

Published in 2021 to nurture a debate on governance in science and future pandemics' systemic risk, this 2003 letter was among others to prepare Canada (in some cases the world) to address national and global emergencies, e.g. I took the initiative, at my expense, to prepare Canada for Mad-Cow disease long before it hit our shores. I also provided this advice, in 2003, as a private citizen. Years earlier, I was a non-partisan Executive Member of the Prime Minister's Committee on Government Reform (1994-98).



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From **Alain Paul Martin**  
President and CEO

May 23, 2003

The Right Honourable Prime Minister Jean Chrétien  
Ottawa, Canada

Monsieur le Premier Ministre,

Judging from recent developments on Mad Cow Disease and the hard lessons we have learned from the UK and the EU, it is quite possible that the issue will unfortunately get worse for a while. There are deeper operational and policy questions to be raised behind the dramas and traumas of news headlines.

The emerging clusters of health, economic, political and social risks demand an integrated national approach to lever all the wisdom we possess in Canada, the UK and elsewhere to eradicate the disease first. We must concurrently fireproof the nation with high standards similar to those established by Dr. Kenneth Wells when we faced Foot & Mouth epidemics (FMD), a system which made Canada a pacesetter in FMD prevention and the envy of the world for 50 years. We should also delve into the various accountabilities to uphold the highest level of transparency and goodwill that are fundamental to democratic trust-building and international trade. In this regard, we know from the UK that there is a fragile balance between raising risk and accountability questions, and not unduly alarming the public. There should however be no compromise when it comes to health risk where erring on side of caution is of paramount importance. As an illustration, our transparency profile would have been further up today, if the logical question, raised by a US Senator, about the 4-month autopsy delay, came first from a Canadian leader. Instead, the Alberta Minister of Agriculture was in reactive mode stating almost reluctantly that "Alberta would consider requests from our trading partners to speed up the process", and raising further uncertainty about our eagerness to take the high road.

May I respectfully suggest that an independent advisor with impeccable integrity be part of your PMO crisis team to validate available intelligence and provide sober and unbiased advice? In my humble opinion, there are at least four Canadians who can help you face up to the daunting challenges on the immediate horizon. Drs. J. Brian Morrissey, John McGowan, Gordon Dittberner and Norman Willis are all highly respected at home, in the USA and abroad. They all have a low need for publicity and public rewards. They are totally driven by integrity and the eagerness to serve our country.

A veterinary surgeon with a PhD in virology and former director general, Animal Health, Dr. Norman Willis is an epizootic research scientist and a world authority on accidental release and deliberate use of biological agents affecting food and agriculture. He designed, built and ran the groundbreaking Level IV biocontainment laboratory. Respected worldwide, as a former director general, now lifetime president emeritus, of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

As for Dr. Brian Morrissey, you and the Governor General awarded him the "Outstanding Achievement Award" for his work as a public servant. He is also a veterinary surgeon with an MBA and expertise and

general management experience as former director general of what is now the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, as well as ADM Science in Fisheries, and Research ADM in Agriculture. He is also highly respected within CFIA, Health Canada and internationally. I had the privilege to work with Drs. Morrissey and McGowan and Deputy Minister Gaétan Lussier, as organizational consultant during the CFIA incubation. Last year, I have actually invited Dr. Morrissey to join me on an executive seminar for Health Canada where I choose the British BSE/vCJD case study for risk-management preparedness. Dr. Morrissey authored a chapter on the incubation of the disease in my book "Harnessing the Power of Intelligence, Counterintelligence & Surprise Events" (a copy of which is in your personal library).

It is worthwhile to indicate that I have asked Dr. Morrissey for his opinion on this proposal and he readily recommended Dr. Norm Willis. He is reluctant to come back to Ottawa. As you know, he is a great patriot and a humanist. Off the record, I think he may change his mind, if requested, by the highest office of the land, to help shape the road map to rescue our country.

Four years ago, you have kindly agreed with my recommendation to create a Canadian-led World Emergency Organization. As you may recall, the core mission of this organization was emergency preparedness, and the establishment of new standards and cooperation for sharing vital intelligence, and building regional SWAT teams. Unfortunately, Mr. Lloyd Axworthy to whom you have delegated the task, had other priorities, as he confirmed in an apology note sent much later. The project was ultimately lost in subsequent reorganizations within DFAIT. As a private citizen, I felt I had done my duty, and therefore did not feel it was appropriate to contact you to reactivate the project. I sincerely believe such an organization would be even more compelling now with SARS, BSE/vCJD, and other calamities, described in my original proposal. But in the short term, we must focus on Canada to eradicate Mad Cow and its stigma. A special independent advisor will consolidate your position and head off potential conflicts between agencies, and Federal, provincial and foreign authorities. In some way, this would be equivalent to Mr. Claude Laverdure's position on foreign affairs.

With the warmest personal regards to you and Aline,



Alain Paul Martin  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Enclosure: PDI background material on BSE/vCJD lessons learned from the UK and the European Union.

**FOLLOW UP NOTE:** This is the first of two 2003 reports on BSE to Canada's Prime Minister. On February 27, 2004, Dr. Norm Willis set up a provisional office in Tokyo. Armed cutting-edge evidence-based BSE/vCJD expertise and principled-negotiation diplomacy, Dr. Willis played an instrumental role in promptly lifting the bans and restoring the flow of Canadian beef exports to Japan, China, Honk Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines.

While participating in the 2004 Harvard Business School's Alumni Global Forum in Shanghai, I learned from Mr. Fan Xiaojian, Vice Minister of Agriculture, that both Drs. Brian Morrissey and Norm Willis, are "esteemed for bringing science-based solutions to complex issues".

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