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December 12, 2018

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas-Taylor, PC, MP  
Minister of Health of Canada  
70 Colombine Driveway  
Tunney's Pasture  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0K9

Dear Minister Petitpas-Taylor,

Immunodeficiency Canada supports Canadian Blood Services in their recommendation for a 3 month time based deferral period for blood donations from the population of men who have sex with men (MSM) currently set at a 1 year deferral period.

Immunodeficiency Canada represents individuals and families born with a Primary Immunodeficiency (a broken immune system due to genetic defects or disorders) and the healthcare professionals who work to diagnose, treat and support them. There are currently over 250 different forms of Primary Immunodeficiency recognized by the World Health Organization. These forms range widely in severity and symptoms. On average one in every 1,200 individual are affected by this disease and early diagnosis and treatment are vital in saving lives. Approximately 29,000 Canadians suffer from Primary Immunodeficiency.

Patients are treated for any current infection with specific antibiotics, anti-viral or antifungals medications. Some patients require Immunoglobulin Replacement Therapy in which antibodies from donors are separated from the blood, treated, condense, screened and prepared into individual treatments. Canadian Blood Services coordinates the supply of these antibodies. A patient will receive antibodies from over a hundred donors with each treatment which can occur as often as daily, weekly or monthly depending on the method of delivery into the body. Patients are on Immunoglobulin Replacement Therapy for the rest of their lives.

Immunodeficiency Canada trusts Canadian Blood Services to best manage the blood system in a safe manner for our population. We value our role on the National Liaison Committee and have been involved in consultations regarding the change in the MSM policy. Canadian Blood Services addresses the continuing changes in the needs of our Canadian population with sound science and a sensitivity that makes them a leader in community consultation and stakeholder engagement.

We look forward to a continued role with Canadian Blood Services as we represent individuals born with Primary Immunodeficiency.

Sincerely,

Richard Thompson  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc:  
Simon Kennedy, Deputy Minister, Health Canada  
Pierre Sabourin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Products and Food Branch, Health Canada  
Cathy Parker, Acting Director General, Biologics & Genetic Therapies Directorate, Health Canada  
Graham Sher, CEO, Canadian Blood Services