



Open letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa

Dear Prime Minister,

“The United Nations had hoped to reduce the number of deaths related to pregnancy by 75 per cent by 2015 as part of its Millennium Development Goals. It now appears this target will go unfulfilled.”

- Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Jan. 26, 2010

On behalf of over 3000 Canadian healthcare professionals, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) offer a heartfelt thank you, Prime Minister, for committing Canada to make the improvement of women and child health in the world's poorest regions a priority for the G8/G20 Summits this year in Canada.

Your announcement this week represents a welcome breakthrough in our decade-long fight to bring greater attention to the cause of maternal, newborn and child health. Canada's commitment this week will result in healthier families, better health systems, stronger communities, as well as increased economic productivity and environmental sustainability in countries where these things are needed the most. With the generous financial support of Canada and its G8 colleagues, hundreds of thousands of women and children could be saved every day, through low-cost interventions such as improving access to clean water, better nutrition, immunizations, as well as skilled attendance at birth.

We know this because SOGC, and many of its Members, have volunteered their time and talents in low-resource countries and have witnessed first-hand the difficulties endured by women and children. The SOGC has been working with international partners in countries like Haiti, Uganda, Guatemala, and many more, to build capacity of health workers, and to strengthen their skills in Emergency Obstetric Care, so they may respond to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Such partnerships and programs are essential for Canada's international development efforts aimed at saving women and children, yet rarely have we seen such focused attention and concrete commitments to address these issues as your announcement this week.

With your leadership, Prime Minister, we are confident that concrete financial commitments will come out of the G8 Summit, and that the significant, indefensible, gaps in maternal and child health funding will be addressed.

The SOGC welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Canadian government to make the proposed maternal and child initiative an exceptional success, and help to further enhance Canada's reputation as a world leader in the defense of mothers, babies and children at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "André B. Lalonde". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "André" being more legible than the last name "Lalonde".

André B. Lalonde, MD, FRCSC, FSOGC, FACS, MSc
Executive Vice-President, SOGC
Executive Board Member, PMNCH