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CANADIAN BLOOD SERVICES

Statement by:

The Honourable Vivienne Poy

Thursday, March 15, 2012

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Hon. Vivienne Poy: Honourable senators, I rise today to speak about the Canadian Blood Services' new initiatives to make stem cells more readily available to Canadians who suffer from life-threatening diseases such as aplastic anemia, leukemia and other blood-related and immune disorders.

There are currently close to 1,000 Canadians on the waiting list for a blood stem cell transplant from all backgrounds. About 70 per cent of these patients will find a compatible stem cell donor outside of their families, and patients are most likely to find a donor in their own ethnic group.

At present, potential stem cell donors in Canada's national database are mostly Caucasian, despite the increasing diversity of the Canadian population, so there is an urgent need for a national strategy.

Over the past year, the Canadian Blood Services' OneMatch Stem Cell and Marrow Network began phase one of a campaign called "For All Canadians," to create a national public umbilical cord blood bank. A cord blood stem cell laboratory has been

established in Ottawa and a second lab will be constructed in Edmonton. Phase two will see new cord blood collection sites in Vancouver, Toronto and Edmonton, in addition to Ottawa.

In conjunction with all the provinces and territories, except Quebec, the For All Canadians project aims to collect 20,000 cord blood units, representing Canada's diverse population.

It is important to note the activities already taking place among Canada's ethnic minorities in support of the Canadian Blood Services' efforts. For example, the mayors of several cities have declared March to be Chinese Stem Cell Awareness Month. On March 31, 2012, with champion figure skater Patrick Chan as spokesperson, four major urban centres will be holding the 331 National Chinese Stem Cell Drive to encourage Chinese Canadians to join the Canadian Blood Services stem cell registry.

As honorary cochair of the For All Canadians Campaign, I would like to ask honourable senators to help raise awareness about the need for life-saving cord blood donations. Pregnant mothers from all ethnic backgrounds should be encouraged to donate their umbilical cords after the births of their babies in order to save the lives of many Canadians.
