

April 19, 2021

**ENHANCED EYE DONATION SERVICES
WILL IMPROVE ACCESS FOR MANITOBANS**

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**Merging of Tissue Bank Manitoba and Misericordia Eye Bank Ensures
New Entity Will Be Better Positioned to Assist in Gift of Sight: Stefanson**

The merger of two tissue donation services has strengthened the Misericordia Health Centre's Eye Care Centre of Excellence, improving Manitobans' access to corneal transplants, Health and Seniors Care Minister Heather Stefanson announced today.

"Manitoba has continuously shown its commitment to improving health services so patients can get better care sooner," said Stefanson. "The merger of Tissue Bank Manitoba with the Misericordia Eye Bank creates a singular organization dedicated to helping more patients receive the gift of sight."

Under the terms of the merger, which took effect near the end of January 2021, Tissue Bank Manitoba has expanded its work providing tissue donation services to include cornea donation, which was previously overseen by the Misericordia Eye Bank. Eye recovery technicians employed by Misericordia Eye Bank have joined Tissue Bank Manitoba, bolstering the level of knowledge and skills the merged organization can offer.

"The exceptional team at Tissue Bank Manitoba has been working to save and heal lives through the gift of tissue donation since 2003," said Kimberly Dodds, director, Tissue Bank Manitoba. "We are thrilled to now be working alongside talented eye recovery technicians from Misericordia Eye Bank, who will help us achieve our goal of providing more tissue donation opportunities for Manitobans."

Tissue Bank Manitoba serves the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Interlake–Eastern Regional Health Authority and Southern Health–Santé Sud health region on a 24-7 basis for the recovery of musculoskeletal and skin tissue. With time, enhanced eye donation services will be available in these regions as well, allowing more surgeries to be performed while improving wait times.

"This merger means greater collaboration and sharing of expertise, translating into increased tissue donation, and an improvement in wait times for patients and their families," said Dr. Stephen Brodovsky, medical director of eyes, Tissue Bank Manitoba. "With increased donation of ocular tissues, patients now also have more lead time before their scheduled surgeries to plan ahead for this sight-restoring operation."

Today's announcement coincides with National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week (April 18 to 24), which raises awareness about the critical need for more donors across the country and encourages Canadians to register their decision and to talk to their loved ones about organ and tissue donation.

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Tissue transplants save lives and provide an enhanced quality of life for thousands of Canadians each year. Tissue transplants offer health and healing in many ways include restoring vision, replacing defective heart valves for newborns, providing skin for those suffering severe burns and supplying bone grafts to save someone from a limb that might otherwise be amputated.

All Manitobans are encouraged to talk with family about donation decisions and to register intent to be an organ and tissue donor using <https://signupforlife.ca>, Manitoba's online organ and tissue donor registry. Registration is simple. It takes two minutes and three pieces of information: name, birthdate and nine-digit Manitoba Health card number.

Tissue Bank Manitoba is an award-winning entity recognized by MTF Biologics, one of the largest tissue banks in the world, and recognize technical achievements and best practices in tissue recovery and performance. In addition to the Emerald Award of Excellence in 2020, which Tissue Bank Manitoba won for the second time in four years, the organization also received four Best Practice Awards for its quality of work involving the recovery of life-saving and enhancing tissues such as skin, which is used to help people heal from burns, breast reconstruction after mastectomy and hernia repair.