

Food and Biotechnology

Letter with regard to the Protocol on Biosafety

April 26, 2000

The Hon. David Anderson
Minister of the Environment
28th Floor
Terrasses de la Chaudiere
10 Wellington St.
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0H3

The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Lester B. Pearson Building
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G2

**Re: Signing of the Protocol on Biosafety under the United Nations
Convention on Biological Diversity**

Dear Mr. Axworthy and Mr. Anderson,

On January 30 of this year, more than 130 countries took an important step towards to protection of the earth's biological diversity in agreeing on the text for a Protocol on Biosafety under the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Protocol establishes an international framework of rules for the transboundary movement of living modified organisms, such as genetically modified plants, fish, animals and microorganisms.

The Protocol will be opened of signature on May 15, 2000 at the headquarters of the United Nations Office in Nairobi, Kenya. Canada was the first developed country to sign the Convention on Biological Diversity at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. We ask that you ensure that Canada is among the first signatories to the Protocol on Biosafety as well.

The negotiations around the Protocol were lengthy and difficult. An early signature on the Protocol by Canada would do much to strengthen goodwill within the Convention, and the United Nations program as a whole. It would also send a clear message to the global community regarding Canada's willingness to take steps to ensure the safety of products of modern biotechnology in international commerce.

We would be pleased to discuss the Protocol with you, your staff, or your officials, should you require any additional information regarding our views on the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy
Biotech Action Montreal (BAM)
Biotech Working Group of the Manitoba Eco-Network
Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)
Canadian Environmental Defense Fund
Canadian Organic Growers
Council of Canadians
The Clearinghouse Group
EcoCouncil of the Peterborough Area
Environmental Law Centre (Alberta)
Falls Brook Centre
The Gaia Group
Green Campus Society
Greenpeace Canada
Nature Saskatchewan
The Ramshorn
Saskatchewan Environmental Society
Sierra Club of Canada
Society Promoting Environmental Conservation (SPEC)
Toronto Environmental Alliance
West Coast Environmental Law

cc: The Hon. L. Vanclief, Minister of Agriculture and Agr-Food
The Hon. A. Rock Minister of Health
The Hon. C. Caccia, Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development
Bill Graham, M.P., Chair, House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs
Richard Smith, Acting Commissioner for Environment and Sustainable Development
John Herity, Director, Biodiversity Convention Office, Environment Canada
Richard Ballhorn, Director-General, Environmental Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade