programs that connect people living with, or at risk of, HIV to vital services have been underfunded, to the tune of [more than \\$123 million](#) in commitments that were never delivered. As a result, many organizations have closed or discontinued programs. With 62,050 Canadians living with HIV and 2,122 new HIV diagnoses [reported in 2018](#), Canada's HIV response needs to be adequately funded. On World AIDS Day 2020 Senator René Cormier introduced a motion that called on the federal government to increase HIV-specific funding to \$100 million annually.

Question for candidates: How will your government apply the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to deepen the federal government's investment in the HIV epidemic and reduce new HIV infections?

Every Canadian citizen has the right to vote. When you exercise this right, you help choose who represents you in government.

Are you registered to vote?

If you're not already registered (or if you're unsure and need to check), use Elections Canada's [Online Voter Registration Service](#) OR visit [any Elections Canada office](#) by Tuesday September 14, 6:00 p.m. If you're a newcomer to Canada, learn more at [settlement.org](#).

Do you know who is running in your riding?

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