



Submission to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on Global Vaccine Equity

May 20, 2022

Respectfully submitted by Anglican Church of Canada, Ansaar Foundation, Canadian Baptist Ministries, Canadian Council of Imams, Canadian Multifaith Federation, Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative, Danforth Jewish Circle, Good Neighbour Project, International Development and Relief Foundation, Intriciti, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, La Fondation Anne Sophie Musique, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Mennonite World Conference, Millennium Kids, National Alliance for the Advancement of Pluralistic Societies, National Muslim Christian Liaison Committee, Ontario Zoroastrian Community Foundation, The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, Reform Jewish Communities of Canada, The Alliance Canada, The Salvation Army Canada, The United Church of Canada, World Evangelical Alliance, Zoroastrian Society of Ontario

Love My Neighbour (LMN) is a national movement for global vaccine equity fueled by 37 Canadian organizations and multi-faith communities.¹ LMN has brought together Canadians of diverse faiths and no faith background from across the country, united in our desire to see all people regardless of nationality, enjoy equitable access to lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines. We encourage the Canadian government to join us in care for our neighbours through working for increased access to vaccines globally.

It is estimated that 85.8 per cent of Canadians have received at least one dose, while 15.9 per cent of people in low-income countries have received the same.² In Haiti, only 1.6 per cent of the population has received at least one dose. These statistics indicate a social inequity this diverse group cannot live with.

Partnership with Faith Communities

Canadian organizations and multi-faith groups from Jewish, Muslim, Zoroastrian and Christian traditions have come together in advocacy and fundraising.³ We want to embody the compassion Canadians share for our global neighbours and the desire to ensure everyone can access life-saving vaccines. Across the country, Canadians are holding fundraisers, writing songs, selling samosas and chai tea, decorating pumpkins and sidewalks, buzz cutting hair, swimming across Lac St-Pierre, washing cars, selling candy grams, requesting vaccine donations in lieu of wedding and birthday gifts, and collaborating with their Scouts' group, Girl Guides' Unit, school, youth group, neighbourhood or faith community, in support of global vaccination efforts.

Love My Neighbour has engaged in direct advocacy around vaccine access and also raised over \$750,000 to help UNICEF vaccinate global neighbours in low- and middle-income countries against COVID-19.⁴ Of these gifts, \$536,000 were matched by the Government of Canada through the GiveAVax appeal. An additional \$300,000 has been donated by LMN participants to support UNICEF's COVID-19 emergency appeals in India and provide support to COVID-19 testing and treatments. Our total impact over the last year exceeds \$1.5 million.

Global Affairs Canada recently interviewed LMN's founder and project coordinator, and four Love My Neighbour participants who raised funds and advocated for global vaccine delivery in very creative ways. This article was published on the GAC website during World Immunization Week, April 24-30, 2022.⁵ **Given the role of faith communities in Canada and their active support for equitable vaccine delivery since early in the pandemic, we encourage the government to be in continued conversation with these communities so that we can support in vaccination efforts.** Multi-faith communities in Canada are globally connected throughout the world and can be supportive in understanding vaccine delivery mechanisms and roadblocks in unique country contexts around the globe.

Dose-sharing

Since the beginning of COVID-19, Canada purchased enough vaccines to vaccinate Canada's population many times over. With Canada's privileged position comes an increased responsibility to ensure that everyone has access to their right to a healthy, safe life. In the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need persists to close the global vaccine gap to keep everyone safe, in Canada and globally.

We applaud the government's donation of approximately 15 million surplus vaccine doses through the COVAX facility and direct, bilateral arrangements with countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as international financial support for COVAX.⁶ We also believe that Canada can play a greater leadership role to ensure vaccine equity, especially when it comes to prioritizing vaccine access for frontline workers, health workers, high-risk and elderly populations around the world.

We urge the creation and rapid implementation of a donation plan for the 200 million vaccine doses Canada committed to donate in 2022. Canada's global response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be timely and equitable if it is to be successful. Vaccine inequality will only prolong the global pandemic for all.

