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30 June 2011

Mr. Neil MacDonald, Executive Director
Public Health Strategic Policy and Planning Branch
Alberta Health and Wellness
23rd Floor, Telus Plaza North Tower
10025 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 1S6

Dear Mr. MacDonald;

Re: Lack of Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Testing Sites in Alberta

The Alberta Community Council on HIV (ACCH), a coalition of 13 AIDS service organizations (ASOs) that provide HIV/AIDS education, support, and prevention services across the province, is writing to Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW) over our concern regarding the lack of STI testing sites in the province. The lack of sites plays a significant role in the extremely high rate of sexually transmitted infections in our community and is a great disservice to the health of all Albertans, especially those who are already marginalized due to poverty, racism, homophobia, or addiction.

As organizations with expertise in the area of sexual health with a province wide network of service to at risk communities and individuals, we are poised to not only see the impact of the lack of testing sites, but to provide a broad-based deployment of additional sites, with proper resources, and supportive policy.

We applaud the recent STI Blood Borne Pathogen Strategy which identified the need for more testing – especially for those communities and individuals at high risk. We work with people and communities who are highly vulnerable on multiple fronts and can and do reach the “hard to reach”. We welcome the opportunity to provide this service through locally based ASOs. We seek to work in partnership with Alberta Health Services in implementing the strategy through community based STI testing sites in addition to or in conjunction with existing or planned sites. Our member groups are assessing their readiness now to provide community based assistance in implementing the strategy; providing community based STI sites is a key area where we feel we can be most effective.

We look forward to the opportunity for further dialogue and to provide further information on how ASOs in Alberta and ACCH can work to implement the strategy and curtail the rising rates of STI and Blood Borne pathogens in our community.

Sincerely;

Brenda Yamkowy
Chair
Alberta Community Council on HIV

c.c. Dr. André Corriveau, MD, MBA, FRCPC
Chief Medical Officer of Health
Alberta Health and Wellness

Margaret King
Assistant Deputy Minister
Alberta Health and Wellness