

March 22, 2023

Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Canada
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Dear members of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts

On behalf of the member companies of BIOTECCanada, I am writing to convey the biotechnology industry's significant concerns regarding the motion currently being considered to grant access to unredacted contracts securing the supply of COVID-19 vaccines. This unprecedented initiative puts Canada at risk with partner jurisdictions globally, negatively impact investment into the Canadian biotech ecosystem, and stifle the growth of biotech companies and innovation at a critical time for Canada.

BIOTECCanada is the national industry association with over 200 members located nation wide, reflecting the diverse nature of Canada's health, industrial and agricultural biotechnology sectors. In addition to providing significant health benefits for Canadians, the biotechnology industry has quickly become an essential part of the transformation of many traditional cornerstones of the Canadian economy including manufacturing, automotive, energy, aerospace and forestry industries.

At the onset of the pandemic in April 2020, there was global recognition effective vaccines and therapeutics would be required to save lives and allow the global economy to return to normal. At that time, the most optimistic projection for the development of effective vaccines was a 3-5 year time horizon. Thankfully, the industry was able to develop four highly effective vaccine candidates before the end of 2020, including two mRNA vaccines which were dependent on lipid nanoparticle technology from the Canadian biotech company, Acuitas.

The effectiveness and timeliness of the vaccines ultimately saved the lives of thousands of Canadians, billions of dollars in GDP and allowed society and the economy begin to get back on track. Importantly, while the world is in a far better place today than would otherwise be the case if not for the vaccines, it is quite clear we are not completely done with COVID-19 as variants continue to allow the virus to persist. Correspondingly, it is very likely that more COVID-19 related innovations will be needed over the period ahead. Importantly, there is recognition globally of the need to also prepare today for the real possibility there will be pandemic or other global health challenges in the future.

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Accordingly, the Canadian government is investing significantly to augment Canada's biomanufacturing capacity and life sciences ecosystem more broadly to prepare Canada for the next health challenge. This is particularly relevant as evidenced by the attraction of investment dollars spurring on the economic growth of the new start up network of companies located throughout Canada. Many of these companies are the anchors for long term growth of the entire sector in Canada. To successfully grow Canada's biomanufacturing and life sciences innovation capacity will require global investment and partnership, a good deal of which emanates from the global pharmaceutical industry.

All companies entering into contracts with the federal government require assurances that confidential business information negotiated with the Canadian government will remain confidential. This is fundamental to securing supply. The release of unredacted, confidential contracts would signal to our trading partners and globally operating companies that Canada is not aligned with international business practices. Releasing these contracts, without respecting business confidentiality will undermine investor confidence and have reputational consequences for Canada that extend beyond the biotech industry for other sectors which contract confidentially with the federal government. In this context, the industry strongly urges the Committee to consider the significant investment and reputational consequences of taking the unprecedented step to release unredacted contracts.

Sincerely,



Andrew Casey
President and CEO