



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**THE TAINTED BLOOD TRAGEDY**  
**The Canadian Hemophilia Society, remembering the past...  
vigilant for the future**

**OTTAWA** – November 26, 2007 – Lest we forget, the Canadian Hemophilia Society (CHS) has initiated the process to hold a **Commemoration of the Tainted Blood Tragedy**.

To launch the Commemoration, the first *Tree of Life* in what the CHS hopes will become a small memorial forest across the country will be planted today at the Head Office of Canadian Blood Services in Ottawa. Héma-Québec has also endorsed the Commemoration and will plant a tree at its Head Office in Montreal in 2008.

At the same time, the CHS is releasing its **2005-2007 Report Card on Canada's Blood System**. This marks the fourth such analysis since the publication of the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada (the Krever Report) on November 26, 1997, exactly 10 years ago.

"We promised our members we would do all in our power not to let such a tragedy happen again," said Pam Wilton, CHS President. "This Commemoration to remember those who lost their lives, and this Report Card to focus attention on a safe and secure blood system, are two parts of that commitment."

"Today, 25 years after the blood tragedy began to unfold, we remember all those who have passed away," said Minister of Health, the Honourable Tony Clement. "While providing compensation to all those who have suffered was the right thing to do, it can never erase the pain. Lessons learned from this tragedy will never be forgotten and today, Canada's national blood system is recognized by the World Health Organization as having developed the highest standards of blood safety and is a model for other countries."

In the 1980s, more than 1,100 Canadians were infected by HIV through blood and blood products. Seven hundred received blood products to treat hemophilia and other bleeding disorders; 400 received transfusions for trauma, surgery, childbirth, cancer and other diseases. Three-quarters of these victims have passed away.

A much larger number of people – up to 20,000 – were infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) through blood and blood products before testing was introduced in 1990. The number of people who have died from hepatitis C related liver disease caused by tainted blood is not known but could be in the thousands, and continues to rise.

“We are also focusing on the importance of blood safety,” added Pam Wilton. “Transfusion medicine has advanced greatly: clotting factor concentrates to treat hemophilia are now considered one of the safest therapeutics available; transfusions of red cells, platelets and plasma are safer than ever before. Following the recommendations of the Krever Commission, major reforms were made to Canada’s blood collection and distribution system. But we must remain vigilant.”

Dr. Graham Sher, Chief Executive Officer of Canadian Blood Services, said, “It is significant that we come together with the Canadian Hemophilia Society today to plant this tree in front of the Head Office of Canadian Blood Services. Each of our organizations has a different perspective on the blood system – one the perspective of the supplier and the other the perspective of the customer. But no matter what is our perspective, we have the same goal of ensuring that patients receive safe blood and blood products.”

The concept of the “Tree of Life” has been chosen for the Commemoration. The tree is an important symbol in almost every culture. With its branches reaching into the sky, and roots deep into the earth, a tree symbolizes life. For families who have lost a loved one, it can be a daily reminder that the person is not forgotten, that his/her memory lives on.

The first national Commemoration, presided by the Honourable Horace Krever, will be held on October 27, 2008. (October 27 represents the day in 1993 Justice Horace Krever was appointed to head the Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada.) A tree and memorial plaque will stand as a permanent reminder of the tragedy in the nation’s capital. Trees of life will also be planted in provincial capitals and an invitation will be extended to those who have lost loved ones to plant trees on municipal land, in public parks or on their own properties. A Web site, to be launched early in the new year, will provide people with the opportunity to tell the story of a person who has passed away or is living with the consequences of tainted blood.

These trees will stand as living memorials to the thousands of victims who lost their lives in Canada’s tainted blood tragedy. May their pain and suffering not be in vain.

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The Canadian Blood Services tree-planting will take place today at 1800 Alta Vista Drive in Ottawa at 1 p.m.

The Canadian Hemophilia Society Report Card on the Blood System is available at [www.hemophilia.ca/en](http://www.hemophilia.ca/en).

### **Profile of the CHS**

The Canadian Hemophilia Society (CHS) is a national voluntary health charity. Our Mission is to strive to improve the health and quality of life for all people with inherited bleeding disorders, and to find a cure. Our Vision is a world free from the pain and suffering of inherited bleeding disorders.

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