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DIVERSE FAITH LEADERS RALLY TO SUPPORT HUMANITARIAN BILL AND SAVE LIVES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

*Leaders Canada-wide call for Members of Parliament to do the right thing
and pass Bill C-393*

March 3, 2011 – With Bill C-393 — intended to strengthen and reform Canada’s Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) — up for its final hour of debate this evening, leaders from faith communities across Canada stand united in purpose: to urge Members of Parliament to pass the bill and reform CAMR into sound legislation with the power to relieve suffering and save lives.

In *“The Price of Life: An Open Letter to Members of Parliament from Leaders of Faith Communities in Canada”*, dozens of faith leaders and organizations representing various faith communities ask that “. . . elected Members of Parliament reflect upon the awesome power and responsibility [they] now have to make it easier to send essential medicines to developing countries and to help the most vulnerable people worldwide.”

Together, these concerned Canadians of faith appeal —with a single voice — to their elected representatives to act upon intrinsic Canadian humanitarian values and pass Bill C-393, with its critical “one-licence solution” restored and without any “sunset clause” attached.

Among the eighty plus signatories to this open letter to date are many prominent leaders and organizations, including:

- The **Canadian Council of Imams**
- **William Francis**, Commissioner and Territorial Commander, Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda
- **Mark J. Freiman** and **Bernie M. Farber**, National President and Chief Executive Officer respectively, Canadian Jewish Congress
- **The Reverend John Kapteyn**, Executive Secretary, Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America
- **The Reverend Brian Kiely**, President, International Council of Unitarians and Universalists
- **Archbishop Fred Hiltz**, Primate, Anglican Church of Canada

- **The Reverend Susan C. Johnson**, National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
- **The Mennonite Central Committee Canada**
- **Mardi Tindal**, Moderator, United Church of Canada/ L'Église Unie du Canada
- **The Reverend Bill Burke**, Director, National Liturgy Office, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops
- **The Reverend Frances Deverell**, President, Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice
- **John Hopewell**, President, Canadian Unitarian Council
- **The Reverend Dr. Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd**, Member, Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Past President of the Canadian Theological Society
- **The Reverend Julie Stoneberg**, Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada
- **Nancy Mortifee**, Interfaith Committee, United Church of Canada
- **The Reverend Bob Patterson Watt**, former President of the Board, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America Co-Chair, Toronto Ecumenical Good Friday Walk for Justice, Secretary-Registrar, Gathering of Baptists

To view the open letter online, and for more detailed information on Bill C-393, please visit http://www.aidslaw.ca/EN/camr/documents/FaithLtr_EN.pdf and www.aidslaw.ca/camr respectively.

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**The Price of Life: An Open Letter
to Members of Parliament from Leaders of Faith Communities in Canada**

March 3, 2011

Dear Members of Parliament:

As leaders of various faith communities across Canada, steadfast in our commitment to helping those in need, we strongly urge you to support Bill C-393, a bill that will improve Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR). We reach out to you now with a sense of urgency, knowing that our brothers and sisters worldwide are living in the shadow of death without sufficient access to affordable, life-saving medicines to battle diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We believe that Bill C-393 can reform CAMR into sound legislation with the power to relieve suffering and save lives.

As leaders of faith communities, we are well aware that the privilege of being Canadian carries with it a high degree of responsibility, both here at home and within our global community. It is also true that Canada has a long and celebrated tradition of humanitarianism, consistent with the fundamental character of our nation and its generous people; of this we are fiercely proud. We must remember, however, that the word "tradition" implies consistency of purpose and action; we cannot rest on our laurels when the opportunity to end suffering and save lives presents itself.

We believe that the passage of Bill C-393, with its "one-licence solution" intact and without prohibitively short timelines imposed, presents just such an opportunity. We ask that you, our elected Members of Parliament, reflect upon the awesome power and responsibility you now have to make it easier to send essential medicines to developing countries and to help the most vulnerable people worldwide. Please act upon your humanitarian values by supporting Bill C-393 when it comes to a vote at third reading.

