

Roy Romanow and Jake Epp Launch Fundraising Campaign for ICID/UNICEF *HIV Prevention in Ukraine* Program

Media Release - For Immediate Release

September 23, 2011

WINNIPEG - The Hon. Jake Epp and Heather Medwick, CEO of the International Centre for Infectious Diseases (ICID) today launched a fundraising campaign to support an HIV prevention initiative in Ukraine. Ukraine has been experiencing one of the fastest growing HIV epidemics in the world.

Mr. Epp and the Hon. Roy J. Romanow - former Premier of Saskatchewan - are Co-Chairs of the campaign, which will raise \$500,000 to support the initiative, a partnership between Winnipeg-based ICID, UNICEF Canada and UNICEF Ukraine.

The program will also engage the expertise of the University of Manitoba Centre for Global Public Health to develop prevention strategies. The Centre, led by Dr. Jamie Blanchard, has 25 years of frontline experience in HIV/AIDS prevention in both Africa and India.

“We are delighted that Mr. Epp and Mr. Romanow have agreed to take on a leadership role to raise funds for the *HIV Prevention in Ukraine* program,” said Heather Medwick, CEO of ICID. “We look forward to developing this program with Dr. Blanchard and UNICEF, and making an impact on the health and well being of young Ukrainians.”

“Through hard work and determination, Ukrainian Canadians have prospered in Canada, but have also been the most important supporters of Ukraine as a nation,” said Mr. Epp.

“This is an opportunity for the Ukrainian Canadian community in particular, to come together and give back in order to help prevent the spread of a deadly disease although we encourage all Canadians to give.”

MORE - MORE - MORE

"HIV Prevention in Ukraine is a very important humanitarian program and ICID and its partners have an excellent reputation for this type of quality research and public policies," said Romanow. "HIV in Ukraine is a challenge we must overcome and I am very pleased to be associated with this initiative."

"The Ukrainian Canadian community is very supportive of ICID's efforts to increase awareness of and halt the spread of HIV/AIDS in Ukraine," said Ukrainian Canadian Congress National President Paul Grod. "We encourage all Canadians to support this important humanitarian initiative."

Fundraising efforts will be focused on government and specific granting organizations, as well as generating private support from corporations and individuals. The Canada Ukraine Foundation, a national charitable organization has offered their support to the project.

To learn more people can go to icid.com. To make a donation, visit www.unicef.ca/ICID , or find it (HIV Prevention in Ukraine) on Facebook or on Twitter: @StopHIVUkraine

-30-

Contact:

Tanya Merke Epp (204) 946-5156

Project Manager, ICID

tmerkepp@icid.com

BACKGROUND

Quick Facts

Approximately 360,000 Ukrainians, or 1.46% of the population, between the ages of 15 and 49 live with HIV/AIDS. According to UNAIDS it is estimated that the number of people (Adults 15 – 49) living with HIV in Canada is approximately 67,000, or 0.2%.

In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the number of people living with HIV has almost **tripled** since 2000, reaching an estimated total of **1.4 million people 2009**.

Annual HIV diagnoses in Ukraine have more than doubled since 2001.

UKRAINE

The prevalence of HIV in Ukraine is higher than in any other country in Europe and Central Asia. Annual HIV diagnoses in Ukraine have more than doubled in the last 10 years, and more than 2,500 people died of AIDS in 2010.

The spread of HIV is partly due to poverty, high migration, risky sexual behavior among youth, and a continued rise in drug injection use. This is compounded by widespread stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, causing people to avoid getting help. A lack of social services and educational prevention programs only make the problem worse.

According to a UNAIDS Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2010, 25% of those who inject drugs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are living with HIV. But in Ukraine, that figure has skyrocketed to between 39% and 50%. In relation to the high number of HIV positive injection drug users, transmission amongst heterosexual partners is also increasing.

PREVENTING HIV/AIDS IN UKRAINE

The project will focus on the south-east corner of Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhya, which has a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. The target population will be women aged 14 to 24 who are at high risk of contracting HIV, particularly sex workers, injection drug users and other youth who are vulnerable for engaging in risky behaviours. It is hoped that reaching out to these groups will help stem the spread of HIV/AIDS.

With Ukraine now the country worst affected by HIV/AIDS in Europe, it is imperative that the most marginalized populations, including women and youth, receive the public health education and life skills they need to protect themselves from infection.

The research that comes out of the *HIV Prevention in Ukraine* program will help guide program development across Ukraine and in other countries of the region.

SECURING SUPPORT

The program will be supported through individual and corporate donations, as well as private and government grants. ICID and UNICEF Canada have committed to raising \$500,000 each for a total of \$ 1 million.

The *HIV Prevention in Ukraine* program will assist people in one of Ukraine’s hardest hit regions. By targeting some of the country’s most vulnerable populations, the project will not only help those who are most impacted by HIV and AIDS, but learnings from this program will also be used in other jurisdictions across Ukraine.

Project Budget: \$1 million

ICID Campaign Goal: \$500,000

UNICEF Canada Funding: \$500,000

PARTNERS

ICID

Created in 2004, ICID is a Winnipeg-based not-for-profit registered charitable organization with a mission to bring people and resources together to catalyze solutions that target infectious diseases. ICID, working with and through its partners, seeks to implement practices, programs, and policies that reduce the impact of infectious disease in Canada and worldwide through strategies that prevent and manage infections efficiently for individuals and populations

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Steeped in tradition and excellence that stems back 131 years, the University of Manitoba has grown to be the largest and most recognized post-secondary educational institution in Manitoba. The University of Manitoba creates, preserves and communicates knowledge, and thereby, contributes to the cultural, social and economic well-being of the people of Manitoba, Canada and the world.

UNICEF

UNICEF is the world’s leading child-focused humanitarian and development agency. Through innovative programs and advocacy work, UNICEF saves children’s lives and secure their rights in virtually every country. It’s global reach, unparalleled influence on policy makers, and diverse partnerships make UNICEF an instrumental force in shaping a world in which no child dies of a preventable cause. UNICEF is supported entirely by voluntary donations and helps all children, regardless of race, religion or politics.