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Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Global Affairs Canada

April 25, 2018

Dear Minister,

I write to you today regarding the status of Taiwan at the World Health Organization's next World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting, to be held in Geneva from May 21 – 26, 2018.

As you know, last year Taiwan was refused participation in the WHA due to political differences with the People's Republic of China. Taiwan had held observer status at the WHO since 2009 and participated in many WHA and WHO meetings and activities over the years until the unfortunate decision to exclude them in 2017.

The New Democratic Party of Canada supports the inclusion of Taiwan at the 2018 World Health Assembly meeting. We see no reason why Taiwan, which has much to contribute to global health, should be excluded from this meeting.

Disease knows no borders. The government of Taiwan represents 23 million people who deserve to be represented within the World Health Organization, and whose health should not be compromised by a political dispute. The consequences of Taiwan's exclusion from the activities of the WHO/WHA are serious, as Taiwan's acquisition of timely information on disease and medical issues has been delayed when compared to WHO members. When disease outbreaks strike, every minute counts. It is essential that Taiwan, as an international air traffic hub and an island of 23 million people, be able to access the same timely information as WHO members.

I would like to draw your attention to Taiwan's health system, which is world-class and an example to many countries. Taiwan was the first in Asia to implement a national health insurance program and is home to major medical advancements – but its medical community is largely excluded from the WHO's global health network. Since the SARS outbreak, Taiwan has also developed a strong disease prevention system and has worked with the global community to build capacity to prevent

diseases such as Ebola, MERS, and Zika. Taiwan is a significant provider of assistance in this regard. It is important to stress that Taiwan is also a strong supporter of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly with regard to global health.

Minister, I ask that Canada advocate on behalf of Taiwan's participation at the upcoming World Health Assembly. I am sure you will agree with me that political disputes should not influence the international community's ability to work together for global health.

Canada would not be alone in supporting this. The United States supports Taiwan's bid to regain observer status in the World Health Organization. At the 2017 WHA, Germany and Australia also spoke in support of Taiwan's inclusion at the next assembly meeting. Today I ask your government to take a strong public stand on this issue.

I note that many Taiwanese-Canadians support the participation of Taiwan at the WHA. Several have written to you directly in this regard and have shared their correspondence with me.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Hélène Laverdière, MP
NDP Foreign Affairs Critic

CC:

Don Davies, NDP Health Critic

Frank Lin, Acting Representative, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada

Douglas Chiang, President, Taiwanese-Canadian Association

Mireille Lin, Convener, Taiwanese-Canadian Association of Greater Montreal

Chun-Yan George Kuo, President, Taiwanese-Canadian Association of Ottawa