



# News Release Communiqué

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## **SENATE TO DEAL WITH LIFE-OR-DEATH ISSUE** ***Committee's consideration of access to medicines bill*** ***could influence death toll in developing countries***

**TORONTO, October 7, 2009** — Tomorrow, the Senate Standing Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce begins holding public hearings on Bill S-232, legislation that proposes streamlining the system by which lower-cost, life-saving AIDS medicines make their way to people who are dying for drugs in developing countries. Their deliberations and the bill's adoption could literally determine if thousands of people die from lack of access to affordable medicines.

Canada's Access to Medicines Regime (CAMR) has been in place for over five years since it was passed by Parliament in 2004 with support from all political parties. CAMR is flawed, however, and has only been used once to ship a single AIDS drug to a single developing country. The supplier, Canada's largest generic drug manufacturer, has indicated it will not make any further attempt to use the flawed CAMR, pointing out that it required years of work to achieve one single licence.

"We need to reform CAMR and make it more workable, thereby saving thousands of lives at no additional cost to Canadian taxpayers," says Richard Elliott, Executive Director of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network. "It's shameful that an initiative lauded by the government as one of Canada's contributions to addressing the global AIDS pandemic and other public health needs has delivered so little."

Pressure to pass the bill has been growing. This past May, over 40 Canadian and international groups underlined the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CAMR by issuing a statement in which they asked parliamentarians to amend CAMR.

Furthermore, the pan-Canadian Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign has mobilized in support of African grandmothers bearing the burdens of the AIDS epidemic, including caring for children living with or orphaned by the disease. Earlier this year, the group circulated a petition which included a call to reform CAMR. Over 32,000 Canadians signed this petition which the Grandmothers gave to MPs and Senators for them to table in Parliament.

“Every day counts for people who are dying without the affordable medicines they need to survive,” says Gillian Sandeman, spokesperson for the Grandmothers to Grandmothers Campaign. “Half of all children with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa die before the age of two because they don’t have access to affordable, practicable medicines suited for children. We are calling on parliamentarians to address this desperate public health and human rights tragedy by streamlining CAMR to make it workable.”

Both Bill S-232 before the Senate and the similar Bill C-393 in the House of Commons would streamline CAMR with a simplified ‘one-licence solution’. This approach would eliminate the current requirement for separate negotiations with patent-holding pharmaceutical companies for each purchasing country and each order of medicines, providing a more workable process to get affordable medicines for people in developing countries with HIV/AIDS.

For more information: [www.aidslaw.ca/camr](http://www.aidslaw.ca/camr).

### **About the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network**

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network ([www.aidslaw.ca](http://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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