



**Government
of Alberta**

Alberta

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alberta government gives grant to Kidney Foundation for living donor expense program

Edmonton, Alberta (July 7, 2010) – A \$200,000 grant has been provided by the Government of Alberta to the Kidney Foundation of Canada to establish a Living Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement Program in Alberta. The program will reimburse an Albertan who donates a kidney, partial lung or liver, for some costs associated with the organ donation process.

“We need to encourage more Albertans to consider organ donation,” said Minister of Health and Wellness Gene Zwozdesky. “This important program is one way in which we can help and support living donors who have chosen to give the gift of life. Increasing the number of organ donations will, in turn, reduce wait times for Albertans needing an organ transplant.”

The Living Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement Program will reimburse a living organ donor for reasonable travel and accommodation expenses at the final stage of the assessment process as well as meals and accommodation following transplant surgery. If an individual cannot work during the recovery period, a loss of income subsidy may also be provided.

“About 375 Albertans with kidney failure are waiting for a life-saving organ,” said Heidi Erisman, Executive Director of The Kidney Foundation’s Northern Alberta Branch. “A kidney transplant from a living donor is considered a preferred treatment. It tremendously improves the quality of life and health of the recipient.”

The maximum funding available through the program is \$5,500 for each living donor.

“Patients often require several years of dialysis before a transplant can be obtained,” underscored Paul Shay, National Executive Director of The Kidney Foundation. “There is a significant cost saving when there is a successful transplant – and most transplants are successful.”

The Kidney Foundation of Canada is a national volunteer organization committed to reducing the burden of kidney disease through funding and stimulating innovative research; providing education and support; promoting access to high quality health care; and increasing public awareness and commitment to advancing kidney health and organ donation.

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Contact:

Barbara Foxall
Manager, Kidney Care Services
The Kidney Foundation of Canada
Northern Alberta and the Territories Branch
kidneycare@kidney.ab.ca
780-451-6900, ext. 232

Donnae Schultz
Communications
Alberta Health and Wellness
780-427-7164

BACKGROUNDER

Living Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement Program

The Living Organ Donor Expense Reimbursement Program was introduced by The Kidney Foundation of Canada in 2006.

The program is designed to reduce financial barriers to donating an organ while also encouraging more organ donations from living donors.

The lengthy donor evaluation process often requires the organ donor to travel and to take time away from work. Currently, the organ donor is responsible for all costs related to the organ donation process. In some instances, these costs can prevent the individual from donating an organ.

The cost of a transplant is significantly less than the cost of dialysis. The cost of dialysis for a patient is about \$60,000 per year and, given current wait times for a kidney from a deceased donor, a patient often requires several years of dialysis before a transplant can be obtained. In contrast, one successful transplant costs about \$32,483 and approximately \$10,000 a year following that for medication.

Alberta's two-year program is the 4th of its kind in Canada.

Applications for the program may be made at the Northern and Southern Alberta Branches of The Kidney Foundation of Canada.