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LEGAL NETWORK NEWS

Issue 27 | June 2007



Warsaw, host city of the 18th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm

Warsaw conference showcases Legal Network's harm reduction work

For five days in May, Warsaw played host to over 1200 delegates from over 80 countries to the 18th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm. Executive Director Joanne Csete, senior policy analysts Richard Pearshouse and Leah Utyasheva, and former executive director Ralf Jürgens travelled to the Polish capital to attend the conference, as well as several satellite sessions on practical aspects of the human rights struggle for people who use drugs.

Csete addressed a large plenary session to speak about the next UN General Assembly ministerial summit on drug control in 2009.

“The last summit in 1998 went largely unnoticed by AIDS and human rights NGOs. It would be disastrous to repeat that mistake,” said Csete. “We need to bring a strong and organized NGO voice to the 2009 summit, and include HIV/AIDS and human rights perspectives in the dialogue.”

Csete also moderated a major session on women, harm reduction and prisons. At another session, she presented a preliminary version of the Legal Network's forthcoming paper on applying human rights standards to treatment for drug dependence.

Richard Pearshouse addressed a pre-conference satellite on harm reduction and prisons, organized by Ralf Jürgens. Pearshouse's presentation focused on a legal framework for harm reduction services in prisons, and was based on the Legal Network's model law on drug use and HIV/AIDS (available at www.aidslaw.ca/modellaw), of which he is the principal author.

Pearshouse also presented highlights of the model law at the conference proper, where he was challenged by representatives of the Russian Federation.

“They tried to argue that the UN drug conventions justify keeping methadone illegal and unavailable for treating opiate addiction,” he recalled. “So it fell to me to explain that they were mistaken, that methadone maintenance therapy is fully consistent with the conventions, and that it should be available to those who need it.”

Leah Utyasheva attended a satellite on legal services for people who use illicit drugs, organized by the Law and Health Initiative of the Open Society Institute. >>>

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Left to right: Seljan Mammadli of the American Bar Association’s Europe and Eurasia Program (CEELI), Hana Gajdosikova of the Center for Addictology at Charles University in Prague, and Corinne Carey, a consultant with Open Society Institute’s Law and Health Initiative, confer at the OSI satellite in Warsaw

“Warsaw was a great opportunity to catch up with Russian-speaking colleagues from several countries,” said Utyasheva. “I also attended informal planning meetings on our continuing work in Tajikistan, Russia and Ukraine.”

by Joanne Csete, the meeting brought together an extremely thoughtful group of people who use drugs and their allies, all of whom laid out a number of excellent and practical ideas for the new publication.

“Representatives of the Russian Federation tried to argue that the UN drug conventions justify keeping methadone illegal and unavailable for treating opiate addiction . . . they were mistaken.”

Ralf Jürgens also organized a satellite meeting of the advisory group for the upcoming international version of *Nothing About Us Without Us*, the Legal Network’s report and booklet on meaningful involvement in policy and program decision-making of people who use drugs. Co-moderated

For more information on the Warsaw conference, visit www.harmreduction2007.org. Presentation materials from the Legal Network’s satellite training session on *HIV/AIDS in prisons* are available from www.aidslaw.ca/download. 

LNN

LEGAL NETWORK NEWS

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The Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network 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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Feature | Legal Network steps up access to medicines advocacy in Ottawa

The federal government missed its own mid-June deadline for reporting to Parliament on the results of its review of Canada's Access to Medicines Regime. The review was announced in August 2006, but not begun until over three months later, and was not completed before the House of Commons recessed for its summer break on June 21.

"We gave Parliament a detailed brief on how to fix the Regime," said Deputy Director Richard Elliott, referring to the Legal Network's most recent brief on the issue. "But because of this political inaction, not a single pill has left Canada despite the fact that it's been over three years since the Regime was passed."

