Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges

The 22nd International AIDS Conference

The 22nd International AIDS Conference is the largest conference on any global health issue in the world and was held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, from July 23 to 27. This year’s theme was Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges, and drew attention to the need for a human-rights based approach to reach key populations.

CANFAR’s Chief Executive Officer, Alex Filiatrault, attended the conference and shares his personal experience on how CANFAR remains a trailblazer in its mission to end HIV in Canada.

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Positive Flame march. Copyright: Marten van Dijl / IAS

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What was your experience like at the International AIDS Conference this year?

Alex Filiatrault
My experience at the conference was an eye-opening one, as it showed me how the global HIV epidemic is still so strong. It was a somber reminder how many communities around the world are currently affected by high rates of HIV infections.

What can you tell us was impactful or transformational to you during the conference?

Alex Filiatrault
I visited the Global Village on several occasions and I was profoundly moved by all the countries that were represented. The Global Village is where communities from all over the world gather to meet, share, and learn from each other. The youth that were representatives at the individual booths of each country shared incredible stories of survival, overcoming adversity, celebrating individual identity, being out and proud, and fighting stigma. The Global Village’s approach to fighting stigma was truly impressive.

Do you believe that Canada will reach the 90-90-90 targets set by UNAIDS for 2020?

Alex Filiatrault
There is still a lot of work to be done in reaching the 90-90-90 targets, and we’re at a crossroads in Canada. We need to step up our efforts in growing HIV awareness to ensure that people get tested, and have access to proper medication, and care. We’re very fortunate that we have been able to make progress in suppressing the infection for people living with HIV in Canada, however, testing remains a significant challenge. It’s important that people are aware of their status through testing.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recently released new national statistics revealing that an estimated six people in Canada become newly infected with HIV each day. What still needs to be done to address these infection rates?

Alex Filiatrault
The CANFAR team, members of the CANFAR Board, and Scientific Advisory Committee all believe in the same purpose: ending HIV in Canada can only be achieved by reducing new infections. New infection rates must be reduced to its lowest possible levels in the next five years, as the global community continues to undertake research for a cure, improved care, and HIV testing.

Can you tell us what motivated you to join CANFAR?

Alex Filiatrault
It’s an incredible time for implementing new HIV testing strategies and national awareness programs. At CANFAR, I am truly making a difference and I feel that we need to continue investing more money in research and increase testing, and access to testing in Canada. I believe these combined actions will help in eradicating HIV altogether in Canada.

What impact do you hope to make from your involvement with CANFAR?

Alex Filiatrault
My greatest desire in my current role is to truly activate a network of support to grow HIV awareness coast to coast. We need to get the conversation going and remove stigma around this conversation. Getting people involved is key for me.
The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recently published new statistics reflecting the current state of the HIV epidemic in Canada. HIV rates in Canada remain high compared to other developed countries around the world, and are not decreasing. Currently, there are 63,110 people living with HIV in Canada, and over 2,000 new infections every year.

By 2020, Canada hopes to achieve the UNAIDS target of 90-90-90, meaning 90% of the population living with HIV are diagnosed; 90% of those who are diagnosed are on antiretroviral treatment; and 90% of those who are on antiretroviral treatment have a suppressed viral load.

Currently in Canada, only 86% of people living with HIV are diagnosed. For those who are diagnosed, 81% are on antiretroviral treatment. Of those on antiretroviral treatment, 91% have a suppressed viral load.

This means that there are over 23,000 people in Canada who are not receiving the appropriate care, in terms of testing and treatment.

While Canada has achieved the third UNAIDS target of 90% of those on treatment have a suppressed viral load, more needs to be done to encourage people to get tested and to increase access to treatment. With only two years away from 2020; the 90-90-90 target can still be achieved if Canada puts into place a targeted and integrated strategy for increasing HIV prevention, testing, access to treatment, and eliminating the stigma around HIV.

Learn more about CANFAR’s response to the UNAIDS 90-90-90 target and its mission to end the HIV epidemic in Canada.

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**National Statistics Update**

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*Currently, Canada has achieved the third UNAIDS 90-90-90 target.

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Be a Hero.

Stand united with CANFAR in its mission to end HIV in Canada.

