



February 22, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. *
Prime Minister of Canada
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Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing to urge you and your government to actively support the proposal of India, South Africa, Kenya, Eswatini, Pakistan and Mozambique for a “Waiver from Certain Provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the Prevention, Containment and Treatment of COVID-19.” The waiver is supported by the World Health Organization, UN Human Rights Experts, UNITAID, UNAIDS, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and over 100 of the world’s poorer nations.

Monopoly powers given to pharmaceutical companies by the World Trade Organisation's Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement will privilege pharmaceutical companies’ profits over the health of the world’s citizens both internationally and in Canada. The world’s pharmaceutical industry already enjoys some of the largest profit margins on earth, equalling those of big banks and even surpassing those of the oil and gas industry. They argue that they need the monopoly to make up their research and development costs, but the amount of money that these companies spend on Research and Development is wildly exaggerated. They spend much more on marketing, repurchasing shares, handing out dividends and providing lavish pay packages for their executives.

Without this waiver pharmaceutical companies will be able to prevent other manufacturers from producing COVID-19 vaccines and medicines. Many more people will die as a result. The PSAC believes that vaccines must be treated as a global public good. If not, the pandemic will last longer. It will assuredly harm people in developing countries. It will also have a lingering impact in Canada.

Burdens on health care systems will increase, and as variants multiply, shutdowns will become an ongoing reality. Unless this waiver is accepted, it is unlikely that much of the world’s population will be vaccinated before 2024. The world is unavoidably in this pandemic together. We are urging your government not to opt out.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents the most serious public health and economic crisis in our lifetime, and it won’t be solved until all the world’s people have access to vaccinations.

We urge you to support this waiver and argue for its support at the next TRIPS Council Meeting.

Sincerely,



Chris Aylward
National President

c.c. The Honourable Mary Ng Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade
The Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health
The Honourable Judy Sgro, Chair of the Standing Committee on International Trade
MP Tracy Gray, Official Opposition Critic, Export Promotion and International Trade
MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, Bloc Critic, Export Promotion and International Trade
MP Daniel Blaikie, NDP Critic, Export Promotion and International Trade
MP Paul Manly, Green Party Critic, Export Promotion and International Trade