In "Getting the Regime Right," the Legal Network made 13 recommendations to Parliament to fix the Regime. The cornerstone is a proposal to authorize *any* pharmaceutical firm to produce generic versions of *any* drug patented in Canada for export to *any* eligible developing country listed in the law. Elliott presented the brief as part of



Closed for business: The House of Commons recessed for its summer break on June 21

needless red tape that discourages all parties — from developing countries that want to buy affordable generic drugs, and pharmaceutical firms in Canada that want to sell them, to humanitarian organizations that want to deliver the drugs to patients — from actually using it.

representatives of Canadian generic manufacturers, international agencies such as the World Trade Organization and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and leading policy experts in this area. Representatives of various Canadian government departments also took

"Because of political inaction, not a single pill has left Canada despite the fact that it's been over three years since the Regime was passed."

the Legal Network's testimony before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology on April 18 in Ottawa.

The same day, the Legal Network and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Canada held a press conference on Parliament Hill to make the case for reforms to the Regime and how they could be realized.

As it stands, the Regime is full of

The following day, the Legal Network and the North-South Institute co-hosted an expert consultation that brought together more than 60 participants from around the world to discuss access to affordable medicines for millions of people in developing countries. Participants included purchasers and advocates from various developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America,

part in the discussion, which was held at the Courtyard by Marriott hotel and featured Stephen Lewis, former UN Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa, as the keynote speaker.

To read "Getting the Regime Right," or for more information about the Regime and our work to fix it, visit www.aidslaw.ca/gtag or www.aidslaw.ca/treatment and select the Publications link at the bottom of the page. 

Feature | AGM honours Ruth Carey and HALCO, hears stories of grassroots action to influence policy change

On June 10–11, the Legal Network welcomed members from across the country to Toronto for its annual general meeting, held jointly with the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR).

The event kicked off with an exciting panel discussion, “From Grassroots to Policy: Real-life efforts toward human rights-based responses to HIV/AIDS in Canada and beyond,” featuring Kara Gillies, a sex worker and activist with Maggie’s — Toronto Prostitutes’

their ongoing criminalization, he said, and they need to become organized to demand access to the services and other basic human rights to which they are entitled.

Brown recounted the history and tactics of AIDS Action Now!, a Toronto group that was instrumental in the 1980s and early 1990s in fighting for policy changes and programs that have been key in improving access to care for people living with HIV. Since the XVI International AIDS

touched by her work,” said Joanne Csete, Executive Director of the Legal Network. “As a result of her dedication, and that of all HALCO staff and board members since its foundation in 1995, HALCO has had an impact not only provincially, but also nationally and internationally.”

HALCO was founded to provide desperately needed legal services to low-income people living with HIV, and to advocate more broadly for the human rights of people facing the

“The correct response to AIDS in Canada is to be angry.”

— Ruth Carey, individual recipient of the 2007 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights

Community Service Project; Guy-Pierre Lévesque, the founding director of Méta d’Âme, a peer-managed help centre in Montréal for people with addictions to heroin and other opioids; and Glen Brown, a Toronto-based social justice activist.

Gillies highlighted the critical importance of ensuring sex workers’ voices are heard in policy debates about prostitution and related activities, particularly to dispel the myth that abolitionism and prohibition represent the definitive feminist position on sex work.

Lévesque spoke passionately to the importance of recognizing the dignity and capacity of people who use drugs. Their marginalization and vulnerability to HIV is perpetuated by

Conference in August 2006, the group has become more active again, and has been taking on local advocacy on global issues, including fixing Canada’s law on exporting generic medicines.

The panellists’ stories and the discussion around them was the perfect lead-in to the presentation of the 2007 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. This year, two Canadian recipients were honoured: Ruth Carey accepted the award in the individual category, while HALCO, the HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic (Ontario), was the winner in the institutional category.

“Ruth Carey is a hero to thousands of people affected by HIV/AIDS in Ontario whose lives have been

many legal challenges associated with HIV. To this day, it remains the only such legal clinic in Canada.

For most of its existence, HALCO has been inseparably linked with the passion and dedication of its co-founder, Ruth Carey, who served as executive director for almost a decade before stepping down in 2007. At the same time, Carey somehow managed to make enormous contributions to other organizations, including the Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, the Prisoners’ HIV/AIDS Support Action Network (PASAN), Pro Bono Law Ontario, and the Legal Network.

“The correct response to AIDS in Canada is to be angry,” said Carey, recounting the very personal story >>

of how, as a law student through the AIDS Committee of Ottawa, she first began to do legal work for people living with HIV.

