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STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY IN SIX CITIES ECHO SENATOR'S CALL TO REFORM ACCESS TO MEDICINES REGIME

TORONTO, April 1, 2009 — Less than one week after publicly promising to do so, Senator Yoine Goldstein has **tabled legislation to reform Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR)**. Today, students and community members in six Canadian cities are echoing his call for change by holding events as part of a **National Day of Action and Awareness on CAMR**.

Last week, Senator Goldstein hosted an Expert Panel on Parliament Hill in Ottawa where he proposed streamlining the process where affordable medicines to fight HIV/AIDS are sent to people in developing countries. His call was supported by notable panel participants such as former United Nations Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa **Stephen Lewis** and UNICEF Canada's Executive Director **Nigel Fisher**.

Today, students and community members **in six Canadian cities** are making noise and raising awareness by launching a **postcard campaign** to encourage Members of Parliament (MPs) to support the legislation. When CAMR was initially passed by Parliament almost five years ago, it received support from all political parties. Organizers are hopeful the same will happen this time in order to streamline the process.

"The current system just doesn't work," says Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "CAMR was passed almost five years ago but has only been used once, for a single shipment of a single AIDS drug to a single country. The need is enormous, but it just isn't user-friendly in its current form."

In testimony before Parliament, the Legal Network and other NGOs have outlined how CAMR can be streamlined so that separate negotiations with patent-holders are no longer required for each purchasing country and each order of medicines — a simplified, "one-license solution." Bill S-232, introduced in Parliament yesterday by Senator Goldstein, would introduce this simpler approach.

Canada's largest generic drug manufacturer, Apotex, Inc., has committed to making a formulation of a key medication specifically suitable for children and infants with AIDS but only if CAMR is streamlined.

Recently, the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, mobilized in support of African grandmothers, gathered over 32,000 names on a petition which included support for amending CAMR. It was recently tabled in the House by twelve MPs, representing all parties.

“We implore Parliamentarians to hear the message from Canadians that they want their government to deliver on its pledge,” said Mr. Elliott. “Every day counts for people who are dying without the affordable medicines they need to survive. This includes hundreds of thousands of children with HIV/AIDS, many of whom will not live beyond their second birthday if we don’t act. Any delay is inexcusable. We must streamline CAMR now,” emphasized Mr. Elliott. “The Senate should act quickly to pass Bill S-232 and we need to see corresponding action in the House of Commons.”

The National Day of Action events are taking place in Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver (details and contact info below). In addition to the campaign postcards, awareness-raising tools will include a game-show-like “Wheel of Life” and distribution of free mock-medicine. Background material is available at www.aidslaw.ca/camr.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (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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Locations for National Day of Action events taking place on Wed. April 1st (this is no April Fool’s!)

Halifax — Sir Charles Tupper Medical Building, Dalhousie University Campus
Time: 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. (local time)

Montréal — Milton St. and University St., McGill University and 585 St. Catherine St. West

Time: 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. (local time)

Ottawa — Parliament Hill (next to Centennial Flame)

Time: 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. (local time)

Toronto — Lobby of the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy Building (144 College Street, immediately west of Queen's Park Crescent)

Time: 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. (local time)

Winnipeg — University of Winnipeg

Time: 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. (local time)

Vancouver — Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street

Time: 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. (local time)