

For immediate release

Également disponible en français

**FORMER PRIME MINISTER AMONG 59 VIPs
CALLING FOR CHANGES TO ACCESS TO MEDICINES REGIME**
House of Commons votes tomorrow on bill, Senate possibly later this month

December 1, 2009, Toronto — Today, on World AIDS Day, 59 notable Canadians from the worlds of politics, development, law, medicine and the arts, are publicly calling on parliamentarians to reform Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR). Among those signing the letter are former Prime Minister Paul Martin, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario James Bartleman, former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa Stephen Lewis, past International President of Médecins Sans Frontières Dr. James Orbinski, arts leader Karen Kain, environmental activist David Suzuki, author Sally Armstrong, former Members of Parliament, and numerous leading researchers, national leaders from various faith communities, labour leaders and members of the Order of Canada.

Their call amplifies the opinion of 80 percent of Canadians who support the key changes proposed in current legislation, according to a recent poll done by opinion research firm Pollara for the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Canadian Crossroads International and UNICEF Canada.

The House of Commons will vote tomorrow on Bill C-393, a private member's bill on reforming CAMR. A Senate Committee is currently considering S-232, a bill that is practically identical. A bill called the *Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa Act* was originally passed by Parliament more than five years ago with all-party support to create CAMR, with the goal of facilitating exports of affordable, generic medicines to people in developing countries. The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and many other non-governmental organizations have called for reforms, underlining the initiative's failure to be effective since only a single shipment of medicine has been sent to a single country in over five years.

"Now is the time to act," said Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "People in the developing world, including hundreds of thousands of children with HIV and other illnesses, have waited long enough for Canada to fulfill its promise. They are literally dying for drugs."

The letter signed by the 59 VIPs and complete poll results, along with further background, can be viewed at www.aidslaw.ca/camr.

For more information, please contact:

Disponible en français

Gilles Marchildon
Director of Communications
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
Telephone: +1 416 595-1666 ext. 228
Cell: +1 647 248-2400
E-mail: gmarchildon@aidslaw.ca

**Canada's Access to Medicines Regime:
An open letter to Canada's Parliamentarians from concerned Canadians**

WORLD AIDS DAY
December 1, 2009

Dear Members of Parliament and Senators,

We write to urge you to support legislation that will make it easier to send life-saving medicine to developing countries and, in the process, reaffirm Canada's history of commitment to helping our fellow citizens of the world.

Five years ago, all Members of Parliament and Senators put aside their partisan differences in supporting unanimously legislation creating Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR). They were courageous to do so. The developing world needs Canada to demonstrate that same courage again now.

Everyday thousands of people in developing countries die of treatable diseases, including AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Children are often among those hardest hit. Consider, for example, that half of all children with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa die before the age of two, and 80 percent die before reaching the age of five.

They die not because life-saving medicines do not exist. They die because these medicines aren't available to them and to their countries, at prices they can afford, because of limited budgets and overwhelming needs. They die because they are too poor to buy the medicines that those of us in wealthy countries so often take for granted.

Canada's Access to Medicines Regime was created to lower the costs of these medicines and make them more accessible. Its original intent remains clear: allow generic drug manufacturers to compete to supply less expensive drugs to developing countries, by obtaining a special licence and paying royalties to the patent-holding drug companies on any such sales.

However, the current law is not working. To date, only one medicine has been sent to one country in five years. No generic drug manufacturer in Canada, and no other developing country, has indicated a willingness to go through the cumbersome process again. As a result, more people are dying.

The good news is CAMR can be fixed to make it simpler for developing countries to get more affordable medicines to help their people. Two bills are now before Parliament — one in the Senate (Bill S-232) and the other in the House of Commons (Bill C-393) — that, if passed, will:

- reduce red tape in the process by letting generic drug manufacturers fill multiple orders of the same drug to different countries under one simple licence;
- maintain compensation by way of royalties paid to patented drug companies; and
- come at no cost to taxpayers.

At a time when Canada and Parliamentarians are facing a global economic slump and a federal political environment of heightened partisanship, opportunities to rise above those challenges and enact meaningful change in the world are rare. This is one of those opportunities. Fixing Canada's Access to Medicines Regime will follow through on Parliament's laudable promise to developing countries made five years ago. This change will save lives.

We therefore ask you to please support Bill C-393 (in the House of Commons) and Bill S-232 (in the Senate).

