



Our Blood Counts

Plasma for Northern BC

Our Blood Counts- Plasma for Northern BC

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March 6th 2025

City of Prince George

Mayor Simon Yu and Members of Council

1100 Patricia Blvd, Prince George, BC V2L 3V9

Subject: in support of a Blood Plasma Donor Centre in Northern BC

Dear Mayor Yu and Members of Council:

On behalf of Our Blood Counts, we are requesting Prince George City Council's support in principle for the establishment of a Northern BC Blood Plasma Donor Centre in Prince George.

Canada currently faces a significant plasma deficit. Plasma from blood is essential for producing life-saving medications. Despite efforts to increase domestic plasma collection, Canada still relies on international supply chains for plasma-based treatments. We believe renewing blood donation in Northern BC through a plasma donor centre would support Canadian patients and health providers by reducing Canada's reliance on foreign donors and suppliers.

The Importance of Plasma

Plasma is crucial for transporting water, salts, enzymes, antibodies, and clotting factors in the body. Donated plasma is combined through a process called fractionation to produce plasma protein products. These products are used to treat conditions such as cancer, immune deficiencies, liver and kidney diseases, and blood disorders.¹ Plasma donations are more frequent than whole blood donations, as only plasma is extracted with specialized equipment while other blood components are returned to the donor.

Canada's Plasma Shortage and Need for a Northern BC Centre

Canada collects less than 20 percent of the plasma it needs. Over 80 percent of immune globulin (a plasma protein product) used in Canada is sourced from the United States. Despite expansions, Canadian Blood Services only expects to meet 50 to 60 percent of domestic demand for plasma.² The global value of the market for plasma-based medication is expected to rise in value by 70 percent from 2023 to 2034³ with the United States and Canada being key growth areas. Therefore, expanding domestic plasma collection is crucial.

Canadian Blood Services ran a whole blood donor centre in Prince George from 1998 to 2015. Its closure has left Northern BC residents with long travel distances to donate blood or plasma. However, Canadian Blood Services is opening plasma donors in cities like Thunder Bay Ontario.⁴ Thunder Bay is a key centre for an expansive rural region, much like Prince George is for Northern BC. This shows the potential for success of plasma donation in our region.

Our Advocacy and Regional Support

Our Blood Counts, a group of blood donors, recipients, and advocates, seeks to bring a plasma donor centre operated by Canadian Blood Services to Northern BC. This centre would help collect plasma to produce vital medications for patients across Canada.

Our petition in support of a Northern BC plasma donor centre has garnered over 1,300 signatures since its launch in June 2024, showing strong regional support. Prince George, as a regional hub, is ideally positioned to host a centre and attract donors from across Northern BC. More than 90 percent of petition signers say they would be likely to donate at such a centre.

Comparing Northern BC to Thunder Bay, Ontario

Thunder Bay as a city is larger than Prince George, with 123,258 people⁵ compared to PG's 89,490⁶. However with over 130,000 people, Northern Health's Northern Interior Health Services Delivery Area has the population to support a plasma donor centre.⁷ Prince George is also closer to Canadian Blood Services' testing operations in Calgary than Thunder Bay is to its testing site in Brampton Ontario. Those signing the petition from across the North (and from communities outside of the Northern Interior) have also said they would include plasma donations in Prince George in their travels.

Canadian Blood Services' Response

Canada requires 100,000 new blood donors annually. However, Canadian Blood Services has thus far declined our call for a Northern BC donor centre. The organization has not responded to our specific points about population and closer proximity to a testing site. They have only said they are confident they are well positioned to meet their targets through their existing network plans and that logistical concerns prevent re-establishing a donor centre in this region.

Canadian Blood Services has encouraged Northern BC residents to register for stem cell and organ donation. Our Blood Counts supports this step as members of our group have previously registered for such donations. We also combine blood donation with our out-of-region travels when possible. That said, we remain dedicated to bringing plasma donation to Northern BC.

