

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

Bill Casey, M.P.  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Health  
The House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A4

Dear Mr. Casey:

Pursuant to Standing Order 109 of the House of Commons, on behalf of the Government of Canada I am pleased to respond to the 19th Report of the Standing Committee on Health (Committee) entitled *Organ Donation in Canada* (Report).

I commend the members of the Committee for undertaking this study that reflects the growing momentum to improve organ donation and transplantation (ODT) in Canada. The Government of Canada agrees with the spirit and objectives underlying the Committee's recommendations. We recognize the need to do more on ODT, and I am actively pursuing my mandate to work with provinces and territories (PTs) to facilitate collaboration on an organ and tissue donation and transplantation system that gives Canadians timely and effective access to care.

In that regard, since early 2018 Health Canada has been leading an initiative in collaboration with provinces and territories and Canadian Blood Services called the Organ Donation and Transplantation Collaborative (ODTC). The ODTC has conducted interviews with over 40 experts, including all the organizations and individuals who testified at the Committee as well as government officials and other key stakeholders. Through analysis of the evidence gathered, the ODTC identified stakeholder perspectives on promising opportunities to improve organ donation rates, organ transplant patient care and equity of access to donation and transplantation. These opportunities, and those identified in the Report, were discussed at an Organ Donation and Transplantation Collaborative Workshop held November 22 and 23, 2018.

Several themes that have emerged through the ODTC reflect the intent and general direction of the Report recommendations (Rs), including interest in continued or enhanced:

.../2

- Support for interprovincial organ sharing programs and coordinated organ donation promotion activities (R1);
- Collaboration with and among provinces and territories towards implementation of best or leading practices (R2);
- Promotion or facilitation of organ donation registration, such as through federal access points (R3, R4, R5).
- Support for organ donation and transplantation research (R6);
- National data to monitor donation and transplantation outcomes and support research and systems improvement (R7).

In addition, the ODTIC identified a need for governance structures that align roles and accountabilities and that foster trust, transparency and collaboration. There is also a desire to address inequities of access to transplantation.

I can assure you that the Report, together with the ODTIC efforts, have provided an informed foundation for planning of next steps to achieve a higher performing pan-Canadian system.

Meanwhile, some concrete actions have already been announced. On research, a further investment of \$3.3M for the Canadian Donation and Transplant Research Program to continue advancing research on the many facets of organ and tissue donation and transplantation in Canada was announced in October 2018. This funding is a joint investment from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Astellas Pharma Canada Inc., the Canadian Liver Foundation, Cystic Fibrosis Canada, the Fonds de recherche du Québec–Santé, and the Kidney Foundation of Canada. The Government of Canada was also pleased to support M-189 and continues to support Bill C-316, which may provide Canadians with another opportunity to learn about how to register for organ donation when filing their income tax returns.

I thank you for highlighting the importance of this issue by tabling the Report and recommendations. We look forward to ongoing dialogue on how to continue improving the organ donation and transplantation system to protect and promote the health of Canadians.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ginette Petitpas Taylor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "T".

The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Health