

Cover Letter for the Action for Anthony Team's Research Document, January 2009

In June 2007, guest preacher Rev. Jim Mitulski spoke to our congregation at Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, of his visit to an African village where he encountered an infant named Anthony. Anthony had contracted HIV at birth and had died not long after, as a result of complications from the HIV. His death could have been avoided, if only he had been afforded access to some of the medications made easily obtainable through legislative schemes such as CAMR.

CAMR is *Canada's Access to Medicines Regime*, legislation enacted in 2005 to assist with the production and transportation of inexpensive, anti-retroviral drugs to developing African nations where some 18 million people are living with, and dying from, HIV/AIDS. We also learned that not one pill had been sent since the legislation was passed.

The Action for Anthony team was formed in response to this and set about to research all aspects of the situation, to arm us with the knowledge necessary to affect change. Our stated mission is to overcome the obstacles prohibiting the Canadian government's pledge of providing affordable HIV/AIDS medication to developing nations, via CAMR.

The result is the attached document, titled *Action for Anthony Research Summary and Considerations*. It is an extensive and comprehensive summation of all sides and parties who have been involved in this crisis. It clearly outlines the stated positions taken by the various groups who feel they have a stake in the CAMR legislation and its process.

From November 2006 to May 2007, the Canadian government conducted an extensive review of this legislation. In December 2007, it concluded that it was too early to determine whether the legislation needed revising. Since our recent federal election has taken place, we appear to have much the same political situation as when the CAMR was first examined. We feel it is time for all Canadians to inform their federal government that more needs to be done to produce a much simpler and more effective piece of legislation, in order to support the flow of ARV drugs to the developing world.

As Stephen Lewis has pointed out, CAMR sets up a 'labyrinth' for generic drug companies to work through to fulfill their mandate. So far, only one Canadian generic drug company (Apotex) has been asked by one African country (Rwanda) to bid for a contract to supply ARV drugs. Having won the contract, Apotex, spent countless hours and \$2 million fulfilling their contract with Rwanda.

The good news is that for the first time since CAMR was put in place, ARV drugs have gone from Canada to Africa to help fight HIV/AIDS. The bad news is that Apotex found the experience to be so harrowing that they will never again participate in so difficult, time consuming, expensive and complicated a process.

As Canadians, we of the Action for Anthony team find this to be a ‘bitter pill to swallow’ and totally unacceptable for a traditionally benevolent country such as ours. As a church that actively engages in supporting social justice issues, we feel more can be done, such as informing our MPs in Ottawa of the need to fund and support the delivery of these vital drugs to the millions who are suffering and dying.

This research document will be of interest and assistance to anyone wishing to read about the arguments put forth by the Government of Canada and the research-based pharmaceutical companies. It breaks down the original Jean Chretien Pledge to Africa in May 2004 meticulously, gathers complementary and supplementary data, and arguments, in response to the component sections of the legislation.

Please read through it to learn more and to arm yourself with the information you need to decide what can and must be done to prevent this devastating disease.

Sincerely,

Michael Kent Lewis and Rob Williams, on behalf of Melee Hutton, Liz Gildner and James Robb, Action for Anthony team, MCCToronto