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## **BILL C-15 FALLS SHORT OF ITS GOALS** *Minimum mandatory sentences mimic ineffective U.S. model*

OTTAWA, April 24, 2009 — Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy (CSSDP) and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network are calling attention to the fact that legislation currently before Parliament will fall short of its intended purpose. Bill C-15, *An Act to Amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, imposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences but will fail to protect youth or decrease drug use — the very goals it seeks to address.

Three actions on Monday, April 27 will highlight Bill C-15's shortcomings. CSSDP is holding a lobby day on Parliament Hill with students from across Ontario and Quebec meeting with Members of Parliament (MPs). Secondly, there will be a 10:00 a.m. (EDT) media conference with representatives from some of the organizations opposed to Bill C-15, including Craig Jones, Executive Director of the John Howard Society of Canada. Finally, all three groups (the Legal Network, CSSDP, and the John Howard Society) will appear before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice to present their submissions on Bill C-15. (The Legal Network's presentation is available at [www.aidslaw.ca](http://www.aidslaw.ca)).

"Bill C-15 is being touted in part as a tool to protect youth and decrease drug use," says Tara Lyons, Executive Director of CSSDP. "But evidence shows mandatory minimum sentences don't accomplish these goals." Her organization is concerned by the possibility Canada will see a marked increase in the number of young people imprisoned as a result of mandatory minimum sentences because this occurred in the United States. "Since the Canadian government justifies this criminalization, in part, as a means of protecting our youth, we are standing up and saying, 'not in our name.'"

"Bill C-15 is bad public policy," says Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "Furthermore, we see that the United States is now reconsidering mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences because they don't work. Not only do they not work, they are bad for individual and public health because they lead to the imprisonment of yet more people with addictions. In prisons, they face higher risks from drug use because prison officials fail to implement needed HIV prevention measures, despite acknowledging the reality of drug use inside and the fact that many prisoners have addictions."

CSSDP is a national grassroots student and youth-run organization concerned with the criminalization of people who use drugs and drug use.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network promotes the human rights of people living with and vulnerable to HIV/AIDS 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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**Media Conference:**

Monday, April 27, 2009  
10:00 a.m. EDT  
Charles Lynch Theatre (Room 130-S)  
Parliament Centre Block  
Ottawa

**For further information and interviews:**

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