

Canadian Blood Services called, you should donate

By Sarah Sobanski

I was sitting on the couch, drinking a cup of sleepy-time tea when my cellphone started ringing. Seeing the 1-888-number, I balked, but then, staring into the bottom of my mug, I thought, 'What's one more call before bed?? I'm glad I did.

'Hi Sarah, it's Phil calling with Canadian Blood Services,' came a smooth, almost southern but more Canadian accent. 'Sarah, we're calling because with the upcoming long weekend we do have an increased need for donors. We're going to be at the Bancroft Pentecostal Tabernacle on Monday, Sept. 4. We were wondering if you could help out with a donation that day?'

Now, first I had to get over the fact that Canadian Blood Services was calling me, specifically. A number of questions crossed my mind: are they calling because they call everyone who donates blood? How desperate is the need for blood that the services can expend the resources to do house calls? Do they prefer that people make an appointment?

'If you can make the appointment, Sarah, it matters because that's how the doctors figure out what type of blood we're getting and how much of it. Then they can plan surgeries or cancer treatments or whatever the case may be,' Phil told me when I plied him with my first set of questions. 'I've had a lot of people say to me well the appointment doesn't seem to get me in any quicker. That's not the primary focus of appointments ? it's so we can give the doctors a heads up.'

That only gave me more questions. In the past, I wrote an editorial about my first time giving blood. It was packed when I went; I was almost turned away because the clinic had had so many walk-ins. I assumed that that meant nurses just brought as many supplies as they could and they always walked away with a truck full of donations.

Phil told me this wasn't the case. It doesn't matter if you have a rare blood type or a more common blood type such as A positive. With so few people donating, all donations are considered in critical need.

'Any blood type is a valuable item to us, we need it all. You think Canada isn't a real populous country, if you do the math and you get four per cent and it's actually a little less than that. People say, 'Jeez, you call a lot.' Well yeah, because you're it. If you're helping us there aren't a lot of them out there and we do tend to call a lot,' said Phil.

'So you're not calling because of my rare blood type,' I joked.

'I had one gentleman, he had the O negative blood, the big deal blood, that's the blood that's universal,' he replied.

'When I called him I said, 'We have a great need for your blood type right now.' He said, 'Oh, come on, Phil, you guys always say that.' I said, 'Well, less than four per cent donate. You're an O negative, that's seven per cent of the population. If you do that math we need you all the time.'

'But why on a long weekend Monday?? I asked. 'Everyone's off at the cottage. Everyone's hungover or sleeping in or both.'

'Because everybody's off,' Phil replied. 'They like to try it at optimum times? I don't think they want you to come in with a belly full of beer, so to speak, but I mean if you were up the night before enjoying yourself I don't think that has any bearing on anything.'

To clarify, according to the **Canadian Blood Services website**, you have to be sober for 12 hours before donating. That means you can have fun the night before, just make sure you get a good night's rest before showing up to donate.

As of Aug. 9 there were still 52 appointments available. One in two **Canadians is eligible** to give blood; however, last year only one in 60 eligible people actually donated.

Canadian Blood Services needs our help to collect 400 units of blood from donors in Bancroft this year. To make an appointment, download the GiveBlood app, or visit blood.ca.