CANFAR.COM/DONATE

#EndingHIVinCanada #EndHIV

Co-authored by Anindita Marwah
(CANFAR Office Volunteer)
United in Support

Bernadette Morra and Jimmy Molloy

Alex Filiatrault, CANFAR’s Chief Executive Officer, recently sat down with 2018 Bloor Street Entertains Event Chairs Bernadette Morra and Jimmy Molloy for a discussion on their philanthropic leadership.

How did you first get involved in CANFAR?

Bernadette Morra
I started covering Bloor Street Entertains in the ’90s while I was fashion editor for the Toronto Star. I also wrote about other fashion fundraising initiatives, like designers or retailers who held special events or were donating a portion of their sales to CANFAR. It was a time when everyone wanted to do anything they could to help the cause.

Jimmy Molloy
In the ’80s I owned a restaurant called Auberge Gavroche and we were one of the lead restaurants in catering dinners in people’s homes to support CANFAR. These fundraising dinners evolved into what Bloor Street Entertains today.

How do you make decisions about which charities you will support? Is there a cause that one of you is more passionate about than the other, or do you choose together?

Bernadette Morra
We both have causes that are closer to our hearts. I lean more toward the arts while Jimmy is very focused on healthcare. But we fully respect each other’s charitable decision-making and together we achieve a nice balance.

Jimmy Molloy
We both make smaller spur-of-the-moment donations without consulting the other. Those are often in response to a crisis or because a friend asks for support. We discuss all significant donations together because we can’t do it all.

“More needs to be done in terms of getting the word out about prevention. Information and education are the best weapon.”

- JIMMY MOLLOY
Can you share what it means to the both of you to be the Event Chairs for this year’s Bloor Street Entertains?

Bernadette Morra
Bloor Street Entertains has a long history of support from some of the fashion world’s most significant luxury brands.

Jimmy Molloy
We are honored that CANFAR has entrusted us with the responsibility of ensuring these brands are proud to have their name associated with this evening and this cause.

What is your favourite memory from over your years of your involvement with CANFAR?

Bernadette Morra
The hectic year there was a bomb scare at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). The Bank of Montreal, the presenting sponsor, had 80 guests with nowhere to go. Michael Carlevale, who was catering the dinner at Montblanc, invited everyone to Prego. He only had 30 filets in his fridge but somehow managed to feed everyone. It was a true “loaves and fishes” scenario.

Jimmy Molloy
I love the way everyone comes together for this event: chefs, waiters, florists, retailers, and guests are all contributing to one common cause. Everyone’s on the same team. It’s wonderful to share that feeling of making a difference.

What is your reaction to the fact that there are still an estimated six people in Canada who become newly infected with HIV each day? What do you believe needs to be done to address this critical issue in Canada?

Bernadette Morra
We were both shocked to hear this statistic. The urgency and terror of the first few years of the AIDS crisis has waned, and I think in some ways HIV has become a forgotten issue. A major awareness campaign is in order.

Jimmy Molloy
More needs to be done in terms of getting the word out about prevention. Information and education are the best weapon.

What message would you send to others who may be considering supporting CANFAR and vital HIV and AIDS research?

Bernadette Morra
Get educated about the work that CANFAR is doing. Read their website and sign up for their quarterly newsletter. Then weigh whether that is where you want to direct your funds. Donating to charity should be a thoughtful, conscious decision so you feel good about where your money is going.

Jimmy Molloy
We are so blessed to live in Canada. We have an obligation to give back, because that’s the right thing to do. CANFAR has done a remarkable job of changing the course of this disease. Now is the time to finish the job.

ALEX FILIATRAULT
Chief Executive Officer
afiliatrault@CANFAR.com
On October 2nd, 2018, The Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research (CANFAR) in partnership with arts-based youth performance group, SExT: Sex Education by Theatre, released Bodak Consent, a brand-new music video highlighting the topic of consent, safer sex practices and HIV/STI prevention.

Bodak Consent is a rap parody based on Cardi B’s Bodak Yellow. The lyrics were re-written by 19-year old cast member Lauren Chang teaching youth about consent. The piece is an arts-based public health and sexual health educational resource made by youth for youth.