“There is no greater honour, no greater privilege than for HIV-positive people to trust you and tell you their stories. I had the incredible gift of that trust every day. People who came to me for help were unbelievably brave,” she continued. “It’s scary to tell someone you are HIV-positive and scary to tell someone the intimate concerns of your life. But day after day, I would watch that bravery and the sheer nobility of people living with HIV as they reached out for the help they needed to live better lives. I suspect that I will live my whole life and never experience such a great privilege again.”

Legal Network members had an opportunity to attend a number of CWGHR workshops dealing with different aspects of HIV and rehabilitation. Participants also attended a Legal Network workshop presented by Joanne Csete on applying human rights standards to treatment for drug dependence.

The two-day event wrapped up with a consultation, led by the Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD), regarding the “global engagement” component of the Federal Initiative to Address HIV/AIDS in Canada, the federal government’s official response to the epidemic.

For more information on the AGM, including downloadable documents and presentations, please visit www.aidslaw.ca/aggm. To find out more about the Awards for Action, go to www.aidslaw.ca/awards. 

MEDIA SCAN

The following facts and figures provide a snapshot of the Legal Network’s media activities from March 16 to June 30.

57 Total number of media requests from outlets ranging from the *Nanaimo News Bulletin* and the *Windsor Star* to *The Globe and Mail* and the Paris-based *Journal du Sida*

15

Number of media requests on Canada’s Access to Medicines Regime, which is meant to facilitate the exportation of affordable medicines from Canada to developing countries (see “Legal Network steps up access to medicines advocacy in Ottawa,” p. 3)

53

Total number of media “hits” — i.e. print (38), TV (8) and radio (6) stories in which Legal Network staff were cited, seen and heard — in publications and programs including the *National Post*, *The Record* (Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo, Ontario), *Embassy* magazine, CTV’s *Canada AM*, CBC Radio One’s *The Current*, Radio-Canada’s *Jamais trop de lève-tôt*, *Global National with Kevin Newman*, and CTV Newsnet’s *The Verdict with Paula Todd*

19

Number of media requests regarding criminalization of HIV exposure or transmission

24

Number of print media hits on issues related to drug policy and harm reduction, including letters to the editor by Executive Director Joanne Csete and Director of Communications Leon Mar published in the *National Post* (2) and *The Toronto Star* (1)

Moving on | Taslim Madhani and Alana Klein head east

This summer will see the departure from the Legal Network of Administrative Assistant Taslim Madhani, who's heading to the nation's capital, and Senior Policy Analyst Alana Klein, who's moving home to Montréal. Before leaving, Taslim and Alana reflected on their experiences at the Legal Network.



At the end of June, I'll be leaving the Legal Network to take on a policy position with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in Ottawa.

Every day at the Legal Network has been an educational experience for me. The nature of my role as Administrative Assistant has provided me with the unique opportunity to not only work closely with every staff member, but also to learn from each of them. What they have taught me is invaluable. Above all, I have learned the importance of forging meaningful partnerships in what have often been precarious political climates, and seen first-hand the results of effective advocacy.

One of the highlights of my time with the Legal Network was listening to Gareth Williams' acceptance speech for the 2006 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. Gareth's unflinching commitment to fighting discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS in Jamaica made me realize that I was part of an important struggle. I hope to continue this struggle through my work at CIC and to push for policies that are informed by principles of inclusiveness, equity, and respect for human rights.

Leaving the Legal Network has been a difficult decision for me, but I am comforted by the fact that I will take with me two important lessons learned from my time here. First, no human rights violation, no matter how minor or contentious, should be left unchallenged. Second, as long as there are organizations like the Legal Network, members who support their work, and activists like Gareth who tirelessly advocate for the rights of marginalized groups, there is always hope for change.

Taslim



At the end of this summer, I will be leaving the Legal Network for the somewhat dustier environs of McGill University's Faculty of Law. Of course, the relationship is not over; lucky for me, I have never really managed to fully extricate myself from this organization. Little did I know when I contacted Ralf Jürgens in 2000 to persuade the Legal Network to hire me as a summer student intern that I was beginning a lifelong relationship, one which would forever frame my view of where I fit in the world, and my understanding of law and of human rights.

