



April 17, 2024

Mayor Andrea Horwath  
Hamilton City Hall  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Horwath:

I was born and raised in Hamilton, Ontario and I have had a deep commitment to advocating on behalf of vulnerable communities, patients, and caregivers throughout my career. Currently serving as the Executive Director of Alpha-1 Canada and the Board Chair of the Network of Rare Blood Disorders Organizations (NRBDO), I am compelled to express the distress and confusion within patient communities regarding the potential decision to ban the collection of source plasma in Hamilton, as approved by the Ontario Government through a public-private partnership between Canadian Blood Services and Grifols Canada.

Hamilton is home to thousands of patients who depend on life-saving plasma-derived medicines. These critical treatments are manufactured from compensated plasma donations sourced outside of Canada. It is essential to recognize that everyone involved in the supply chain, from manufacturing to distribution and administration, is compensated for their contributions. Not only the countless individuals manufacturing the products, but many Hamiltonians are also compensated for their time and efforts:

- the logistics personnel in Hamilton-Wentworth;
- the distribution centre staff in Hamilton-Wentworth;
- the infusion nurses in Hamilton infusion clinics;
- the blood bank staff in Hamilton hospitals.

Why, then, should the plasma donor not be compensated for their time and effort?

As someone who donates plasma weekly and interacts with donors regularly, I find it offensive to suggest that plasma donation is predatory. The motivations behind each donor's decision are personal, and insinuating that such donations are against "Hamilton's values" undermines the autonomy and informed choices of its residents.

It is important to understand the significant impact of plasma donations on patients' lives. For instance, it takes over 900 plasma donations to treat just one patient with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency for a year. 1 in 5,000 Canadians live with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, a genetic disorder, that occurs when there is a lack of a protein in the blood called alpha-1 antitrypsin (AAT). AAT protects the lungs, so without it severely affected patients can have little to no lung protection, which can require lung transplants and cause premature death. A plasma protein replacement therapy is the only specific treatment for severe alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency.

Provincial and territorial governments have recognized the necessity of supporting public-private partnerships to meet the needs of Canadians living with blood and bleeding disorders.

I respectfully urge you and your Public Health Committee colleagues to listen to the voices of patients and families in Hamilton and consider the extensive research and data, supporting the public-private partnership between Canadian Blood Services and Grifols Canada. This partnership not only aligns with Hamilton's values but also reflects the city's mission and vision.

On behalf of the alpha-1 patient community, I would like to request that you withdraw the notice of motion for the April 29 meeting of the Committee on Public Health to declare the City of Hamilton a "plasma-free zone."

Sincerely,

Angela Diano  
Executive Director