

September 18, 2017

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor
Minister of Health
Government of Canada
70 Colombine Driveway
Tunney's Pasture 0906C
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Petitpas Taylor,

The Canadian Health Coalition (CHC) is concerned about the continued payment for blood plasma in Canada. The CHC is a public advocacy organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of public health care. Our membership is comprised of national organizations representing nurses, health care workers, seniors, churches, anti-poverty groups, students and trade unions, as well as affiliated coalitions in 9 provinces and one territory.

Blood plasma is the first body part in Canada that has been allowed for sale. Canada is only the fourth country in the world to pay plasma donors partly because it goes against the advice of major international health care organizations like the World Health Organization, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Society, the European Blood Alliance and many others. It also goes against the advice of Canada's Krever Inquiry which looked into ways to ensure that Canada never experienced a catastrophe like the 1980's tainted blood scandal.

The Canadian government has claimed that Canada must move to a model of paying donors because Canadian Blood Services (CBS) and Héma-Québec cannot collect enough plasma through their voluntary model. This reasoning has four serious flaws:

1. CBS only collects plasma at 7 facilities across Canada. In 2012, CBS closed a plasma collection centre in Thunder Bay citing: due to "new replacement products and the decline in hospital demand...based on current projections CBS must plan for a reduction of approximately 10,000 units to our plasma collection program." (Canadian Blood Services, Statement, 2012) CBS is capable of collecting more plasma from voluntary donors, in fact they have created a plan to expand their plasma collection in the next few years.
2. Having a parallel private collection system has shown to decrease plasma being donated at volunteer clinics. Previous to 2016, we only had international examples of this. Now, CBS is reporting a decrease in young blood donors at their Saskatoon clinic which they believe may be a direct result of the opening of a paid plasma centre. (Canadian Blood Services, Summary Note-Saskatoon Performance and CPR Impacts, April 20, 2017)
3. Canadian Plasma Resources (CPR), the for-profit private company collecting plasma has said that they are looking for purchasers in Europe. The plasma that CPR is collecting will leave Canada and

be sold on the international market. This will not increase the supply of plasma for Canadian use. Private, paid-plasma centres will take donors away from CBS and will sell the plasma on the international market, thereby decreasing the supply available to Canadians.

4. Lastly, once plasma from Canada is sold internationally, trade agreement rules will make it difficult for Canada to stockpile plasma solely for national use and we will need to continue selling plasma to the highest bidder. In the event of another blood-borne virus, Canada will not be able to ensure we have enough supply for our own population.

The Canadian Health Coalition continues to have very serious concerns about a private, paid plasma collector in Canada. Health Canada has the statutory duty to assess the safety of drugs, including blood, whole plasma and plasma products. Only Health Canada, and not any province or territory, has the legal authority to protect all Canadians from the inherent health hazards of plasma sourced from a population shown by research evidence to have higher rates of infection, that is, paid donors.

For more information on our concerns regarding the safety of paid plasma, please see the enclosed letter that we sent to your predecessor, Minister Jane Philpott, on April 15th, 2016. We did not receive a fulsome reply from that letter, only that she was unable to meet.

We hope you are able to review this file and we look forward to hearing from you.

Warm Regards,



Pauline Worsfold, RN
Chairperson