Since I began working at the Legal Network full time in January 2006, I have gained valuable knowledge about how and why the HIV pandemic affects people as it does; about the many subtle and less subtle ways in which stigma, prejudice and discrimination affect the lives of people living with or affected by HIV; about how to work levers of power; about the role the law can play in mediating power for better or for worse; and about the dangers of imagining solutions to human rights problems without the deep involvement of the people whose rights are at issue.

The most valuable Legal Network lessons, however, have not been the kind I could have learned from any one book, seminar or meeting. They have been the more profound lessons that come from watching the humility, courage and respect with which Legal Network staff undertake their work. During my telephone interview for this position, I recall [Executive Director] Joanne Csete asking me what I thought a rights-based approach to HIV/AIDS would entail. As I fumbled to give an answer that would not sound trite, Joanne and [Deputy Director] Richard Elliott chuckled warmly and said that if they knew the answer they could cut their work down to half days. I still see them in the office on Sundays, so I guess the search is not over. I think I get it now. I hope to pay the lessons forward.

Alana

Profile | Students' paths converge at Legal Network

Four second-year law students started their summer internships at the Legal Network in May. Selected from a competitive pool of 110 candidates, the interns hail from backgrounds as disparate as filmmaking and immunology.

Indira Stewart's undergraduate volunteering through the Film and Literature program of Brown University in Rhode Island included working on an HIV/AIDS oral history video project. But it was her work in Harlem, New York, at a community-based law office that served mostly ex-prisoners, that gave her a better understanding of the connection between AIDS and the law.

"What I loved about film was the power of providing a voice for



Left to right: Anne Merminod, Julie Shugarman, Indira Stewart and Cheryl Robinson

the city's Downtown Eastside. Julie responded by throwing herself into student activism and volunteering with Pivot Legal Society, a Legal Network member.

through Pro Bono Students Canada (some readers may recognize her name from the *HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Review*), says her science background shifted her world view and continues to influence her perspective on the law.

"One day, one of the clients told me that he wished he had cancer or diabetes instead of HIV, because then he wouldn't feel so alone."

somebody who didn't have one," says the University of Ottawa common-law student. "Volunteering is how I became interested in the law as another avenue to fight for people who don't have a say."

"It's exciting to work with groups that historically have been marginalized or silenced, and to trust the voices of the people most affected by the law," concurs Julie Shugarman, also from the University of Ottawa's Common Law Section. "I think compassion is understated in society; people have stopped seeing other people as human."

During her undergraduate studies in ethics at Vancouver's Simon Fraser University, there were increased rumblings about the violence and injustice suffered by sex workers in

For Anne Merminod, an undergraduate course on AIDS at Concordia University in Montréal led her to volunteer with another Legal Network member organization, Maison Plein Cœur, a local community centre for people living with HIV. A year after her course was over, she was still there.

"One day, one of the clients told me that he wished he had cancer or diabetes instead of HIV, because then he wouldn't feel so alone," recalls Merminod, who now studies both common and civil law at McGill University and hopes to combine her policy interests with direct service work.

University of Toronto law student Cheryl Robinson, who first became involved with the Legal Network

"I was so focused on minutiae that I felt I was losing sight of the bigger picture," says Robinson, a graduate of McGill's Interdepartmental honours program in Immunology and its Master of Science program in Experimental Medicine. "I was much more interested in the social aspects of the knowledge we gain through science, rather than the actual science. I think that's what the law is — it's looking at much larger factors that affect society and then working to change them."

All four interns plan to continue volunteering after this summer, whether through the Legal Network or its member organizations, or, as in the case of Merminod, by working to establish an HIV division at a local Montréal legal aid clinic. [LNN](#)

IN BRIEF

MSM struggle for human rights in China

Men who have sex with men (MSM) are highly vulnerable to human rights abuses in China, adding to their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS. Through the HIV/AIDS Small Grant Program of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Legal Network is giving technical support to Chinese organizations doing the courageous work of reaching out to provide MSM with information on AIDS and human rights.



