



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

The Honourable Mark Holland  
Minister of Health

April 15, 2024

RE: Urgent Need to Extend HIV Self-Testing Kits Support Funding

Dear Minister Holland,

We are writing about the government's decision to end funding for a critical program offering support and training with free HIV self-testing kits, especially due to an alarming rise in infections in our country, and request that the government renew investments in 2024 to ensure this life-saving program can continue.

As you know, new cases of HIV went up nearly 25 percent in 2022 in Canada compared to 2021.

These free self-testing kits that are made available through government funding are especially important for reaching individuals who are underserved by our healthcare systems and may face barriers to accessing healthcare, including gay and bisexual men, Black Canadians, newcomers, and Indigenous populations. While these tests remaining free and accessible without barriers are essential components of the program, we are hearing from frontline workers in our communities who understand the importance of teaching people how to use them correctly from the start to ensure a beneficial experience. This ensures that individuals who test negative but are at high risk continue to use them at recommended intervals.

Experts estimate one out of every ten people with HIV don't know they are living with the virus because they've never been tested and HIV testing and stigma remain a barrier, a number that surely will only increase by taking this critical testing support option away.

We also know accessibility to private and reliable testing is key to community health and harm reduction by limiting spread as treatments can be used to decrease the risk of transmission upon diagnosis.

In MP Morrice's community, the AIDS Committee of Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, and Area (ACCKWA), which recently expanded services to Guelph-Wellington as well, responds to the changing needs of the population they serve and individuals infected, affected, and at risk for HIV and AIDS. In the last year alone, they supported almost 600 people in testing for HIV. 94% of the people engaged requested assistance from a peer worker to ensure they understood and completed the test correctly.

With the program that is now ending, ACCKWA has been able to hire peer workers to support those learning to use the tests, reducing vulnerability and risk, whether related to sexual health risks or substance use, something that is at grave risk of continuing without additional federal government support.

By hiring people from the same communities who need these tests, 375 community agencies like ACCKWA are not only able to provide the testing kits, but to provide outreach, coaching, and support for those who want to take them.

We would be glad to discuss any of the above further with you and/or members of your team. Thanks for the work you do in service of Canadians.

Sincerely,



Mike Morrice,  
MP for Kitchener Centre



Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands, BC  
Leader of the Green Party of Canada



Jonathan Pedneault, Deputy Leader,  
Green Party of Canada