



# CANADIAN SENATE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS AGAINST

## BAN ON COMPENSATED PLASMA DONATION

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**I**n a rare and meaningful move, the 13 members of the Canadian Senate's Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (SOCI) unanimously voted to recommend against Bill S-252, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. The Bill, introduced by Senator Pamela Wallin in May 2018 and written in close collaboration with industry detractors, would amend Canada's Blood Regulations to ban compensated plasma donation in all Canadian provinces and territories, with an exception for Canadian Blood Services.

Prior to making its recommendation, the SOCI heard from 16 witnesses over seven meetings between Dec. 5–April 4, including PPTA's Senior Vice President for Source & International Affairs and representatives of PPTA member companies Prometic Plasma Resources and Canadian Plasma Resources. All three witnesses effectively delivered messages against the proposed ban, including the ethical nature of compensation for plasma donors; the decades-long impeccable safety record of plasma protein therapies made from plasma from compensated donors; and the twin fallacies of “crowding out” and “self-sufficiency.” Patient representatives also offered compelling testimony, providing personal details about the crucial nature of collecting sufficient plasma for plasma protein therapies.

Under Canadian Senate procedure, committees can issue a report on a bill or decide to merely not finalize the discussion, allowing a potentially highly pressured political situation to cool instead of taking direct action. The SOCI's direct action and unanimous recommendation comes at a time when the global battle against compensated plasma donation has become increasingly political, having little to do with facts and more to do with adherence to dogma. This vote represents a solid victory for the champions of compensated plasma donation.

In the brief report issued by the SOCI following the recommendation, the committee cited several reasons it did not believe the bill was fit for further consideration. Among them was the fact that “members heard contradictory testimony on several complex and technical issues” which could not be fully addressed by the Bill as written. There were also concerns about whether jurisdiction lay at the federal level at all; decisions about compensation have been made on the provincial and territorial level to this point. Finally, members questioned why, if some think that compensation is unethical, it would be ethical for certain entities to remunerate donors.

Though this vote was not quite the end of the road for Bill S-252, it was certainly a huge step forward in a country that has housed interest groups that have become increasingly hostile and vocal about compensating plasma donors. As of publication of this issue of *The Source*, the bill is still technically pending before the full Senate, which may or may not vote on it before the government prorogues (finishes its business on its calendar) in mid-June to prepare for Canada's next election. Should the Senate end the legislative session with Bill S-252 still on the order paper, it would have the same effect as being actively rejected by the Senate, if a much less satisfying one. ●