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Dear Mr. Jeneroux and Ms. Goodridge:

Thank you for your correspondence of November 22, 2022, concerning access to infant formula in Canada. When it comes to the health and nutrition of infants and young children, we recognize that any disruptions to the supply of infant formula is highly stressful and a source of significant anxiety for many parents and caregivers. As such, Health Canada has been working closely with manufacturers, retailers, and medical professionals to mitigate shortages and secure supply where possible since the emergence of this shortage.

The Abbott Nutrition manufacturing facility in Sturgis, Michigan was closed for several months this year following a product recall on February 17, 2022. The closure of this facility affected the worldwide supply of infant formula, with critical disruptions in the United States and Canada. This facility produced several Similac brand products, which accounted for a significant portion of the Canadian infant formula market. The Sturgis facility re-opened in July, but production has not yet returned to historical levels.

Health Canada reacted promptly to the closure of this facility by publishing an Interim Policy (<https://bit.ly/3VIAaql>) on March 10, 2022, to facilitate the importation of equivalent infant formula from other countries in order to mitigate the effects of the shortage on Canadian families. More than 45 products have been authorized for temporary importation under this policy, and the list continues to be updated regularly. Most of these imported products are specialized formulas, as these were more significantly affected by the shortage. Specialized formulas include those for babies with food allergies (hypoallergenic formulas) and for patients with rare metabolic disorders (metabolic products, which are not available to consumers and used only under strict medical supervision).

Since the beginning of the shortage, Health Canada has promoted information sharing and proactively explored ways to reduce or eliminate barriers to providing rapid and fair access to product. The Department worked closely with manufacturers to discuss opportunities for increased production, coordinate shipments of formula into the country,

and identify additional products for importation. Enhanced collaboration with provincial and territorial representatives ensured the fair and equitable distribution of hypoallergenic formula across the country. Information from major distributors provided a detailed understanding of the supply of these products nationally and allowed Health Canada to quickly address emergent needs.

The Department sent targeted information to the health care community and to caregivers, and developed several communication products for the public, health care professionals and pharmacists to help them navigate the shortage. For several months, Health Canada recommended that hypoallergenic formulas be ordered through a pharmacist to manage their limited supply and ensure that these would be available for babies relying on them for medical reasons. The shortage of hypoallergenic formulas was successfully managed through this leadership, and the supply of hypoallergenic formulas is now more stable. Some products began returning to store shelves as of late October.

However, the supply of regular infant formula is now increasingly strained as the situation persists. In recent weeks, lower cost options, such as generic brand powdered formulas, have been frequently out-of-stock in various regions of Canada. While other nutritionally comparable infant formulas remain available in stores and online retailers in various formats, these may be more expensive and require that babies adapt to a new formula. We recognize that this can be stressful for caregivers. Considering these new pressures, Health Canada has extended its Interim Policy through the end of 2023 in order to further strengthen the national supply of infant formula and allow continued access to imported products. The Department is working hard to provide continued access to infant formula for Canadian families, and shipments of store brand powdered formulas are expected in the coming weeks. Once infant formula arrives in Canada, it will be distributed to Alberta, along with the other provinces and territories, by retailers and distributors.

The overall supply of infant formula is expected to remain limited until the Abbott facility in Sturgis returns to its full production capacity. Abbott has indicated that this is unlikely to occur before mid-2023. Health Canada and other manufacturers are planning accordingly. Until this facility resumes typical production levels, we will continue monitoring the situation closely and facilitating measures to mitigate disruptions and strengthen the supply chain to minimize the impact on Canadian families.

The Department is committed to minimizing the effects of this ongoing situation on Canadian families, and will continue its engagement with manufacturers,

provinces/territories and the health care community until the national supply of infant formula has fully stabilized.

Again, thank you for writing, and please accept my best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P.