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May 31, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

Warm greetings from The United Church of Canada.

COVID-19 has undoubtedly changed the world. Now more than ever, we realize we are in it together—we are not alone. At the same time, we are made increasingly aware of the access gap between the rich and poor. While residents across the country receive their first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccines, as Moderator of The United Church of Canada, I want to raise with you deep concern about the unequal global distribution of vaccines. According to the United Nations, richer countries have received 87% of vaccines, while lower-income countries received just 0.2%. The severe disparity casts a harsh spotlight on the ever-increasing gap in economic wealth, quality health care, clean water, and other rights named in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Canada, like many Western countries, has purchased more than enough vaccines and is expecting to vaccinate the majority of its citizens this year. This is not the reality for the global majority, where some timelines are expected to be met only in 2023/24.

We acknowledge with appreciation Canada's initial contribution to COVAX. As the spread of variants poses greater threats to all and the global calls for vaccine justice increase, I urge you and your government to move proactively toward a just and equitable global COVID-19 vaccination distribution strategy. **It is a moral and ethical imperative to ensure that people everywhere will be safe from the disease.**

We acknowledge Canada's principled leadership in prioritizing vaccine access in Canada for priority communities, including Indigenous communities, recognizing that systemic failures and chronic underfunding of basic health care and infrastructure, clean water to communities, and other inequities contributed to the risks posed by COVID-19. We ask you and your government to exercise this same principled leadership to improve vaccine access for people without immigration status and for low-income racialized communities here in Canada, and to **take bold action** to ensure vaccine access and equity globally.

The United Church joins our voice with people across Canada and the globe to urge the Canadian government to implement the following recommendations:

- Increase financial support to COVAX and urgently redistribute to COVAX Canada's purchased and committed vaccine doses to COVAX, including doses purchased from COVAX.



- Increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to countries most affected by the COVID-19 crisis with unconditional grants and technical support, prioritizing efforts by community-based and -led organizations to strengthen health systems, support social protection, protect people's livelihoods, and foster peacebuilding.
- Suspend the international Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to allow vaccines to be produced more quickly and affordably around the world.

Now is the time for Canada to be a leader in ensuring fair access, distribution, and administration of the vaccine around the world.

Let us be agents of compassion and justice embodying the biblical call to live our faith in acts that uphold abundant life and equity for all.

Wishing you grace and peace during these unprecedented times.

Sincerely yours,



The Right Rev. Dr. Richard Bott  
Moderator, The United Church of Canada

Cc:

Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance  
 Hon. Marc Garneau, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
 Hon. Karina Gould, Minister of International Cooperation  
 Hon. Mary Ng, Minister of International Trade  
 Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health  
 Hon. Hon. Marco E. L. Mendicino, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship  
 Hon. Anita Anand, Minister of Public Services and Procurement  
 Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services  
 Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs  
 Hon. Erin O'Toole, Leader of the Official Opposition  
 Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party  
 M. Yves-François Blanchet, Chef du Bloc Québécois  
 Ms. Annamie Paul, Leader, Green Party of Canada  
 Michael Chong, Official Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs Conservative Party of Canada  
 Heather McPherson, New Democratic Party Critic for International Development  
 Jack Harris, Critic for Foreign Affairs New Democratic Party  
 Jasraj Singh Hallan, Official Opposition Critic for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Conservative Party of Canada  
 Christine Normandin, Bloc Critic for Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship  
 Jenny Kwan, NDP Critic for Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship  
 Tracy Gray, Official Opposition Critic, Export Promotion and Trade, Conservative Party of Canada  
 Garnett Genuis, Official Opposition Critic, International Development and Human Rights, Conservative Party of Canada  
 Stéphane Bergeron, Bloc Critic for Foreign Affairs  
 Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, Bloc Critic for International Trade  
 Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, Bloc Critic for Francophonie and International Cooperation  
 Daniel Blaikie, NDP Critic for Export Promotion and International Trade