

Media Release

April 3, 2017

1.8 Million Ontarians Mistakenly Believe They are Registered Organ Donors

TORONTO – An Ipsos study has revealed that as many as 1.8 million Ontarians mistakenly believe they are a registered organ and tissue donor. April is BeADonor month, and Trillium Gift of Life Network is encouraging Ontarians to check their donor registration status. There are two ways to verify you are registered: visit www.BeADonor.ca to check, or check the back of your photo health card; if the word “donor” is printed, you are registered.

If 1.8 million Ontarians were added to the registry, as many as 45 per cent of the eligible population would be registered. Trillium Gift of Life Network considers this a more accurate representation of the widespread support for organ and tissue donation in Ontario.

For decades, Ontarians proudly signed paper donor cards declaring their intent to donate their organs and tissues after death. At that time, the card was the best available means to make your donation wishes known and, in fact, as many as two million Ontarians still have a donor card.

The challenge with traditional paper donor cards was that they were often not available or located when needed, and families may not have been aware their loved ones had signed one. Paper donor cards became obsolete when the province began recording consent for donation in a Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care database. Registration through www.BeADonor.ca or at a ServiceOntario centre is the only guaranteed way of ensuring that your donation wishes are known at end of life and shared with your family.

“When you register, you give an incredible gift to those waiting for a transplant and to your family”, says Ronnie Gavsie, President and CEO, Trillium Gift of Life Network. “By providing evidence of your wishes through registration, you relieve your family of the burden of making that decision for you at a very difficult time.”

“We’ve had three consecutive record years of lives saved through the compassion of organ and tissue donors and their families,” says Dr. Eric Hoskins, Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. “It’s very encouraging to see growing support for donation in Ontario. As a next important step, Ontarians who believe they are registered should please check online to confirm. To do so, visit www.BeADonor.ca and give hope to the 1,500 people waiting today.”

Other highlights from the survey:

- Three in 10 (29 per cent) of Ontarians falsely believe you can register as a donor by signing and keeping a paper donor card.
- Over 300,000 Ontarians have a donor card stored somewhere not easily accessible, including a safety deposit box, in their car, or with someone else.
- Seventy-one per cent of those who believe they are a registered donor have discussed their wishes with their family.

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Trillium Gift of Life Network is a not-for-profit agency of the Government of Ontario responsible for planning, promoting, coordinating and supporting organ and tissue donation for transplantation across Ontario and improving the system so that more lives can be saved.