

For immediate release

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People living with HIV call for legislation barring pay-for-plasma company from operating in BC

Vancouver, BC: Positive Living BC members are urging the Province to put into place new law prohibiting the sale by individuals of their blood and blood plasma, as Canadian Plasma Resources (CPR) plans to open in BC within the next two years. CPR has already been banned from operating in Ontario and Quebec.

“Privatizing blood plasma donation and collection is a foolhardy and dangerous move for several reasons,” explains Valerie Nicholson, Chair of Positive Living BC. “Principal among these reasons is our still fresh memory of the (Krever) Royal Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada, and its findings and recommendations. The Commission’s 1997 Report stated that ‘donors of blood and blood plasma should not be paid for their donations, except in rare circumstances.’ Such circumstances might include disasters and serious emergencies; they certainly had nothing to do with routine commercial enterprises.”

“People living with HIV have particular interest in this matter given that the Krever inquiry into the 1980’s tainted blood scandal recommended that in order to prevent another tainted blood tragedy, Canada should not allow donors to be paid for plasma and should ensure that the core functions of the national blood system be performed by a single operator and not contracted out to others,” says Nicholson.

Other considerations include creating harmful competition for the public collection system and opening the door to further “market-based innovations” (e.g., opening the door to mixing Canadian blood plasma with blood plasma from other sources, widening the range of for-sale items to include other human body elements like organs, tissues, ova and sperm, and so on).

“The easiest, fairest and most salutary way to preclude any of these unhappy outcomes is simply to preclude the practice itself by joining Ontario and Quebec in banning it within the province,” says Nicholson. “We urge Minister Terry Lake, in the strongest possible terms, to do this quickly.”

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Contact:

Adam Reibin, Director of Communications
Positive Living Society of BC
604.612.0222

Positive Living BC is a registered charitable society dedicated to empowering persons living with HIV disease and AIDS through mutual support and collective action. It is Western Canada’s largest AIDS organization with a membership of more than 5,700 HIV-positive full voting members. Our services and programs are available to, and regularly accessed by, many of the 12,000-15,000 HIV-positive individuals living with BC.