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## LEGAL NETWORK INTERVENES IN SEX WORK CASE AT SUPREME COURT; PRESENCE OF INTERNATIONAL SEX WORK ACTIVIST POINTS THE WAY FORWARD

**TORONTO, June 11, 2013** — On June 13, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network will be among the groups intervening before the Supreme Court of Canada in ***Canada v Bedford***, a landmark constitutional challenge to Canada's prostitution laws. The Legal Network's arguments are informed by principles of the rights to health and to work, and reflect the input of a broad range of Canadian and international sex worker activists.

One such prominent activist is **Catherine Healy**, a leading international sex work legal expert and founding member of the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC). In addition to sitting alongside the Legal Network at the Court, she will appear on a panel at the Legal Network's **5<sup>th</sup> Symposium on HIV, Law and Human Rights** in Toronto on the day following the hearing. Here she is expected to share her experiences in the successful repeal of laws that criminalized sex work in New Zealand.

"Much ink has been spilled about the so-called 'Swedish model' that criminalizes clients, third parties in sex work and in some cases, sex workers themselves," says Sandra Ka Hon Chu, senior policy analyst at the Legal Network. "But only the decriminalization of sex work — as is the case in New Zealand — truly addresses the stigma, discrimination and violence faced by sex workers."

"Ten years ago, New Zealand decriminalized prostitution and created a framework to safeguard the health and human rights of sex workers," says Catherine Healy. "The sky has not fallen, there has been no substantiated evidence of trafficking, and sex workers are better protected from violence and exploitation. If Canada is serious about protecting the health and safety of all its constituents, then the 'Swedish model' is *not* the way to go."

While sex work itself is not illegal in Canada, many provisions in Canada's *Criminal Code* make it all but impossible to engage in sex work without risk of prosecution. Last year, the Ontario Court of Appeal recognized in *Canada v Bedford* that some of the current provisions have serious and negative impacts on the constitutional rights of sex workers, including by exacerbating risks to their health and safety. Unless the Supreme Court strikes down those provisions, sex workers in Canada will continue to suffer increased danger in their line of work, as well as violations of their basic human and constitutional rights.

“The courts and Parliament owe a responsibility to sex workers to ensure that one deadly — and unconstitutional — regime is not replaced with another,” says Chu.  
“Decriminalizing sex work is the clearest path to avoiding such a miscarriage.”

The Legal Network’s joint factum to the Supreme Court of Canada is available at [www.aidslaw.ca/bedford](http://www.aidslaw.ca/bedford). For information on the Legal Network’s Symposium, visit [www.aidslaw.ca/symposium](http://www.aidslaw.ca/symposium).

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### **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 and analysis, advocacy and litigation, public 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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