



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-03066**

BY: **MR. GARRISON (ESQUIMALT-SAANICH-SOOKE)**

DATE: **DECEMBER 10, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **MR. JOHN OLIVER**

Response by the Minister of Health

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Blood donations

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Our Government is committed to protecting the safety and security of Canada's blood supply. We are also committed to supporting blood donation policies in Canada that are non-discriminatory and scientifically supported.

In Canada, every blood donation is tested for several infectious diseases, including HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Despite advances in testing methods, there remains a period when there is a risk that infected units of blood may not be identified by testing. As a result, donor screening and deferral remain relevant safety measures because they minimize the potential of infected units entering the blood supply system.

It is important to note that as per the recommendations of the Krever Commission, Health Canada is responsible for the regulatory oversight of safety of the blood supply and as the regulator maintains an "arms-length" relationship with Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec. Under Canada's *Blood Regulations*, Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec are required to make submissions to Health Canada for any changes to their processes. Health Canada has no authority to mandate that a donor screening criterion be changed.

On June 16, 2016 Health Canada approved proposals from Canadian Blood Services and Héma-Québec to reduce the blood donor deferral period for men who have sex with men from a five to a one year period. This regulatory decision

came into effect on August 15, 2016. Health Canada is open to considering further changes to the current men who have sex with men donor deferral policy provided that submissions are received from the blood operators supported by the appropriate scientific evidence

On June 20, 2016, the Government of Canada also committed to a three-year \$3 million federal contribution to Canadian Blood Services, in collaboration with Héma-Québec, to host an international conference with world health leaders to discuss blood donor policy, to fund behavioural research to ensure non-discriminatory practices, and to encourage further development of technologies by working with industry and academia.