

*Routine Proceedings*

products. Each and every unit of blood is thoroughly tested by the Canadian Red Cross Society for HIV and for other blood-borne infections.

For a short while in the early 1980s the blood supply in many countries, including Canada, was contaminated by the AIDS virus. Scientists and governments banded together in an immense and successful effort to restore its purity. We developed methods of identifying the virus and treating blood which justify our confidence in the safety of today's blood system.

Before these measures were developed some people who received blood transfusions or who needed blood products to manage blood disorders such as haemophilia were infected with the virus which causes AIDS.

The Canadian Haemophilia Society and a small group of blood transfusion recipients asked the federal government for financial assistance for those who were affected. We have had many meetings with the CHS. I have been very impressed with the tireless efforts of the president of the Canadian Haemophilia Society, Elaine Woloschuk. I would like to thank her and her team for all of the work which they have done on behalf of their membership.

I am pleased to announce that the Government of Canada will provide \$120,000 in assistance to each of the approximately 1,250 Canadians who became infected with the AIDS virus through blood transfusions or blood products in this country.

This tax-free sum will be paid in four equal annual instalments beginning next April. The plan will apply in full measure to those who are currently living with AIDS, as well as to the estates of those who have died.

Full details will be provided to potential recipients within a month. Every effort will be made before next April to ensure that their entitlement is established in a prompt manner while protecting rights of privacy and security.

I would like to assure the House that the funding that I am announcing today is over and above the money that we have already earmarked for AIDS. It will not be taken from other programs to provide assistance to people living with AIDS.

[*Translation*]

The measures announced today should not be considered as a compensation plan. Our decision was not dictated by a fear of legal liability. In any case, no amount of money could ever compensate for the loss suffered by a person infected by AIDS.

My colleagues and I have looked for a fair and equitable solution that acknowledges the fact that haemophiliacs, most of whom are unable to obtain life insurance, must be given special assistance, above and beyond our universal health insurance and social security programs. We have looked for a way to help a group of Canadians who do not have insurance and who in most cases are the family's bread winner.

Canada is not alone in taking this kind of action. Governments of other countries are helping people who were infected by blood products.

[*English*]

Our goal is twofold, to ensure that public confidence in our blood supply system remains high; and to provide a form of disaster relief to Canadians who are facing extraordinary hardship.

I have discussed the federal government's position on this issue with provincial Ministers of Health. Together we have reviewed the unique circumstances, particularly of haemophiliacs who have produced so urgent and tragic a problem.

We have also discussed the concern of both levels of government for maintaining the integrity of Canada's blood supply system. Doing so depends upon public support, technological, medical and scientific excellence, and when extraordinary circumstances arise, a willingness to respond with understanding.

I have received expressions of support for this assistance from many Canadians including from many members of Parliament. In turn I urge all those Canadians whose gifts of blood have been gifts of life for many to please continue to give blood. We have a system that is safe and we need their support to make it effective.

I would like to close my remarks today by saying a few words about other discussions currently taking place. As the House will know, we have received representations from the parents of vaccine damaged children. In some ways their situation is similar. Promoting public health in