

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,

I am writing this letter in support of decreasing the current deferral period of those who fit the criteria of the *Men who have Sex with Men* (MSM) policy. I have volunteered with Canadian Blood Service (CBS) since 2015 with much of my focus on actively recruiting new donors in the Greater-Victoria (BC) area. Eventually, I was offered the opportunity to manage the UVIC Blood4Life club. Whether it is blood or stem cells, my goal is to educate the community about the importance of their donations. I want people to understand that their individual contributions are significant; this cannot be overstated. Every sample of blood collected was or will be used for life-saving procedures. Yet, there is often not enough blood available. If the current deferral period of one-year was reduced to three months, then CBS can increase the population of available blood donors and hopefully the number of donations.

It is my firm belief that decisions should be made on the foundation of scientific evidence and logic. Without question, our most important concern should be the safety of the parties involved. I believe this to be the primary concern of most people due to prior events. When presented with the dataset from CBS, it was evidently clear that a three-month deferral period will not negatively affect the detection of transmittable blood diseases. As a student of science, I would not support this change in policy if the evidence suggested otherwise. I am confident that the researchers working on this project have thoroughly analyzed and presented the data in an unbiased manner with the safety of the people in mind.

Perhaps there will still be concerns regarding the safety of this change. At the time of this writing, it will be slightly over one-year since the implementation of a three-month deferral policy in the United Kingdom. With an entire year of data, we have yet to see an increase in blood-related incidents due to MSM donors which reaffirms the efficacy of the three-month deferral period. Canada may not be the first to implement this policy, but this aligns with our nation's goal to implement evidence-based practices.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. There are additional points that, unfortunately, were not discussed in this letter. But I would like to provide affirmation that all my questions and concerns were diligently addressed by representatives of CBS. As a result, I fully support the reduction of the deferral period for MSM donors with the understanding that CBS will continue to maintain or improve their current rigorous standards for safety. With the science to back this change, I see no reason to limit the pool of potential donors by retaining the current one-year suspension.

Sincerely,

Stanley Liang
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