

April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., MP  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0G2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Mennonite Central Committee Canada (MCC) expresses deep appreciation for the response of the Canadian government to the COVID-19 pandemic internationally, including financial support for global vaccine equity through COVAX. We believe that Canada can play an even greater leadership role to ensure global vaccine equality, especially when it comes to prioritizing vaccine access for essential workers and the most vulnerable globally.

For over a century, MCC has responded to the needs of the most vulnerable in Canada and around the world. We work through local community partners and faith-based groups in over 50 countries, based on a vision of peace, human dignity, and right relationships between all peoples. A defining feature of MCC is our work with refugees, internally displaced peoples, asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations on the move. From partners and our international program, we hear serious concerns about the lack of global vaccine access for essential workers and vulnerable populations, including stateless and displaced peoples.

The lives of vulnerable communities around the world have become even more precarious during the pandemic, [with socially and economically marginalized peoples](#) disproportionately impacted by COVID-19's health and economic fallout. MCC partners and staff are very concerned about safe, equitable, and effective prevention and response to the pandemic.

Canada has currently purchased enough vaccines to vaccinate Canada's population many times over. Without a timely redistribution and donation of our vaccines to COVAX, along with strong support for global equal access to vaccine manufacturing and technology, Canada's COVAX financing will not be enough to realize the goal of global vaccination. Vaccine inequality will only prolong the global pandemic. All countries, irrespective of wealth, must have unhindered, timely access to quality, safe, efficacious, and affordable vaccines.

We urge the creation and rapid implementation of a redistribution and donation plan of Canada's purchased and committed vaccine doses to COVAX to ensure a parallel global roll-out focused on essential workers,

including health. We believe that the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be timely and equitable if it is to be successful.

Along with rapid redistribution, we encourage Canadian support for the temporary TRIPS (Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) waiver, presented by India and South Africa at the World Trade Organization. This waiver will ensure that trade regulations and licensing do not impede the timely manufacture, distribution, and affordability of vaccines. This will allow for an increased vaccine supply that is not as dependent on donations of vaccines from wealthier countries. [Canada has maintained that it has not rejected this proposal](#), and it is studying the impacts of intellectual property regulations on vaccine manufacturing. While we affirm the importance of careful deliberation, we also urge a rapid response. Without the TRIPS waiver, many low- and middle-income countries may not have access to anywhere near sufficient vaccines before 2024, to say nothing of testing or medications for supportive care.

Alongside these actions, we encourage Canada to continue to support health systems strengthening and a coordinated global health response as part of Canada's Official Development Assistance, with funding specially designated for local and community-based health organizations.

We also urge Canada to use our global leadership to call for migrants and displaced people to be provided with free and safe access to vaccines, regardless of citizenship or location, including in Canada.

We hold you and all government officials and staff in our prayers.

Sincerely,



Rick Cober Bauman, executive director

CC:  
The Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P. Minister for International Development  
The Hon. Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P. Minister for Foreign Affairs  
The Hon. Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement  
The Hon. Erin O'Toole, Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Conservative Party  
The Hon. Michael Chong, Official Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs, Conservative Party  
Mr. Garnett Genuis, Official Opposition Critic for International Development and Human Rights, Conservative Party  
M. Yves-Francois Blanchet, Leader, Bloc Québécois  
M. Stéphane Bergeron, Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs, Bloc Québécois  
M. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, Opposition Critic for International Cooperation and La Francophonie, Bloc Québécois  
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader, New Democratic Party  
Mr. Jack Harris, Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs, New Democratic Party  
Ms. Heather McPherson, Opposition Critic for International Development, New Democratic Party  
Ms. Annamie Paul, Leader, Green Party of Canada