



June 8, 2022

TO: THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JUSTIN TRUDEAU, P.C., M.P.
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER
80 WELLINGTON STREET
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CC: THE HONOURABLE MARY NG, MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE
THE HONOURABLE MÉLANIE JOLY, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are at a crucial turning point. As delegates from around the globe gather at the upcoming ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO), you and other world leaders have a unique opportunity – and obligation – to help end the pandemic.

Over the last two years, monopolies on life-saving vaccines held by a handful of pharmaceutical companies, and the shameful vaccine nationalism and hoarding of wealthy countries, have caused immeasurable suffering and millions of avoidable deaths. Going forward, persistent inequalities in accessing tests, treatments, and updated vaccines risk prolonging the pandemic and causing more economic disruption.

It's past time for your government to support the lifting of intellectual property for COVID-19 tools and honor the pledge you made in May 2020 to treat vaccines and other medical products as global public goods.

Canada is out of step with the rest of the world. More than 100 other countries have backed the call for a comprehensive waiver of intellectual property rights, the instruments of law that create pharmaceutical monopolies and cause an artificial scarcity of the tools we need to fight COVID-19. First proposed by South Africa and India in October 2020, such a waiver would be an important step towards ensuring life-saving vaccines and treatments are shared, produced, and distributed according to need rather than profit.

But negotiations have been stalled for the last year and a half by the intransigence of a handful of wealthy countries – including Canada. While taking an outwardly neutral stance, Canadian officials in Geneva have repeatedly sided with the EU in blocking efforts to discuss the waiver at all.

There is disturbing evidence that the pharmaceutical industry has been behind Canada's quiet obstructionism at the WTO. Internal emails recently released to Canada's Foreign Affairs Committee show that trade officials have been closely coordinating their messaging and negotiating stance with the industry's lobbyists.

1. [Documents show close talks between Canadian government and pharma over plan for Covid intellectual property waiver](#)

The WTO is finally set to address the intellectual property barriers to accessing vaccines and other medical products at its 12th Ministerial meeting on June 12-15.

You must take a clear and unequivocal stance in favour of a broad waiver of intellectual property rights in advance of those meetings.

More than two-thirds of Canadians support the measure, according to a May 2022 poll, and only a small minority – fewer than 10 per cent – believe that your government has excelled in its global pandemic response.² You must hear the voices of this clear majority.

Your government has long committed to the principles of fairness and equity. But in practice, a few pharmaceutical companies have been given free rein to use their monopolies to deny access to their life-saving products around the world, to the detriment of our collective well-being.

Existing trade rules have allowed them to corner the market on COVID-19 tools like vaccines and treatments and rack up record-breaking profits while pricing out much of the world. The lop-sided result has been that wealthier countries like Canada have snapped up the majority of available supplies, while much of humanity is left in the position of waiting – often in vain – for donations.

But human lives are worth more than the industry's profits.

It is time Canada broke with pharmaceutical monopolies and the failed charity-based model that have hobbled the global fight against the pandemic.

Tinkering around the edges of this model is not sufficient. Your government must also reject the deeply flawed “compromise” proposal, which the EU has placed at the centre of upcoming negotiations. Trade experts tell us that this counter-proposal would do little to increase access to vaccines and would only entrench the existing charity-based model.

To truly make an impact in ending this global pandemic for everyone – and to regain Canada's stature on the world stage as a leader in advancing justice and equity – your government must support a comprehensive waiver at the upcoming WTO meetings, as well as continue to support the right of countries to regulate pharmaceutical monopolies in ways that keep more people alive. Canada's safety and global health security is immensely improved when all countries are self-sufficient, and have the capacity to make their own tests, vaccines and treatments. This is the best way to prepare for the next pandemic.

No one is safe until everyone is safe, as you and your ministers have not tired of saying on countless occasions. It is time for Canada to start acting on these words internationally.

2. [NEW POLL: Strong majority of Canadians oppose Trudeau's stance on patent waiver](#)

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