

Canada takes a stand against Viral Hepatitis

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OTTAWA, June 16, 2016 – The Honourable Jane Philpott, Canada's minister for health, reaffirmed today Canada's commitment to participate in the global fight against viral hepatitis.

Speaking at a breakfast on Parliament Hill organized by the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH), Philpott said to the health professionals, government officials, civil society representatives and hepatitis survivors in attendance, "We are committed to do the work to end hepatitis as a public health threat by 2030. We are working closely with provinces and territories to address the ongoing burden of viral hepatitis."

Canada, along with 193 other Member States, recently adopted the Global Strategy on Viral Hepatitis at the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland. The goal – the elimination of hepatitis B and C by 2030 – signals the greatest ever global commitment on viral hepatitis.

The Parliamentary Breakfast also marked the launch of the World Hepatitis Day campaign in Canada. WHD, celebrated annually on July 28, is dedicated to raising awareness about viral hepatitis and promoting prevention, and access to testing, treatment and care. Again this year, the Canadian campaign is spearheaded by CSIH and links some 65 organizations planning more than 100 events across the country. This year's theme is: Know your status? Get tested. Know your options.

Eva Slaweki, Executive Director, CSIH said, "Hepatitis is not just somebody else's problem. Thousands of Canadians may be affected by the virus and not know it yet. We urge everyone to get informed and get tested."

Dr. Curtis Cooper, Director of The Ottawa Hospital Regional Viral Hepatitis Program, said, "The adoption of the Global Strategy is a milestone in the fight against viral hepatitis. It is now up to every country that signed on, including Canada, to do what it takes to eliminate these diseases."

Facts:

- Viral hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver caused by one of five hepatitis viruses. Hepatitis B and C may lead to liver failure, cancer, disability and death.
- There are some 600,000 Canadians living with hepatitis, many of whom are unaware of their condition. Worldwide, more than 400 million people are infected, and 1.4 million die every year from the condition – more than HIV/AIDS or malaria.
- For more information on the Global Strategy on Viral Hepatitis:
<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2016/wha69-28-may-2016/en/>

The Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH) brings the Canadian global health community together to better achieve a shared goal of improving health worldwide.
www.csih.org