



NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR NURSES' UNION

NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release:
November 20, 2009*

Newfoundland & Labrador Joins other Nurses' Unions in Calling on Health Canada to Reject Plans to Eliminate Registered Nurses from Donor Screening

St. John's – The Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union and other Canadian nurses' unions are calling for a halt to plans to eliminate nurses from blood donor screening. In a letter sent this week to federal health minister Leona Aglukkaq, the nurses unions detailed their objections to the Canadian Blood Services proposal to eliminate nurses from direct donor screening.

“We know from the Krever Commission that the drive for cost-effectiveness and cost-efficiency can jeopardize blood safety. One of the most critical elements to ensuring a safe blood supply is the careful screening and assessment of all potential blood donors,” says NLNU President Debbie Forward.

The objections of nurses unions to the elimination of nurses from direct donor screening are based on research that found that (a) registered nurses and/or physicians are typically used in donor screening, contrary to Canadian Blood Services claims they are not; (b) there is no evidence that the use of lesser skilled, unregulated workers would not jeopardize the blood supply or donor health; and (c) employers can address retention and recruitment problems through improving the quality of the workplace.

“On behalf of 158,000 nurses, nurses unions have asked Health Canada to reject the Canadian Blood Services proposal to replace nurses with unregulated, lesser skilled workers”, says Linda Silas, RN, President of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. “The proposal to replace nurses is a step in the wrong direction.”

Since the 1997 Justice Krever Inquiry following the tainted blood tragedy where more than 1,000 Canadians who received blood transfusions were infected with HIV and Hepatitis C, Canadian Blood Services has built their reputation as providers of safe blood. "The screening of potential donors has become even more expensive and intrusive," Justice Krever said in his report. "Careful screening is essential to maintain a safe blood supply and it must continue."

- 30 -

For more information contact:
Debbie Forward
President, Newfoundland and Labrador Nurses' Union
(709) 753-9961