Signed by:

- The Right Honourable Paul Martin, former Prime Minister of Canada
- Naomi Alboim, former Deputy Minister of Ontario; Member of the Order of Ontario; Fellow and Vice-Chair, Policy Forum, Queen's University School of Policy Studies
- Janis Alton, National Co-Chair, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace
- Sally Armstrong, Author, Member of the Order of Canada
- Rob Baker, Musician, The Tragically Hip
- Gerry Barr, President and CEO, Canadian Council for International Cooperation
- James Bartleman, former Lieutenant Governor of Ontario
- Richard Bedell, MD, MPH, Medical Advisor for Dignitas International; Clinical Assistant Professor, Division of International Health, Department of Family Practice, University of British Columbia; Advisory Committee Member, Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UBC Chapter)
- John Bemrose, Author
- The Right Reverend Michael A. Bird, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara
- Bonnie Brown, former Member of Parliament
- The Reverend Dan Chambers, President, British Columbia Conference, United Church of Canada
- Michael Clague, Member of the Order of Canada; Director of the Britannia Centre, Carnegie Centre, Vancouver
- Stephen Clarkson, FRSC, Author and Professor, University of Toronto
- Roy Culpeper, Ph.D., President and CEO, The North-South Institute
- Patricia DuVal, National President, Canadian Federation of University Women
- Nigel Fisher, President and CEO, UNICEF Canada
- Robert Fox, Executive Director, Oxfam Canada
- Michael Geist, Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, University of Ottawa
- Patsy George, Member of the Order of Canada; Member of the Order of British Columbia

- Joan Gibb, President, Canadian Cancer Society
- Paul Gross, MDCM, CCFP, Fellow, International Health Enhanced Skills Program, Department of Family Medicine, University of British Columbia
- Agnes Hall, Member of the Order of Canada
- Robert Ernest William Hancock, Ph.D., FRSC; Officer of the Order of Canada; Member of the Order of British Columbia; Canada Research Chair in Pathogenomics and Antimicrobials, University of British Columbia
- Dr. Gerald K. Helleiner, Officer of the Order of Canada; Professor Emeritus, Department of Economics, and Distinguished Research Fellow, Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto; Chairman of the Board, International Lawyers and Economists Against Poverty; Founder, The North-South Institute
- The Most Reverend Fred J. Hiltz, Primate, Anglican Church of Canada
- The Most Reverend Colin R. Johnson, Anglican Archbishop of Toronto, and Metropolitan of the Ecclesiastical Province of Ontario
- Karen Kain, LL.D., D.Lit; Companion of the Order of Canada; Order of Ontario; Artistic Director, National Ballet of Canada
- The Reverend John Kapteyn, Executive Secretary, Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America
- Stephen Lewis, Professor in Global Health at McMaster University; former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa; Co-Director, AIDS-Free World
- The Reverend Dr. Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd, Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Theology of the University of Winnipeg; Past President, Canadian Theological Society
- David Matas, Barrister and Solicitor; Member of the Order of Canada
- Alexa McDonough, former Member of Parliament
- Sharon McKay, War Artist and Author
- Marilou McPhedran, Member of the Order of Canada; Principal, Global College at University of Winnipeg; Recipient of the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case
- Linda McQuaig, Canadian journalist and author
- Paul Moist, President, Canadian Union of Public Employees
- Steve Morgan, Ph.D, Associate Professor, Associate Director Centre for Health Services and Policy Research, University of British Columbia
- David Morley, President and CEO, Save the Children Canada
- Walter Mulkewich, former Mayor of Burlington, Ontario
- Dr. David Ng, Director of the Advanced Molecular Biology Laboratory, Michael Smith Laboratories, University of British Columbia
- Dr. Samantha Nutt, Founder and Executive Director, War Child Canada
- Dr. James Orbinski, Past International President, Médecins Sans Frontières; Associate Professor, St. Michael's Hospital, University of Toronto
- Dr. J.R.C. Perkin, former President, Acadia University
- Dr. Tom Perry, former Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology for British Columbia
- Timothy Porteous, Member of the Order of Canada; former Director of the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario College for Art and Design.

- Dr Mira T. Sundara Rajan, DPhil (Oxon), Canada Research Chair in Intellectual Property Law, Associate Professor of Law at the Faculty of Law, University of British Columbia
- Steven Shrybman, Barrister and Solicitor, Sack, Goldblatt, Mitchell (specialist in international trade)
- Linda Silas, President, Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions
- Jerry Spiegel, Ph.D, Director of Global Health for Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia
- Richard Splane, MSW, PhD, LL.D; Officer of the Order of Canada; Professor Emeritus, the University of British Columbia, former Assistant Deputy Minister of the Canadian Department of National Health and Welfare
- Verna Huffman Splane, RN, MPH, LL.D; Officer of the Order of Canada; Honorary Professor, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia; former Vice-President, International Council of Nurses
- Jean Stairs, Principal, Queen's Theological College, Queen's University
- David Suzuki, Companion of the Order of Canada, Author and Activist
- Mardi Tindal, Moderator, United Church of Canada
- Kishor M. Wasan, R.Ph, Ph.D, Professor, Therapeutics Research Chair in Drug Delivery for Neglected Global Diseases; Chair of Pharmaceuticals, University of British Columbia
- The Honourable and Very Reverend Dr. Lois M Wilson, Companion of the Order of Canada; Member of the Order of Ontario; former Senator and Canada's Special Envoy to the Sudan; former Co-chair, Canadian Committee on Women, Peace and Security for the United Nations
- Robert F. Woollard, MD, CCFP, FCFP; Professor, University of British Columbia
- Tim Wynne-Jones, Author and two-time Recipient of the Governor General's Literary Award