

**Ministry of Health
and Long-Term Care**

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**Ministère de la Santé
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March 11, 2013

The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Health Canada
Brooke Claxton Building, Tunney's Pasture
Postal Locator: 0906C
Ottawa ON K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Aglukkaq:

I am writing about the prospect of three paid-donor blood plasma clinics opening in Ontario by Canadian Plasma Resources. The issue of paid donors is a mounting cause for concern for Canada's voluntary blood donor system.

As health regulators and care providers, I strongly believe that before Canada considers allowing paid-donor blood plasma clinics to proliferate throughout the country, we first need to develop a better understanding of the impact that this development would have on our voluntary blood products donor system.

As you know, our blood supply is managed at the national level through Canadian Blood Services, which was established by a Federal/Provincial/Territorial Memorandum of Understanding, and was founded upon the key principle that "voluntary donations should be maintained and protected." The federal government played a substantive role in the transition from the Canadian Red Cross Society to Canadian Blood Services as operator of our blood system, and did so in response to the Government of Canada's Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada, led by Justice Horace Krever. The final report recommended that the Canadian blood supply system be governed by five basic principles, one of which is that "donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations, except in rare circumstances".

Canadian Blood Services has stated that they will not procure blood plasma from any paid-donor clinics. I am confident that Canadians will continue to voluntarily donate blood, plasma and platelets for altruistic reasons, rather than financial incentives. I also believe it would be irresponsible to allow a shift towards a paid-donor system without first determining how it could impact the supply of blood and blood products. I think we owe it to Ontarians and Canadians to have that discussion before any approvals are granted.

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The regulation and licensing of blood plasma clinics and authorization to collect blood and plasma rests with Health Canada. I understand that the proposed new clinics have not yet been approved. That means we still have an opportunity to engage in this important discussion before any decisions are made. I am therefore asking Health Canada to refrain from granting approval of any new paid-donor blood or plasma clinics until there has been an open consultation with provincial health regulators, care providers, Canadian Blood Services and Canadians.

My ministry is also evaluating what tools we might have at our disposal to ensure that no paid-donor clinics are opened in Ontario prior to engaging Ontarians first.

Minister, I hope you can agree with me that the integrity of our voluntary blood donor system must not be compromised. Let's work together to find the best way forward.

Blood donation saves lives. That's why I will continue to encourage people to donate blood voluntarily.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Deb Matthews". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deb Matthews
Minister