



January 30, 2003

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister
Room 309-S, Centre Block
Langevin Building
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

The Honourable Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of International Trade
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister and Minister,

Thank you for your acknowledgement on 9 January, 2003 of the joint and detailed letter on Access to Affordable Medicines and the WTO of 17 December, 2002, sent by ICAD and twenty-six non-governmental and civil society organizations, along with six individuals.

We appreciate your acknowledgement of our letter, but regret that you have not provided us with any explanations or assurances regarding Canada's position at the WTO on this issue. Given the grave potential for a further reduction in poor people's access to medicine because of the position of several negotiators at the WTO, including Canada, and given the number of diverse and highly concerned Canadian organizations and individuals who sent you the letter, we should be grateful for a formal response. We are particularly interested in knowing why Canada has been one of the negotiators playing a part in eroding the spirit and letter of the November 2001 Doha Declaration with current 'solutions' to Paragraph 6. We also ask that Canada not continue with this approach in the negotiations about to resume very shortly, and trust that the Canadian government will indicate by its actions, and not only by its words, that it does indeed wish to allow poor people access to life-saving medicine.

We strongly recommend in the new round of negotiations that the scope of diseases should not be limited, that Paragraph 6 text be reworked from the start, and that WTO members, including Canada, rethink their positions and come to a solution that gives priority to people's health. We think that current negotiating positions put undue priority on the interests of wealthy countries' pharmaceutical industries. Additionally, we welcome EU Commissioner Lamy's recognition of the World Health Organization global role in health issues, especially since, as recently as September 2002, the EC negotiators in Geneva claimed that WHO was overstepping its mandate with its recommendations. We hope Canada will support the WHO's global role in health issues also. Our concerns outlined in our 17 December letter, including on the scope of diseases and health technologies covered, as well as eligibility of countries to use the Para. 6 solution for import and export, remain the same.

To date we are disappointed that Canada seems prepared to put profit ahead of public health in our WTO negotiations thus far on Paragraph 6. If such a position continues, Canada will contribute to making poor people poorer, something the Canadian public, as well as representatives of Canadian non-governmental or civil society organizations would be ashamed of. This position contradicts the leadership role Canada has taken in the past, committing to a partnership with Africa, and as a country concerned with human rights and development in poor countries.

We urgently await your response.

Respectfully,

Interagency Coalition on HIV/AIDS (Michael O'Connor, Executive Director)
Canadian Labour Congress (Kenneth Georgetti, President)
CARE Canada (A. John Watson, President and CEO)
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network (Ralf Jürgens, Executive Director)
Médecins Sans Frontières (David Morley, Executive Director)

Copies to :

Hon. Bill Graham
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon. Allan Rock
Minister of Industry

Hon. Susan Whelan
Minister for International Cooperation

Ambassador H.E. Sergio Marchi
Chairman, WTO General Council

Ambassador Dr. Eduardo Perez Motta
Chairman, TRIPS Council

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