To date, the video has garnered over 7,000 views on YouTube and the overall reception from both the media and the public have been overwhelmingly positive. CANFAR has been featured on She Does The City (55,720 unique website visitors per month and 30,800 followers on social media) and has gone on radio interviews with SiriusXM Canada Radio (audience of 32.7 million subscribers across North America), kultur’D, a pop culture and diversity show on Global News Radio AM 640 (audience reach of 7 million listeners), and Talking Radical Radio, a podcast about grassroots social change work in Canada on Rabble.ca.

CANFAR was also featured on interviews with CTV News and Breakfast Television, speaking to SExT about the video and partnership.

Other key influencers who have shared or engaged with the video online include, Tanya Kim (former co-host of etalk Canada), Canadian actors Jade Hassouné and Mena Massoud (cast to play Aladdin in Disney’s remake of Aladdin in 2019), Canadian author Kelley Armstrong, and Canadian actress Jean Yoon (from Kim’s Convenience), among many others.

SExT alongside CANFAR is encouraging everyone to follow along and participate in the conversation online using #BodakConsent.

(From left to right) SExT cast member and Bodak Consent writer, Lauren Chang; the kultur’D Show Guest Co-host, Andrea Bains; CANFAR Senior Manager of National Awareness Programs, Roxanne Ma; SExT Creator and Director, Shira Taylor; the kultur’D Show Co-host, Meera Estrada.
Keeping Bloor Street Entertains Young at Heart

CANFAR would like to shine a light on the young professionals who have joined our 2018 Bloor Street Entertains Committee. Thanks to their dedication, this year’s Bloor Street Entertains is already on its way to being one of our biggest and best to date.

For over 20-years, Bloor Street Entertains has reigned as Canada’s largest and only fundraising gala in support of HIV and AIDS research. The legacy that Bloor Street Entertains has built over the past two decades is thanks to the unwavering support of the event’s longstanding partners, sponsors, volunteers, and patrons.

We sincerely thank each of these young heroes for giving their time to sell tickets to CANFAR’s signature fundraising gala and help spread awareness for the cause. It is passionate people who make up a strong volunteer committee, and these five philanthropic champions have showcased their dedication towards making a difference.

Thank you to Mr. Rui Amaral (2018 Bloor Street Entertains Co-Chair), Ms. Candice Sinclair, Mr. Jamie Knoepfli, Mr. Alex Marconi and Ms. Andrea Petrak. It is thanks to the generosity and compassion of people like you that we can, and will, accomplish our mission to end the HIV epidemic in Canada.
Voices for World AIDS Day

On December 1st, people around the world will unite in solidarity for World AIDS Day. Annually, this date marks an important opportunity to collectively remember those we lost due to AIDS-related illnesses and show support for those who continue to be affected by HIV and AIDS.

Voices for World AIDS Day (formerly known as Voices for Hope) began 14 years ago and is the largest HIV collaborative initiative in Canada marking AIDS Awareness Week and World AIDS Day.

Voices for World AIDS Day is led by CANFAR, Casey House, Maison du parc, and the Dr. Peter AIDS Foundation. This initiative aims to increase national partnership-building among a network of AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) across the country to raise awareness of HIV and the work being done in the areas of HIV prevention, testing, access to treatment, and stigma reduction.

Voices for World AIDS Day engages communities in every province and territory, with particular emphasis on youth, Indigenous populations, people living with HIV, health representatives, and government leaders.

The initiative consists of a national social media campaign, a list of community events for Canadians to support, profiles of people living with and affected by HIV, and the distribution of red ribbons to promote public awareness and education of HIV leading up to and on World AIDS Day.

The campaign is encouraging government support and civic participation through social media engagement using the hashtags #Voices4HIV or #VoixSIDA on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, starting mid-November!

Thank you to Viiv Healthcare for their generosity as Presenting Sponsor. For more information on how you can participate, please visit: voicesforworldaidsday.ca

The collective aim of Voices for World AIDS Day is to educate the public about the important issues around HIV, support people living with HIV and AIDS, and advocate for essential services to end the HIV epidemic in Canada.

Together, let’s raise our voices in remembering those we have lost to AIDS. Join the conversation using the hashtags #Voices4HIV or #VoixSIDA on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, starting mid-November!

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