Why Council's Support Matters

Council's support would demonstrate the region's commitment to Canada's plasma needs and send a strong message to Canadian Blood Services about the potential for a successful plasma collection site in Northern BC. We believe Northern British Columbians deserve the opportunity to contribute to life-saving treatments again as much as urban or suburban Canadians.

Draft Resolution

We submit this draft resolution for your consideration. If a resolution is not possible, we would welcome a letter of support. Representatives from Our Blood Counts are available to offer perspective to or answer any questions of Council.

Proposed Resolution in Support of a Northern BC Plasma Donor Centre

WHEREAS plasma from blood is a critical component in life-saving treatments for individuals with immune deficiencies, cancer, kidney disease, and other medical conditions; and

WHEREAS Canada collects less than 20 percent of the plasma required to meet domestic patient needs, relying heavily on international supply chains despite growing demand for plasma-based treatments; and

WHEREAS Canadian Blood Services closed its whole blood donation centre in Prince George in 2015, leaving Northern BC residents with no local option to donate plasma, while new plasma donor centres have been established in rural regions such as Thunder Bay, Ontario; and

WHEREAS the return of plasma donation services to Northern BC would enhance Canada's self-sufficiency in plasma-based medications, supporting patients in Northern BC and others across Canada while reducing reliance on suppliers from outside the country;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Prince George City Council urges the Province of British Columbia, through the Ministry of Health, and Canadian Blood Services to establish a Blood Plasma Donor Centre in Prince George to serve Northern BC, improve access for donors, support patient needs, and strengthen Canada's domestic plasma supply; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Prince George City Council asks residents to further demonstrate their support for life-saving donations by registering for organ and stem cell donation at blood.ca; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that this resolution be forwarded to the Honourable Josie Osbourne, BC Minister of Health and Canadian Blood Services CEO Dr. Graham Sher.

Conclusion

We ask Prince George City Council to express support for a blood plasma donor centre for the region and stand with patients, donors, and advocates in Northern BC. Canada needs more plasma from domestic donors to support patient care needs and reduce reliance on donors and suppliers from outside the country.

Moreover, blood donation should not be an exclusively urban or suburban privilege—residents in our region deserve the opportunity to contribute to life-saving treatments.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Karjaluoto and Chantelle Messier
Our Blood Counts

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Sources:

1. Canadian Blood Services, **Plasma for Life: What is plasma?** (undated)
<https://www.blood.ca/en/plasma>
2. Canadian Blood Services, **Our commitment to increasing plasma sufficiency in Canada** (undated) <https://www.blood.ca/en/about-us/media/plasma/plasma-sufficiency>
3. Precedence Research, **Plasma Protein Therapeutics Market Size, Share, and Trends 2024 to 2034**, September 18th 2024
<https://www.precedenceresearch.com/plasma-protein-therapeutics-market>
4. Michelle Allan, **Plasma donation centre returning to Thunder Bay: Thunder Centre location to open in early 2025, says Canadian Blood Services**, CBC News Thunder Bay, March 12th 2024
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/plasma-donation-centre-returning-to-thunder-bay-1.7141826>
5. Statistics Canada, **Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population- Thunder Bay, Census metropolitan area**,
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=1&dguid=2021S0503595>
6. Statistics Canada, **Focus on Geography Series, 2021 Census of Population- Prince George, Census agglomeration**
<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=1&dguid=2021S0504970>
7. Sources include:
 - a. Statistics Canada, **Census Profile 2016 Census, Northern Interior Health Service Delivery Area [Health region, December 2017], British Columbia:**
<https://www12-2021.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=HR&Code1=5952&Geo2=CD&Code2=6101&SearchText=Northern%20Interior%20Health%20Service%20Delivery%20Area&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=5952&TABID=1&type=0>
 - b. Northern Health, **Our Communities:**
<https://www.northernhealth.ca/our-communities>