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HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION DISAPPOINTED IN RULING DENYING SEX WORKER GROUP'S PERSPECTIVE IN LANDMARK CASE

Maggie's should be permitted to present their perspective in Canadian court of law

TORONTO, March 16, 2011 — The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network is extremely disappointed with today's ruling by Justice O'Connor denying Maggie's intervener status in a landmark case now before the Ontario Court of Appeal. This case will have considerable ramifications for sex workers as it is aimed at protecting their health and human rights. Maggie's: The Toronto Sex Workers' Action Project is an independent, not-for-profit agency dedicated to providing support to, and advocating on behalf of, Toronto's sex worker community. Established in 1986, Maggie's is the first sex worker agency in the world to be government-funded.

Maggie's sought to challenge provisions on communicating, bawdy house and living off the avails of prostitution in Canada's *Criminal Code* on the basis that those provisions do not comply with the equality rights guaranteed by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Maggie's also sought to argue that the objectives of those provisions are driven by moral views on the sale of sex, which are a constitutionally impermissible justification for legislation.

We are troubled that an organization such as Maggie's will not have the opportunity to present their perspective before the Court as it deliberates on a matter of fundamental importance that affects them most directly. It is particularly important that the Court hear from a leading sex worker organization in an environment where sex workers are routinely stigmatized and marginalized and their human rights regularly violated.

The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS are among several organizations that have been granted joint intervener status in the case.

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