Executive Director Joanne Csete (left) speaks to law students in Beijing, while Senior Policy Analyst Alana Klein looks on

In March, Executive Director Joanne Csete and Senior Policy Analyst Alana Klein travelled to China to work with the Legal Network's main partner, the Zhiaixing (formerly Aizhixing) Institute of Health Education, which coordinates assistance to MSM organizations across China on AIDS and human rights issues. Led by Wan Yanhai, the international recipient of the 2002 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, the Beijing-based institute has used its legal expertise to compile user-friendly

materials on the rights of MSM and on legal issues related to HIV/AIDS.

"It's no surprise that in all of the places we visited, we found that MSM face stigma and, in some cases, violent harassment," said Klein. "In Tianjin, we met an outreach worker whose arm was broken while he was trying to distribute AIDS information outside a bar. In Dalian, we went with outreach workers to a public park late at night to distribute condoms and information — mostly in very dark corners. And in Shenyang, where we accompanied outreach workers to two gay bars, we realized that the very fact the owners were creating this space for gay men was a human rights action in and of itself."

In the Greater Beijing Area, police harassment of MSM, sex workers and people who use drugs has intensified in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games. At the time of the visit, the Zhiaixing Institute was trying to fight a municipal order for mandatory detention of people who use drugs.

"The authorities want to 'detain' even minor offenders for long periods of time," explained Csete. "This is all apparently motivated by Olympic organizers' interest in 'cleaning the streets.'"

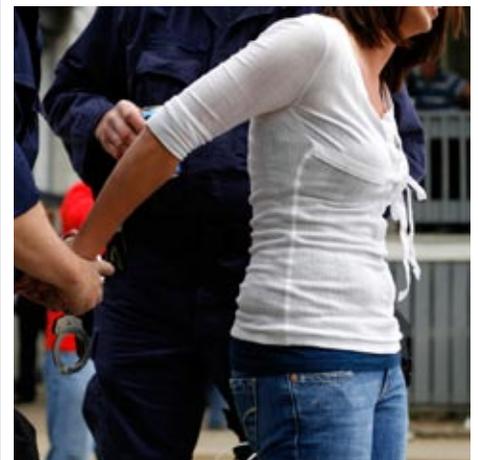
The trip also included a presentation by Csete and Klein to law students

at the Renmin University of China in Beijing.

"I was impressed with the quality of the students' questions, and their understanding of the human rights aspects of HIV/AIDS," concluded Klein. "It made me feel really hopeful about the future of the HIV/AIDS movement in China."

"Criminalization creep"

The dangers of "criminalization creep" — the increasing role that the criminal law is playing in the sexual lives of people living with HIV/AIDS — was the focus of a presentation delivered by Senior Policy Analyst Alana Klein to the Standard Margins Law and Sexuality Conference at the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Law. Klein spoke about recent issues related to criminal prosecutions for HIV transmission and exposure.



"More people, including women, are being charged. Police are becoming more aggressive in investigating these cases. And people have been convicted for lower-risk activities in circumstances where it's not clear they knew their HIV status," explained Klein.

READER FEEDBACK

We welcome your feedback on our stories. Send your letters to the editor by e-mail to LNN-NRJ@aidslaw.ca.

The widening gaps in knowledge about the consequences of criminalization creep have prevented judges from making coherent, responsible, rights-respecting decisions on whether to assign criminal responsibility for consensual activity that may carry a risk of HIV transmission. This problem will only get worse, suggested Klein, unless standards are developed to make clear when criminal responsibility should be assigned. Such standards could draw on criminal law, human rights, and public health policy analyses.

The three-day conference, held at St. John's College on the UBC campus in Vancouver, brought together law students, scholars and activists from Canada and around the world.

To find out more about criminal law and HIV, visit

www.aidslaw.ca/criminallaw.

Sex, drugs and HIV/AIDS in Thailand

At the end of March, the Legal Network and UNAIDS co-hosted a meeting in Bangkok that brought together Thai government and civil society representatives to discuss the development of a harm reduction policy for Thailand.

“The meeting was a follow-up to my interviews in Bangkok and Chiang Mai in December 2006,” said Senior Policy Analyst Richard Pearhouse. “It became obvious then that most people working on harm reduction issues were too busy in their day-to-day work to prioritize something as seemingly abstract as policy reform. The need to create a time and place to discuss these issues was clear.”

