

Hon. Patty Hajdu, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Health,
70 Colombine Driveway,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9
(By email)

October 28, 2020

Dear Minister Hajdu:

Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is one of the world's leading independent emergency humanitarian medical organizations. For decades, we have witnessed people being denied treatment for neglected or deadly diseases because the medicines they need have been priced out of reach by private pharmaceutical corporations or never made available in places where they live — even when those medicines were discovered using public funding, including money provided by the Government of Canada.

This system cannot continue. Today, as governments spend billions — including more than \$1 billion of Canadian public funds — to develop the public health tools the world needs to prevent and treat COVID-19, it's clear we need to ensure the medicines and vaccines we develop are affordable and accessible to everyone who needs them.

Since June 2020, **91,206 people** have signed an [MSF petition](#) calling on the Canadian government to attach conditions to the hundreds of millions of dollars of public funding it invests in medical research and development (R&D) each year. We are asking your government to take immediate steps to implement common-sense safeguards to ensure fair, affordable and global access to medicines, vaccines and other health technologies developed with Canadian public funds. Canada can do this by requiring:

- all recipients of public funds to have policies and commitments in place to ensure medicines, vaccines and other health technologies developed with Canadian public funds are developed quickly, registered in all countries that require them, and priced fairly and affordably, including through the use of enforceable global access terms and conditions in any licensing agreements made with private pharmaceutical companies;
- the open sharing of science, data and technical know-how that is derived from publicly funded research to ensure perpetual royalty-free, non-exclusive access that allows worldwide research and manufacturing rights derived from publicly funded science;
- transparency into all stages of the R&D that Canada funds, including the registration and public reporting and sharing of clinical trial data, R&D costs, manufacturing costs and product prices; if the public is investing to develop these lifesaving technologies, we should be able to keep control and transparency over what we have paid to help generate.

These approaches have already been voluntarily implemented by some Canadian universities, including the University of British Columbia and McGill University, and were also recommended by the Standing Committee on Health in its 2018 report on Open Science. Ensuring a public return on the public's investment should be a guiding principle of Canadian health innovation.

COVID-19 shows how it is essential for governments to impose conditions ensuring health technologies developed with public funds are made affordable and accessible to everyone, everywhere. But the problem is

bigger and more systemic than COVID-19. Without these enforceable safeguards to mandate access, affordability, transparency and knowledge-sharing, Canada will continue to allow our publicly funded discoveries to be privatized and sold back to us and to people around the world at prices we don't control, because we don't even try to negotiate these rights.

To put it in industry terms, that is simply a bad business decision. No privately run company in the world would sell a technology they invested in and know they will need access to in the future, without negotiating fair and reasonable access rights for themselves. Neither should Canada.

Enclosed in this email is the text of MSF's petition, and the list of signatories who are calling on your government to take action. As always, we remain available to share our experience and expertise with Canadian policymakers on how to ensure the medicines Canadians need and develop are available to people around the world. Canada has made many important contributions to global access-to-medicines policies and dialogue – it's time to put that into action at home and serve as a model for the rest of the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Belliveau', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Joe Belliveau,
Executive Director,
Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières

CC: Hon. Navdeep Bains, Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry
Dr. Michael Strong, President, Canadian Institutes of Health
Research Dr. Mona Nemer, Chief Science Advisor