Support for TRIPS Waiver

We urge Canadian support for the temporary Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver, presented to the World Trade Organization. This waiver, proposed over one and a half years ago, will ensure that trade regulations and licensing do not impede the timely manufacture, distribution, and affordability of vaccines. 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 timely access to anywhere near sufficient vaccines, to say nothing of testing or treatment for supportive care. In addition, manufacturing COVID-19 vaccines locally in lower income countries will increase confidence in their effectiveness while combatting vaccine hesitancy and misinformation.

Health Systems Strengthening

We also urge Canada to invest heavily in global health systems strengthening with regular increases in the Official Development Assistance budget in order to reach the promised target of 0.7% of Canada's gross national income by 2030, with funding specially designated for community-based health organizations, including those run by women. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed that donating vaccine doses alone is insufficient. As more vaccines become available, we encourage a focus not only on procurement but also delivery. Fragile health systems must be strengthened to support vaccine absorption through health worker training, cold chain protection, supply of PPE and other equipment, and safe disposal of needles and waste, among other needs. This is a key focus area of Love My Neighbour's continued

fundraising and a pillar of our advocacy work. Canada can lead the way in ensuring fair access, distribution and absorption of the vaccine around the world.

Coordinated and Financed Global Plan

What has become very clear by this stage in the pandemic is that a coordinated and integrated COVID-19 response is the only effective way forward. As the World Health Organization reminds us, no one is safe until we are all safe. While COVID-19 infections persist anywhere in the world, there is a risk of mutations which might be more contagious, more dangerous and possibly more vaccine-resistant.⁷ **We urge Canada to lead both at home and globally with an integrated response combining dose sharing, funding for vaccine delivery, capacity-building for vaccine production, tech transfer and infrastructure, as well as the health systems strengthening needed for this pandemic.**

We urge Canada to work with global leaders to create a comprehensive and financed plan to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are truly available to all worldwide, without delay. We are counting on Canada and world leaders to deliver a coordinated and equitable plan at the G7 Summit in June 2022 to ensure the whole world will have access to COVID-19 vaccines, tests and treatments. We must emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic more prepared for a future health crisis.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Given the role of faith communities in Canada and their active support for equitable vaccine delivery since early in the pandemic, we encourage the government to be in continued conversation with these communities so that we can support in vaccination efforts.
2. We urge the creation and rapid implementation of a donation plan for the 200 million vaccine doses Canada committed to donate in 2022.
3. We urge Canadian support for the temporary Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) waiver, presented to the World Trade Organization.
4. We also urge Canada to invest heavily in global health systems strengthening with regular increases in the Official Development Assistance budget in order to reach the promised target of 0.7% of Canada's gross national income by 2030, with funding specially designated for community-based health organizations, including those run by women.
5. We urge Canada to lead both at home and globally with an integrated response combining dose sharing, funding for vaccine delivery, capacity-building for vaccine production, tech transfer and infrastructure, as well as the health systems

strengthening needed for this pandemic.

6. We urge Canada to work with global leaders to create a comprehensive and financed plan to ensure COVID-19 vaccines are truly available to all worldwide, without delay.

¹ <https://www.loveyneighbourproject.org>

² <https://covid19tracker.ca/vaccinationtracker.html> and <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>

³ <https://www.loveyneighbourproject.org/our-participants>

⁴ <https://fundraise.unicef.ca/loveyneighbour/donate>

⁵ “Canadians pay it forward to move on from the COVID-19 pandemic”,

https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/stories-histoires/2022/donnent_suivant_pay_forward.aspx?lang=eng

⁶ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/global_health-sante_mondiale/vaccine_donations-dons_vaccins.aspx?lang=eng

⁷ Notably, as of May 12, 2022, European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control has reclassified Omicron sub-lineages BA.4 and BA.5, first detected in South Africa, from variants of interest to variants of concern. “Epidemiological update: SARS-CoV-2 Omicron sub-lineages BA.4 and BA.5”, <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/epidemiological-update-sars-cov-2-omicron-sub-lineages-ba4-and-ba5>

