

# Paid Plasma Issue: Media Brief and FAQs



CANADIAN PLASMA RESOURCES

Give Plasma, Give Life

## Paid Plasma Issue Media Brief and FAQs

### Background:

- Canadian Plasma Resources (CPR) is a new Health Canada licensed Canadian pharmaceutical company that has been established to collect human plasma and manufacture it into the drugs that many vulnerable patients require to survive. It intends to compete with the foreign pharmaceutical companies who currently supply Canada's health care system with these drugs.
- Today, 100 percent of these drugs, known as plasma protein products (PPPs) come from foreign, for profit pharmaceutical companies who compensate their plasma donors. A very small amount of the plasma used in manufacturing these drugs comes from volunteer donors in Canada (17%) which is then shipped to these foreign companies for processing
- Canadian Blood Services (CBS) and Hem-Quebec spend about 900 million dollars importing PPPs every year and this number is rapidly increasing
- Demand for PPPs is growing rapidly. Canada is the largest per-capita importer in the world
- CPR is simply seeking the ability to supply Canada's health care system with a Canadian product in the same way foreign companies supply Canada's health care system with imported products
- Note: This issue is not about collecting plasma or blood for direct transfusion into patients. That is a publicly funded voluntary system and will remain so. This issue is about collecting the plasma required to manufacture pharmaceutical products
- CPR is planning to invest 400 million dollars and create 2000 new jobs for nurses, medical technologists, and other skilled workers over the next 3 years
- Canada is entirely dependent on the United States for our supply of PPPs. It is in our national interest to have a secure Canadian supply of the drugs our patients need to survive
- No country in the world is self-sufficient in PPPs without using some form of compensation for plasma donors



- Canada will always rely on paid plasma donors to meet its demand for PPPs – even if a recently announced 7 year, 855 million dollar expansion of Canadian Blood Services is successful. This has been acknowledged by Canadian Blood Services, Hema Quebec, Health Canada, provincial governments and patient groups.
- **The question is not whether Canada will continue to rely on paid donors. The question is whether those paid donors will continue to be exclusively American.**

## Frequently Asked Questions\Comments with CPR response below:

“Why do you need to pay plasma donors?”

- Donors are compensated because donating plasma is much more complicated and time consuming than donating blood. It takes 90 minutes to donate plasma vs. 20 minutes for a regular blood donation. Qualified plasma donors must be repeat donors and are needed to donate much more frequently than blood donors. Without compensation, there would be insufficient donors to meet demand.  
It is also far less costly to recruit a paid donor than it is to recruit a volunteer donor. This saves the health care system significant costs. For example based on the proposal CBS sent to the provincial and territorial governments in late 2016 their projected cost to collect each liter of source plasma would be \$400/L which is at least twice the price of commercial North American source plasma.

“Are paid plasma products safe?”

- Safety is regulated by Health Canada. Paid plasma products have been in use in Canada for 30 years without a single case of HIV or HEP-C transmission. Screening is very strict. Thousands of Canadian patients use them every day.

“What do patients think about paid plasma products?”

- There are many patient groups who support a compensated model for plasma donation. These include:
  - Canadian Immunodeficiency Patients Organizations
  - The Canadian Hemophilia Society
  - Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders
  - Hereditary Angiodema Canada
  - Network of Rare Blood Disorders Organization

“Won’t the existence of paid plasma centres compete with CBS voluntary blood drive centres?”

- According to Health Canada, countries with highly developed paid plasma systems also have much higher voluntary blood donation rates than in Canada. Eg. USA, Germany, Austria
- There is very little overlap between a blood donor and a plasma donor
- Canadian Blood Services has publicly stated that there has been no negative impact on the voluntary donor pool in Manitoba where paid plasma donations have existed for 30 years.

“You are simply collecting plasma for export on the open market, to sell to the highest bidder. Canadian patients won’t benefit”

- Canadian Blood Services purchases all of its plasma based drugs on the open market, through competitive tenders from private companies who all pay their plasma donors. CBS also pays very attractive prices. Why would we invest millions to operate in one of the highest cost jurisdictions in the world if our primary customers are located in lower cost places?
- The plasma that Canadian Blood Services collects today is shipped to foreign for profit firms in the US and Switzerland for manufacturing – and then re-imported to Canada. Canadian Plasma Resources will be following the same model until its manufacturing facility is built in Canada.

“Paying plasma donors takes advantage of homeless people who desperately need the money”

- Health Canada approved procedures at Canadian Plasma Resources prevent homeless people from donating plasma

“The Krever Commission recommended that we should never compensate people for their plasma or blood”

- Justice Krever also recommended that Canada become self-sufficient in plasma. In the 25 years since his recommendation, Canada is not even close to being self-sufficient in the plasma we need to make the PPPs our patients need. In fact no-country in the world is self-sufficient in plasma based drugs without some form of compensation mechanism. On the other hand Canada is indirectly compensating donors in other jurisdictions as almost 80% of plasma products used by Canadian patients are produced from US paid plasma.

“Canadian Blood Services has announced a proposal to collect more plasma from volunteers. Why are you competing with Canadian Blood Services?”

- CBS is asking the provinces and territories for 855 million in additional new funding so that they can increase the Canadian volunteer plasma donor content of PPPs from 17% to 50% over 7 years. Even if they succeed, Canada will still rely on the paid American donor for the other 50%
- 100% of the final product will still come from foreign for profit pharmaceutical companies as CBS ships their plasma abroad for manufacturing. It is these firms we wish to compete with -not CBS
- We welcome CBS’ new found interest in collecting plasma. Canada is the largest per capita user of PPPs and demand is growing quickly all over the world. So, to ensure security of supply for Canadian patients, we absolutely support any increase in the supply of Canadian plasma, regardless of whether it comes from volunteer or paid donors. But let’s be clear - no country has been able to meet its demand for plasma without relying on paid donors. Canada is and will be no different