



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-01023**

BY: **MR. DAVIES (VANCOUVER KINGSWAY)**

DATE: **DECEMBER 7, 2016**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **HONOURABLE JANE PHILPOTT**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE
Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Hepatitis C

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The Government of Canada has endorsed the World Health Organization Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis (2016-21) which outlines targets and actions to drive progress towards elimination of viral hepatitis by 2030.

In Canada in 2011, an estimated 221,000 to 246,000 people were infected with hepatitis C, of which up to 44% are unaware of their infection. Injection drug use with contaminated equipment poses the greatest risk of hepatitis C transmission in Canada. Through the Hepatitis C Prevention, Support and Research Program (Hepatitis C Program), the Government of Canada supports research, surveillance, prevention, public health guidance, and awareness, in partnership with provincial, territorial and local health authorities, health professionals, communities and researchers.

The Government of Canada, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), has invested over \$50 million in Hepatitis C research in the past 5 years, with \$12.1 million in 2015-16 alone. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and CIHR have made strategic investments in the PHAC-CIHR Joint Hepatitis C Research Initiative since 1999; to date, over \$33 million has been invested in this partnership. This Initiative funds a broad-based research agenda to further understand Hepatitis C virus infection and reduce the burden of the disease through the generation, application and use of new knowledge in this field. Among other things, the Initiative supports research and training in virus biology and pathogenesis, diagnostic technology, treatment strategies, quality of life issues, and preventive measures.

The Government is also investing \$4.5 million over five years to support innovative and interdisciplinary research through the Canadian Hepatitis C Network, funded through a partnership between CIHR and the PHAC. CIHR, PHAC and other partners are also supporting research projects focussed on the implementation and scale-up of evidence-based interventions focussed on the prevention of HIV, hepatitis C and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI's). PHAC supports Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange, an important partner in translating evidence-based knowledge on HIV and hepatitis C for end-users, public health program and policy officials.

As a key priority, the Government of Canada is committed to improving the accessibility and affordability of necessary prescription medications such as the new generation of hepatitis C drugs, which have proved to have a very high cure rate.

Recognizing that key populations at risk for hepatitis C infection may be at increased risk for other STBBIs, the Government of Canada has developed an integrated communicable diseases community funding approach. The approach aims to ensure a more effective and efficient response to the prevention of HIV, hepatitis C and related STBBIs. On April 1, 2017, the Government of Canada will begin funding community organizations under a new HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund.

Domestic and global responses to hepatitis C have resulted in extensive evidence and practical knowledge on how best to address it. Collectively, we now need to identify concrete actions that will have an impact on hepatitis C in Canada. As part of the Government's efforts towards this goal, a national conference of Canadian stakeholders and experts will be convened in February 2017 to identify and prioritize those actions that will have a significant impact on the rates of STBBIs in Canada. Local health authorities, communities, health professionals and researchers will continue to play important roles in the overall response to hepatitis C and other related infections.