In many ways, the meeting reflected the larger barriers to harm reduction in Thailand. Scant attention was paid by the Thai government: only two representatives bothered to show up, including Dr. Petchsri Sirinirund of the Ministry of Public Health, who gave an overview of a draft harm reduction policy. While the news was far from good (the policy was problematic, and consultations on it were minimal), it was an opportunity for civil society representatives (including those representing people who use drugs) to hear about the policy for the first time and to challenge its content.



“Without this summit, such a dialogue would probably never have taken place,” said Executive Director Joanne Csete, who attended the meeting and delivered a presentation on harm reduction from a global perspective. “It’s unbelievable that in a country that has focused so much on keeping HIV transmission in check among sex workers, people who use drugs are still being ignored.”

While estimates of HIV prevalence among sex workers in Thailand fell significantly from the mid-1980s to 2004, they remained steady at a shocking 35 to 50 percent among people who inject drugs — one of the highest rates in the world.

At the meeting, Irawati (“Ira”) Atmosukarto of the Indonesia HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care Project elaborated on the process and outcomes of harm reduction policy- and decision-making in her country. In addition to funding needle exchange programs, Indonesia is introducing methadone treatment for people who inject heroin, and training health care workers to provide the treatment in hospitals and health clinics across the country. Even China has started to fund methadone treatment.

“Thailand needs to catch up,” said Csete. “It needs to do for people who use drugs what it’s been doing for years for sex workers — take immediate action to allow them to fulfil their right to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment.”

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IN BRIEF

Harm reduction in Georgia

In May 2007, senior policy analysts Richard Pearshouse and Leah Utyasheva traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia to participate in that country's first-ever harm reduction conference and to continue co-operation with Georgian civil society groups on human rights-based drug policy reform.



Senior Policy Analyst Richard Pearshouse (right) addresses delegates at the first-ever national conference on harm reduction in Georgia

“The situation in Georgia is relatively bleak” explained Utyasheva, who spoke on human rights and drug use at the conference. “There is hyper-criminalization of drug use, a prison needle exchange program was recently suspended, and one pilot methadone treatment program is about to begin — but there is no general framework in place.”

“So, with a lot of pushing from the [Open Society Institute] folks and ourselves, the conference drafted an open letter to the President and

Parliament,” added Pearshouse.

Among other things, the letter called for a more liberal approach to drug policy, better access to drug treatment and harm reduction programs, and a review of Georgia's existing drug laws to bring them into line with international human rights norms. The existing legislation, according to the letter's authors, violates not only Georgia's own constitution, but also the *European Convention on Human Rights*, to which the country is a signatory.

“[Georgia's] policy concerning drug use and HIV/AIDS should be worked out with the participation of civil society, drug users themselves and self help groups of HIV infected people,” read the letter. “Special attention should be brought towards drug use and blood transmitted infectious diseases in Georgian prisons. In the places of deprivation of liberty, programmes of harm reduction, such as opioid substitution treatment, syringe exchange, etc. should be implemented.”

Pearshouse and Utyasheva also attended a series of meetings with numerous stakeholders — including an organization of people who use drugs, a group of legal organizations, the board of directors of the nascent Georgian Harm Reduction Network, and the head of the Parliament of Georgia's Healthcare and Social Affairs Committee — to talk about human rights-based drug policy reform and humane drug addiction treatment.

This work builds on the Legal Network's relationship, begun in 2005, with drug policy reform

activist David (“Dato”) Otiashvili of the policy organization Alternative Georgia. In 2006, Otiashvili and Nika Gambashidze of Uranti, a methadone service provider in Georgia, spent 10 days in Canada at the invitation of the Legal Network on a fact-finding mission funded by the Canadian International Development Agency's Partnerships for Tomorrow Program.

To find out more about our work on drug policy and harm reduction, go to www.aidslaw.ca/drugpolicy.

Gay rights in the conservative heartland

Over 250 delegates attended the two-day OutRights Human Rights Conference in Calgary in April, including Director of Communications Leon Mar, who was a guest speaker. The participants, most of whom worked for community-based organizations (CBOs) serving the queer communities, included many Legal Network members.

Toronto lawyer R. Douglas Elliott, the opening plenary speaker, expressed how pleasantly surprised he was that a gay-centred human rights conference was being held in Canada's conservative heartland.

