

Hepatitis C Tainted Blood Class Action

News

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Government of Canada to discuss compensation options for persons infected with hepatitis C

OTTAWA - Health Minister Ujjal Dosanjh announced today the Government of Canada's intention to enter into discussions on options for financial compensation to people who were infected with hepatitis C through the blood system before January 1, 1986, and after July 1, 1990.

"Since becoming Minister, I have heard from Canadians who have contracted Hepatitis C through the blood supply," he said. "Representatives of those infected with hepatitis C through the blood system before 1986 and after 1990 have asked us to reconsider the government's position on compensation. In reviewing this matter and in discussion with cabinet colleagues and caucus, we have reflected on a number of circumstances that have changed since the original compensation decision was taken in 1998.

"We have therefore decided that it is right and responsible to revisit the decision and begin discussions on options for financial compensation to those who were infected through the blood supply before 1986 and after 1990."

"Hepatitis C places a tremendous burden on infected people and their families," said Minister of State (Public Health) Dr. Carolyn Bennett. "Building on previous actions, I am very happy that there is the possibility to do more to relieve this burden for those people infected through the blood system."

Since 1998, the Government of Canada has committed approximately \$1.4 billion

to compensate and assist people infected with hepatitis C through the blood system. Of this amount, \$875 million was allocated to a trust fund that fulfils the Government of Canada's financial obligations to those infected Canadians under the 1986 to 1990 Hepatitis C Settlement Agreement. The Government has also committed \$525 million for a comprehensive package to support treatment for people infected before January 1, 1986, and after July 1, 1990, improved blood regulation, as well as surveillance, prevention, support and research.

Discussions on developing options for compensating Canadians infected with hepatitis C through the blood supply before 1986 and after 1990 will commence as soon as possible but are expected to take several months and involve many players. There will be discussions with the lawyers who oversee the 1986-1990 Settlement Agreement and with the lawyers of Canadians infected with hepatitis C through the blood system before 1986 and after 1990, and the provinces and territories.