

Dear _____,

A healthcare bill currently before the Ontario Legislature could have life-threatening consequences for many vulnerable Ontarians. The bill seems to have been hastily written in a vacuum with little research and no consultation with those who will be affected.

Bill 178, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act bans Ontarians from being paid for donations of life-saving plasma.

The Ontario government claims that, it is “taking this strong step against paid blood donations to maintain the integrity of the voluntary blood donation system.”

What the government is not telling Ontarians is that 80% of the blood plasma and plasma-derived products purchased for Canadians come from paid donors in the United States and Europe. Canada makes no contributions to the world supply of blood plasma relying on the rest of the world to fill the demand of Canadian patients.

Many patient advocacy groups are calling on the government to stop Bill 178, take a step back, investigate, consult and give this issue the attention it deserves. They say there are numerous unintended consequences which will affect many patients, including people like me, in not only negative but life-threatening ways.

Research has indicated that there is no significant difference in the safety of paid or non-paid sources for plasma, the issue is more accurately about whether we should pay Canadians for plasma donations. Presently, Canadian patients requiring plasma and products made from plasma depend upon products purchased from the United States and Europe where paid donations make up the overwhelming majority of the supply. Eighty per cent of the Canadian and world supplies of plasma derived-products are manufactured in countries other than Canada from the plasma of paid donors.

For example, Alpha-1 Proteinase Inhibitor is used to treat Alpha-1 Antitrypsin Deficiency a genetic deficiency which may result in life-threatening lung disease in adults and/or liver disease in people of any age.

Canadian governments have a right and responsibility to regulate the donation process. Canada currently purchases 80% of its plasma and plasma-derived products from suppliers outside of the country. Purchasing product from outside the country limits Canadian governments' ability to regulate the donation process. The banning of paid donations within our country will increase our dependence on outside sources and other governments' regulation of the process.

There is a worldwide shortage of plasma-derived products. Canada should contribute its fair share to ensure that there is an adequate supply of plasma and plasma-derived products worldwide. This goal can only be reasonably met if we develop a responsibly regulated paid plasma contribution system in addition to the system of donated plasma collection.

It is hypocritical to suggest that Canadians should not be paid for the time and effort involved in donating plasma because there is currently a readily available supply from other countries from donors who are paid.

Sincerely,