

*CMA submission*

# CMA Recommendations on Vaccine Equity and Intellectual Property

House of Commons Standing Committee  
on Foreign Affairs and International  
Development

May 13, 2022

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) is pleased to submit recommendations to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development for the study the committee has undertaken on Vaccine Equity and Intellectual Property Rights. The CMA commends the committee for undertaking such an important and timely study, and we respectfully submit recommendations for consideration as part of its efforts to address the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Every country must have equitable access to vaccines globally. The CMA recognizes that equitable global vaccine access is both a valuable public health tool and necessary to ensure that all countries meet their human rights obligations.

Continued disparities in vaccine access across the globe, exacerbated by the emergence of new variants of concern, highlights the importance of a global approach to managing and ultimately ending the pandemic. The CMA strongly supports the Government of Canada's participation in global efforts to identify and advance solutions to increasing the supply and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Canada has high vaccination rates and a significant supply of vaccines that is sufficient for its own population's needs. Canada is thus well-positioned to contribute to coordinated global efforts to ensure that all residents of all countries achieve the highest level of protection as quickly as possible. Global cooperation to facilitate access to and distribution of vaccines is a matter of social justice and international solidarity and is a pragmatic response to ending the pandemic globally.

These international efforts help support Canada's domestic public health response, as increasing access to vaccines globally helps protect Canadians from future waves of COVID-19 and reduce the likelihood of the emergence of vaccine-resistant variants. Canadians understand that no person is safe until we are all safe. According to a January 2022 Ipsos survey conducted for the CMA, 75% of Canadians agree that global efforts to vaccinate everyone in the world will help end the pandemic for Canadians. As such, the CMA is advancing the following recommendations to the Foreign Affairs and International Development Committee for federal action to support global efforts towards vaccine equity and the continued pandemic response.

# CMA Recommendations on Vaccine Equity and Intellectual Property

## 1) Support a broad TRIPs Waiver

The CMA strongly supports Canada's participation in the global dialogue, led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to identify and advance solutions to increasing the production and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The January 2022 Ipsos survey found public support for international measures to support global vaccine access, with two-thirds of respondents supporting the relaxing of vaccine patent or intellectual property rules to increase developing countries' access to vaccines.

To support global access to vaccines as being deliberated under the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the CMA encourages the Government of Canada to support a broad intellectual property waiver, which is the most effective TRIPS waiver to achieve the goal of increasing low- and medium-income countries' (LMICS) ability to produce and export COVID-19 vaccines. This includes both a temporary patent waiver as well as a technology knowledge transfer and the intellectual property related to other medical products that would facilitate the manufacture and distribution of vaccines in LMICs.

## 2) Continue fulfilling Canada's commitment to increase the global supply of vaccines

The CMA strongly supports Canada's participation in the global dialogue, led by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the World Trade Organization (WTO), to identify and advance solutions to increasing the production and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. The January 2022 Ipsos survey found public support for international measures to support global vaccine access, with two-thirds of respondents supporting the relaxing of vaccine patent or intellectual property rules to increase developing countries' access to vaccines.

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### 3) Enable production capacity, domestically and globally

The CMA encourages the federal government to continue to promote a proactive and practical approach to address barriers to vaccine production capacity, such as the recently announced vaccine production facility in Montreal. The CMA calls on the federal government to further expand Canada's contribution to COVAX once additional domestic production capacity is operational.

In addition, the CMA urges the federal government to encourage the WHO to play a more proactive role in improving the production capacity for vaccines in LMICs. The CMA urges the international community to secure additional financing for LMICs to improve their production capacity.

### 4) Support efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines

Sufficient supply of vaccines does not ensure equitable distribution. Efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines around the world is needed to control the spread of COVID-19 infections. Ideally, vaccine doses would be distributed proportionally to participating countries to minimize wealth disparities in global health. However, the infrastructure and supply chains to support vaccine distribution either does not exist or is insufficient in many LMICS to allow for the effective distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Beyond providing the vaccines themselves, the CMA encourages the federal government to work with its international partners to support the efficient and equitable distribution of vaccines.

### Conclusion

The CMA supports the federal government's commitments to global efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic, including donations to the COVAX Facility, support for the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, and negotiations toward improving LMIC access to vital intellectual property to increase the global supply of vaccines and other medical supplies. Promoting both the supply and distribution of vaccines in LMICs will be critical in the months and years to come. The CMA encourages the federal government to continue working with international partners to ensure the efficient and equitable access to vaccines globally.