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[aleacock@cbmphiv.org](mailto:aleacock@cbmphiv.org)

**Contact:** Dr. Allyson Leacock 246-437-

## **CARIBBEAN BROADCAST MEDIA PARTNERSHIP AND SCOTIABANK LAUNCH PILOT REGIONAL HIV TESTING INITIATIVE**

### ***HIV Testing at Scotiabank Branches Throughout the Region on June 27, 2008 – The Ministry of Health to Oversee the Private, Voluntary Testing and Counselling***

The Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CBMP) and Scotiabank in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, today announced a new regional HIV testing pilot program that will culminate with on-site HIV testing local branches of Scotiabank on June 27, 2008. The following territories are participating in the initiative: Anguilla, Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Maarten, and Jamaica.

On June 27, people will be provided the opportunity to visit select Scotiabank branches to participate in private, voluntary HIV counselling and testing conducted by trained and experienced personnel from the Ministry of Health. While the Caribbean remains one of the hardest hit regions in the world by the AIDS epidemic – second only to Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of HIV prevalence, HIV testing is an important part of prevention and treatment efforts. Studies show that those who learn they are HIV positive modify their behavior to reduce the risk of HIV transmission and early knowledge of HIV status is also important for linking those with HIV to medical care and services that can reduce morbidity and mortality and improve quality of life.

In order to build awareness about the testing day, the CBMP and their members from throughout the region will conduct a coordinated campaign of radio and television ads reaching tens of thousands of people.

Executive Director of the CBMP, Dr. Allyson Leacock, noted that “this is an extremely important step in de-stigmatizing the very process of getting tested and knowing your status. As a region, our broadcast media executives in the CBMP have enabled life-saving messages through our LIVE UP campaign and have made HIV/AIDS a business priority. The media must be a critical vehicle to help our people accept HIV testing as a necessary and healthy process like any other medical check up. This mental paradigm shift will be a key contributor in reducing HIV infection in the region, as people make more informed choices and Live Up. Love. Protect. Respect themselves and each other.”

Scotiabank readily partnered with the CBMP in this initiative given their long term commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS and their Info’ Life outreach in schools and

their Pledge Programme. Managing Director for Scotiabank Caribbean East, Stephen Cozier says, “Our leadership in corporate social responsibility in HIV/AIDS is a strategic priority. We consider it a regional imperative, given the Caribbean’s ranking behind sub-Saharan Africa for HIV infection rates. Given our regional footprint, Scotiabank considers it vital not only to support efforts towards changing mindsets regarding HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination but also in the critical area of testing primarily to reduce infection rates.”

Scotiabank Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Kitts & Nevis, Antigua & Barbuda, Dominica, St. Maarten, Anguilla and Jamaica have all signed on to this initiative, which has been fully endorsed by the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP). PANCAP has invited the Ministries of Health in the participating territories to take the lead in planning and organising the event locally with the provision of all necessary professional staff and commodities. The Country Head of Scotiabank in each territory has committed to providing support for all logistical arrangements.

The initiative was announced at forum moderated by Dennis Johnson, of Starcom Network, featuring: Patrick Cozier- CBU- founding partner of the CBMP; Reeta Bhatia - UNAIDS Rep for Barbados and Eastern Caribbean; Dr. Anton Best - Ministry of Health; Karin Dear - Health Journalist, Nation Newspaper; and, Ainsley Reid - PLHIV from Jamaica and officer of Caribbean Conference of Churches.

#### **ABOUT SCOTIABANK**

Scotiabank has been in the Caribbean and Central America since 1889, operating in 25 countries through nearly 370 branches and has a staff of about 10 160 people serving more than two million customers. Scotiabank is committed to supporting the well-being of communities in which it operates. Recognized as a leader internationally and among Canadian corporations for its charitable donations and philanthropic activities, in 2007 the Bank provided more than \$43 million in sponsorships and donations to a variety of projects and initiatives, primarily in the areas of healthcare, education, social services and arts and culture. Please visit us at [www.scotiabank.com](http://www.scotiabank.com).

#### **ABOUT THE CBMP**

The Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS (CBMP) unites 76 top broadcasters from 26 countries in the region’s first coordinated media response to the pandemic. The Partnership creates a structured framework for sharing information and resources among broadcasters that significantly expands HIV/AIDS-related programming and public education activities across the Caribbean. Member broadcasters deliver HIV/AIDS information across a variety of platforms and formats, including targeted public service announcements (PSAs), entertainment programming, news and public affairs programming, and online resources.

The CBMP was launched in May 2006 at a regional summit of media executives on HIV/AIDS, organized by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, and the Kaiser Family Foundation. The CBMP is overseen by a Board of Trustees chaired by Sir George Alleyne, UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean; a Steering Committee of broadcast executives, chaired by Dr. David McBean of CVM Group, Jamaica and representing a diverse constituency of media houses from Barbados, Grenada, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica, Belize, and regional organizations Caribbean Media Corporation and Caribbean Broadcasting Union, with strategic and technical guidance and production support

from Kaiser. The Ford Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation provide additional financial support to underwrite production of campaign materials and informational resources. For more information, visit <http://www.cbmphiv.org> and [www.iliveup.com](http://www.iliveup.com).