As you consider your position on the substance of Bill C-393, supported by many prominent Canadians with considerable experience in development contexts, we ask that you think about the following:

- Every day, thousands of people in developing countries die of treatable diseases, including AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. AIDS and other illnesses are taking a terrible, yet preventable, toll on families and communities across the developing world.
- Children are often among those hardest hit. Half of all children with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa die before the age of two, and 80% die before reaching the age of five.
- People are dying because medicines are not available to them at prices they can afford. They die because they are too poor to buy the medicines that Canadians so often take for granted. They die because they cannot afford to buy life.

The original and laudable intent of CAMR remains clear: to allow generic drug manufacturers to supply less expensive medicines for export to developing countries, by obtaining a special licence and, in exchange, paying royalties to the patent-holding drug companies on any such sales. However, we can see that the current law is not working and that its bureaucratic hurdles translate into unnecessary suffering and death.

As concerned Canadians of faith, this is unacceptable to us — and we believe that it would be unacceptable to our elected representatives as well. We therefore call upon you to show mercy toward our brothers and sisters, on our collective behalf.

Bill C-393 makes it possible to fix CAMR at no cost to taxpayers. If passed with its "one-licence solution" restored, Bill C-393 will reduce red tape in the process by letting generic drug manufacturers fill multiple orders of the same medicine to different developing countries under one simple licence as they are needed. Most importantly, Canada will once again demonstrate its deep compassion and desire to help those who are needlessly suffering and dying each and every day.

The world is watching, and those in need of life-saving medicines wait and hope and pray. We ask you to support Bill C-393 and its power and potential to deliver lifesaving medicine where it is most needed.

Respectfully, and with hope,

Canadian Council of Imams

William Francis, Commissioner and Territorial Commander, Salvation Army, Canada and Bermuda

Mark J. Freiman, National President, Canadian Jewish Congress

The Reverend John Kapteyn, Executive Secretary, Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America

The Reverend Brian Kiely, President, International Council of Unitarians and Universalists

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The Reverend Dr. Loraine MacKenzie Shepherd, Member, Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, Past President of the Canadian Theological Society

The Reverend Julie Stoneberg, Unitarian Universalist Ministers of Canada

Nancy Mortifee, Interfaith Committee, United Church of Canada

The Reverend Bob Patterson Watt, former President of the Board, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America Co-Chair, Toronto Ecumenical Good Friday Walk for Justice, Secretary-Registrar, Gathering of Baptists

The Right Reverend George L.R. Bruce, Bishop of Ontario, Anglican Church of Canada

The Reverend Canon Bernard Barrett, Past President, Multi-Faith Action Society of British Columbia

The Reverend Margaret Bell, Moderator, Elgin Baptist Association, Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec

The Reverend Dr. Robert A. Burrows, Former President, BC Conference, United Church of Canada

The Reverend Dan Chambers, President, BC Conference, United Church of Canada

Nancy Chiavario, Executive Director, Multi-Faith Action Society of British Columbia

David Courchene (Nii Gaani Aki Innini - Leading Earth Man), Anishinabe Nation, Eagle Clan.

The Very Reverend Dr. Peter G. Elliott, Dean of the Diocese of New Westminster, Bishop's Commissary

The Reverend Dr. H. Faye Ford, President, Saskatchewan Conference, United Church of Canada

The Reverend W. Phil Heinze, Director, Eastern Synod Public Policy and Service Ministries, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada

The Most Reverend Colin R. Johnson, Archbishop of Toronto and Metropolitan of Ontario, Anglican Diocese of Toronto

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The Reverend Dr. Alf Dumont, St. John's United Church, Alliston, ON

The Reverend Dr. Charles Eddis, Unitarian Church of Montreal

The Reverend Debra Faulk, Unitarian Church of Calgary

The Reverend Keith Gilbert, St. Agnes Anglican Church, North Vancouver, BC

The Reverend Dr. Brent Hawkes, Metropolitan Community Church, Toronto, ON

The Reverend Christine E. Hillman, Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda, Ruthven, ON

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The Reverend Paul Kett, St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church, Kitchener, ON

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Deacon Lizz Lindsey, St. Agnes Anglican Church North Vancouver, BC

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The Reverend John Marsh, First Unitarian Congregation, Ottawa, ON

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The Reverend Arch McCurdy, St. John's United Church, Alliston, ON

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