

Hinton Parklander, Alberta

HIV ground fight works Parklander Editorial

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Fighting HIV/AIDS is a noble cause, no matter the approach. The federal government's move to increasingly fund the search for a cure is admirable. They have promised to double funding for the Federal Initiative on HIV/AIDS by 2009, a sizable boost. A total of 59 Canadians died due to AIDS in 2006, and millions around the World: each life justified funding to find a cure. This is, however, no adequate excuse or vale for a cut in funding to frontline service organizations like HIV West Yellowhead.

Statistics show that public education and the provision of condoms works in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS.

There may have been 59 AIDS deaths in 2006, but there were 1,501 in Canada in 1995, with a steady downward trend between the two years.

Canadians reported 2483 cases of HIV infection in 2006, a number that has remained steady since a dramatic decline in the late 1990s, when HIV/AIDS awareness was growing.

Aspen Regional Health statistics have shown dramatic, 50 per cent or greater rises in other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in the last few years; this may not be surprising considering the transient nature of the region's population and a prevailing work hard, play hard culture.

The need for effective prevention programs is here now. For small organizations with a role to play like HIV West Yellowhead, which run on shoestring budgets, any cuts can mean collapse. Cures are invaluable in the long term, but behaviour-changing programs are immediate and effective. Both can and need to be supported if we ever want an end to HIV/AIDS and its life-taking.

R.L.