

December 19th, 2018  
The Honourable Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health of Canada  
70 Colombine Driveway  
Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0K9  
[Hon.Ginette.Petitpas-Taylor@Canada.ca](mailto:Hon.Ginette.Petitpas-Taylor@Canada.ca)

RE: Canadian Blood Services' Proposed Reduction of the MSM Deferral Period to 3 Months.

Dear Minister Petitpas-Taylor:

As Canada's only national charity promoting human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity through research, education and community engagement, Egale Canada Human Rights Trust (Egale) extends support to Canadian Blood Services' endeavours in moving towards an equitable blood donation policy in Canada. In particular, we are urging Health Canada to end discriminatory practices related to blood donation for men who have sex with men (MSM).

Canadian Blood Services (CBS) is seeking approval from Health Canada to reduce the current MSM blood donor deferral period from one year to three months, and the request to decrease the waiting period for trans blood donors for the same period. While these actions would represent important steps in addressing one of Canada's remaining overtly discriminatory policies based on sexual orientation and gender identity, it does not fully address the discriminatory nature of the ban, which would be corrected by screening potential donors based on risky sexual behaviour, without reference to sexual orientation or gender. No such deferral period is required for heterosexual blood donors, regardless of their sexual activity, while a man who has been in a long term monogamous sexual relationship with another man would be denied.

The development of extremely accurate nucleic acid screening test for HIV (window period of 9 days) allows us to begin to move away from discriminatory policies, such as the one-year waiting period (blood ban) faced by MSM and trans people. Also, with the absence of scientific evidence indicating that MSM and trans people are a sentinel population for emerging blood-borne pathogens, the current deferral policy perpetuates the discriminatory stereotype that MSM and trans people are prone to risky or reckless sexual behaviour. More important than this, the deferral policy is intrinsically opposed to fundamental Canadian values of equality and non-discrimination.

Minister Petitpas-Taylor, on behalf of Egale and the LGBTQI2S community whom we represent, we are urging you to enable CBS to address this discriminatory MSM deferral policy, immediately.

Yours sincerely,  
Helen Kennedy  
Executive Director

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cc.

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