



October 20, 2021

Christopher MacLennan  
Associate Deputy Minister  
Global Affairs Canada  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

**RE: Addressing COVID-19 risks posed by fur farming at G20 summit**

Dear Mr. MacLennan:

Last Chance for Animals (LCA) is an international non-profit organization, based in Los Angeles, CA, that has been working in Canada since 2016 to improve conditions for animals and to eliminate animal exploitation.

I am writing regarding the upcoming G20 summit in Rome. In view of the ongoing serious threat posed to both public health and the global economy by COVID-19, we urge the Government of Canada to take the lead in commencing a global discussion about the need to eliminate the coronavirus reservoirs posed by fur farms.

- Since April 2020, the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been detected on more than 440 mink fur farms across twelve countries in Europe and North America. This includes three mink farms in British Columbia's Fraser Valley region.
- Transmission routes from humans to farmed mink, mink to mink, and from farmed mink to humans have all been recorded, with spillover transmission to humans reported in the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and potentially also in the United States.<sup>12</sup>
- As a result of public health concerns, around twenty million minks have been culled worldwide under governmental order, and mink breeding has been suspended in four countries for the duration of 2021. Further, Denmark has recently announced it will extend its mink keeping ban for another year, until the end of 2022, after advice from its public health body stated that "keeping mink in Denmark after 2021 may pose a health risk to people of unknown size."<sup>34</sup>

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) ad hoc Group on COVID-19 and safe trade in animals and animal products has concluded that raw mink skins cannot be considered as a safe commodity for international trade.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/animals.html> & OIE: <https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/06/en-oie-guidance-farmed-animals-.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Surveillance of infectious diseases in animals and humans in Sweden 2020. <https://www.sva.se/media/8d93fbc7f66d298/surveillance-of-infectious-diseases-in-animals-and-humans-in-sweden-2020.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.altinget.dk/artikel/ssi-fastholder-vurdering-der-er-stadig-en-sundhedsrisiko-ved-minkavl-i-danmark>

<sup>4</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/tris/en/search/?trisation=search.detail&year=2021&num=639&mLang=en&CFID=3377979&CFTOKEN=41380270ae69edfb-72243980-08FE-227A-84F4BD0EAFB9E0C7>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.oie.int/app/uploads/2021/04/a-ahg-report-covid19-dec2020-feb2021.pdf>

Nonetheless, mink farming continues unabated in most countries, including Canada, where the practice is still legal, the trade in raw mink skins continues globally without restriction, and multiple outbreaks of SARS-CoV-2 continue to be recorded on mink farms.

A scientific paper by Pomorska-Mól et al, published in July 2021, states that “The scale of infection in minks on mink farms is worrying, mainly because of the ability of the virus to pass through a large population of highly susceptible animals, potentially allowing the emergence of new, dangerous mutations and/or the acquisition of new biological properties”. In conclusion, the researchers’ states “minks farms could represent a possibly dangerous, not always recognized, animal reservoir for SARS-CoV-2.”<sup>6</sup>

There has never been a more urgent need to end the practice of fur farming worldwide, an industry that treats animals inhumanely for a product no-one needs. LCA conducted a year-long whistleblower expose into Millbank, a fur farm in Ontario that houses over 40,000 minks. The neglect documented was so severe Millbank pleaded guilty to failing to meet the prescribed standards of animal care under section 11.1(1) of the *Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*.<sup>7</sup>

LCA hereby calls on the Government of Canada to raise our concerns ahead of the Summit and to negotiate a commitment by the G20 leaders to take action to eliminate the practice of fur farming, including in Canada, as one of the strategies needed to bring the COVID-19 pandemic to an end.

LCA further urges G20 leaders at the Rome summit to heed the OIE findings and, as a matter of urgency, support an immediate halt to all global trade in raw mink skins and make a commitment to assist countries around the globe to phase-out the industrialised farming of animals for their fur at the earliest possible opportunity.

Thank you for your time and I would be honored to answer any questions you might have.

Yours sincerely,



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<sup>6</sup> Review: SARS-CoV-2 infection in farmed minks – an overview of current knowledge on occurrence, disease and epidemiology  
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1751731121001142#b0055>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.lcanimal.org/index.php/investigations/investigations-in-the-field/millbank-fur-farm>