

For immediate release

Également disponible en français

STUDY ON ACCESS TO MEDICINES BILL CONCLUDES TODAY

***Industry Committee has second chance to get it right on Bill C-393,
grandmothers and other supporters will be watching***

Ottawa, 1 November 2010 — Grandmothers with the nationwide Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign will be out in full force again today to see whether the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology Committee finally does the right thing regarding Bill C-393. This bill would reform Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) and make it easier for people in developing countries to get life-saving, affordable medicines. The Committee must report back to the House of Commons by the end of the day today on its study of the bill.

Today's meeting will take place from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. ET in room 237-C in Centre Block.

At the clause-by-clause review of the bill last Thursday, some Committee members chose to play politics with people's lives by trying to push through amendments that would essentially gut Bill C-393, leaving the current flawed regime unchanged.

Only an impromptu protest by the grandmothers to disrupt the meeting forced the Committee to schedule an additional meeting today to debate the amendments further. Watch a video of their demonstration at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gMT--IMJQgY>.

At the Committee, Liberal MP and industry critic Marc Garneau is proposing amendments that would essentially gut Bill C-393, leaving the current flawed regime unchanged and removing any prospect of using it again to supply life-saving medicines to people in need. Meanwhile, the Conservative government has continued to make clear its opposition to Bill C-393, while the Bloc Québécois has not yet stated clearly its position on the substance of the bill.

After Bill C-393 is sent back to the House of Commons, some MPs may seek to kill even a watered-down bill, by denying agreement to the minor procedural requirement of changing the sponsor of the bill. Bill C-393 was originally introduced by former NDP MP Judy Wasylycia-Leis, who is no longer in the House of Commons, but her colleague MP Brian Masse will seek to become the new sponsor.

So far, both the Liberal and NDP House Leaders have provided assurances that their MPs will not defeat this bill on a procedural technicality, but would let it proceed with a new sponsor. The position of the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois has not yet been made clear.

Bill C-393 enjoys widespread and growing support:

- A national poll found that 80% of Canadians support reforms to CAMR (<http://www.aidslaw.ca/publications/publicationsdocEN.php?ref=994>)
- They are joined by dozens of leading Canadians, including the former Prime Minister whose government enacted CAMR, leading advocates, artists, scientists and politicians: (<http://www.aidslaw.ca/publications/publicationsdocEN.php?ref=998>)
- Dozens and dozens of civil society organizations support CAMR reform, including
 - Médecins Sans Frontières Access to Essential Medicines Campaign;
 - the YWCA;
 - Dignitas International;
 - UNICEF Canada;
 - Save the Children, Oxfam Canada and Oxfam Québec, the United Church of Canada, CARE, RESULTS Canada, local AIDS organizations from across the country...and many more.

Read these endorsements at <http://www.aidslaw.ca/EN/camr/index.htm#Documents>.

The Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign, in support of African grandmothers bearing the terrible burden of the AIDS pandemic, has mobilized thousands of supporters across the country and is determined to ensure that Parliamentarians act to fix CAMR. Those grandmothers, and the tens of thousands of other concerned Canadians they represent, are not giving up on fixing CAMR. They will continue to demand action of Parliamentarians to honour their pledge. For more on their campaign, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmxOU24mXHU>.

For more information about CAMR and proposed reforms, see www.aidslaw.ca/camr

If you would like to receive regular updates about this growing campaign, contact Lindsey at lsimms@aidslaw.ca.

– 30 –

For further information and interviews:

Christopher Holcroft
Principal, Empower Consulting for the Legal Network
Telephone: +1 416 996-0767
E-mail: chris_holcroft@yahoo.com