“I can't believe I'm in Alberta,” echoed Mar, who was born and raised in Edmonton, in an interview with queer newspaper Xtra. “I've been doing double takes for the last 48 hours.”

Judy Shepard, gay activist and mother of the late Matthew Shepard, delivered a powerful keynote speech

that was one of the highlights of the conference. (If you're unfamiliar with the Matthew Shepard story, visit www.matthewshepard.org.) Selisse Berry, Executive Director of the San Francisco-based Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, highlighted the huge gap between Canada and the U.S. in terms of gay rights (both in and outside of the workplace).



Mar's workshop, "Speaking Out: Influencing public opinion on human rights issues through effective media relations," focused on the value of media relations and included practical advice for CBOs that may not have dedicated communications staff. He was also invited to participate in a closed-session roundtable discussion to lay the groundwork for the Calgary Blueprint, which conference organizers hope will develop into a useful tool for CBOs to better advocate for human rights.

For more information on OutRights, visit www.calgary2007.com.

National AIDS Trust seminar

In mid-April, Senior Policy Analyst Alana Klein participated in a seminar in London on legislation, judicial systems and HIV/AIDS. The seminar

— co-sponsored by the National AIDS Trust, an independent U.K. policy and campaigning voice on HIV/AIDS, and AIDS Action Europe, a pan-European partnership of NGOs — sought to galvanize action in Europe on pressing legal issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Participants included AIDS service organization representatives from at least 30 European countries including Albania, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Turkey, Romania, Sweden and the U.K., as well as academics and other advocates from around the world. Discussion focussed on strengthening protection against discrimination through different European institutions, access to insurance, privacy issues, and the role of NGOs in legal proceedings. Alana shared some of the Legal Network's experiences around coordinating advocacy strategies and participating in legal proceedings.

For more information, visit *AIDS Action Europe and the National AIDS Trust* on-line at www.aidsactioneurope.org and www.nat.org.uk.

Kudos

Congratulations to Guy-Pierre Lévesque, Executive Director of Méta d'Âme (a Montréal-based Legal Network member organization), who was elected to the executive committee of the International Harm Reduction Association (IHRA) during the 18th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm in Warsaw, Poland (see cover story). We know he will bring an important

human rights voice to this work.

Best wishes also go out to long-time Legal Network collaborator Rick Lines, who is now on staff at the IHRA's London offices as Senior Policy Advisor on HIV/AIDS and Harm Reduction.

Letters

Sorry to hear Glenn is moving on ("Glenn Betteridge ends four years at the Legal Network," Issue 26, March 2007); he is a great asset.

The Legal Network has been invaluable to us at AIDS Programs South Saskatchewan (APSS). We included two documents in our recently compiled "Drug Sensitivity Training Kit," and over the years have asked many questions and received valuable responses that have helped us do our work on a local level. Lawyers have even signed out the newsletter for their court cases.

I often state that out of all the national organizations, yours proves the most helpful in doing our work. Keep it up!

Christine Smith
Executive Director, APSS

Please send letters to the editor by e-mail to LNN-NRJ@aidslaw.ca or by post to:

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www.aidslaw.ca/drugpolicy > Publications
- Prevention and Protection: Enhancing Both HIV Testing and Human Rights in Canada
www.aidslaw.ca/testing > Publications

Info sheets

- HIV Testing — series of 12 info sheets
www.aidslaw.ca/testing > Publications

Briefing papers

- Getting the Regime Right — Brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology regarding Canada's Access to Medicines Regime
www.aidslaw.ca/treatment > Publications

Advocacy

- AIDS and public security: the other side of the coin — *The Lancet* commentary
www.aidslaw.ca/discrimination > Publications

Annual report

- Stepping Up — 2006–2007 Annual Report
www.aidslaw.ca/annualreport

HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Review

- *HIV/AIDS Policy & Law Review* 12(1) — May 2007
www.aidslaw.ca/review

News releases

Available at www.aidslaw.ca/media

- June 10, 2007 — Ontario Legal Aid Clinic and Toronto Human Rights Advocate Win 2007 Awards for Action on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights
- April 18, 2007 — Legal Network Releases 13-point Plan to Parliament to Fix Canada's Access to Medicines Regime