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For immediate release

## **INSITE EXTENSION A POLITICAL MANOEUVRE INSTEAD OF A PUBLIC HEALTH DECISION**

***Existing evidence shows supervised injection facility should be permanent***

**TORONTO, October 2, 2007** — The six-month extension given to Vancouver's supervised injection facility by federal Health Minister Tony Clement earlier this afternoon is an irresponsible decision on a public health program that has been proven to work, said the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network today.

"This is the second time that the federal government has stalled on this decision and said that more research is needed. But the fact is, Minister Clement is asking questions that have already been answered and calling for research that's already been done," said Richard Elliott, Executive Director. "The evidence is unequivocal: Insite is saving lives and lowering the risk of HIV infection in one of the most marginalized communities in Canada, and increasing the chances of referring people who use drugs to addiction treatment services."

This latest extension comes just days ahead of the expected unveiling of the government's new National Anti-Drug Strategy, which omits funding to harm reduction programs like Insite.

"This is a blatant attempt by the government to avoid the most controversial consequence of cutting harm reduction out of Canada's drug policy," concluded Elliott. "This is an irresponsible policy decision that's based on ideology rather than on evidence. It's simply not in the public interest."

Among the existing evidence is research conducted by the British Columbia Centre for Excellence on HIV/AIDS that clearly demonstrates that Insite has lowered the rates of syringe-sharing, deaths from overdoses, and risk of HIV and hepatitis C infection. The research has been published in leading medical journals, including *The Lancet*, the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (CMAJ).

Insite has earned the support of the Vancouver Police Department, local residents and business groups, the City of Vancouver, and scientists and AIDS experts from across Canada and around the world.

**About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)) promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, in Canada and internationally, through research, legal and policy analysis, education, and community mobilization. The Legal Network is Canada's leading advocacy organization working on the legal and human rights issues raised by HIV/AIDS.

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