

## **World Tuberculosis Day – March 24<sup>th</sup>**

*Canadian Lung Association: Canada's leading the international fight against TB, but more work must be done in Canada's North*

While The Canadian Lung Association commends the federal government's recent commitment to international [tuberculosis](#) (TB) control, it urges the government to continue working with provincial and territorial partners to reduce alarming rates of TB among Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

In January, the federal government announced \$100 million in funding to fight this deadly yet preventable disease internationally. The federal funding will be distributed through the [Canadian International Development Agency \(CIDA\)](#) to TB REACH, an international initiative managed by the [Stop TB Partnership](#).

TB REACH will encourage the development and application of innovative, ground-breaking and efficient techniques, interventions, and activities to increase TB case detection, reduce transmission and help prevent the emergence of drug-resistant forms of TB.

"This funding will continue to position Canada as a leader in global TB control," says, Heather Borquez, CEO and president of The Canadian Lung Association. "Canada has some of the top TB specialists in the world. With their help, we're on the move to stopping TB around the world."

TB remains a massive global public-health problem, with nearly 9 million new cases each year, according to the Stop TB Partnership, an international network of organizations whose goal is to eliminate TB. The number of [multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis \(MDR-TB\)](#) cases has reached record levels, according to the [World Health Organization](#).

In 2008, people born outside of Canada accounted for 62% of all reported TB cases in Canada.<sup>1</sup>

"With TB, there are no borders," says Ms. Borquez. "While Canada is a global leader in TB control, there is still important work that must be done here at home."

In Canada, about 1,600 new cases of TB are reported each year. However, certain population groups in Canada are disproportionately affected by TB. They include Inuit, First Nations and Métis, people born in countries that have a high

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<sup>1</sup>

incidence of TB, HIV infected individuals and those who have spent time in a correctional facility.<sup>2</sup>

According to 2008 figures from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canadian-born non-Aboriginal and Canadian-born Aboriginal cases made up 13% and 21% of all reported cases, respectively.

However, the TB rate in the Canadian-born Aboriginal group continues to be the highest of the three – almost six times greater than the overall Canadian rate. For Inuit, the rate of TB is 32 times the national average and 185 times the average for Canadian-born non-Aboriginals, the group with the lowest case rate.

“It is simply not acceptable that rates of tuberculosis among First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada continue to be up to 160 times higher than the rest of the Canadian-born population,” said Brian Graham, Chair of Chronic Disease Policy for The Canadian Lung Association.

“We need to ensure that our strategy for combating this disease also focuses on such social determinants as poverty and housing. We look forward to partnering with the federal government to ensure that the domestic fight against TB is diverse in scope and aggressive in effort to eradicate this formidable disease.”

The international slogan for 2010 World Tuberculosis Day is “On the move against tuberculosis.” World TB Day is held every year on March 24th to mark the discovery of the cause of the disease.

The Canadian Lung Association is the secretariat for and a founding member of [StopTB Canada](#), Canada's voice in the global partnership to accelerate social and political action to stop the unnecessary spread of tuberculosis around the world.

### [Learn more about tuberculosis](#)

Established in 1900, The Canadian Lung Association is one of Canada's oldest and most respected health charities, and the leading national organization for science-based information, research, education, support programs and advocacy on lung health issues.

#### **For more information, please contact:**

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<sup>1,2</sup>Public Health Agency of Canada. (2008). *Pre-release, Tuberculosis in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/tbpc-latb/pubs/tbcan08pre/index-eng.php#hj>. Figures for 2008 are provisional until publication of the Tuberculosis in Canada – 2008 Annual Report.

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