Send by email to:hlth.minister@gov.bc.ca *Or mail to:*

Honourable Dr. Terry Lake

PO Box 9050

Stn Prov Gov
Victoria, BC V8W 9E2

Honourable Dr. Terry Lake, Minister of Health,

I am writing to you (as a) (on behalf of a) British Columbia resident living with lymphedema, a chronic condition with physical, emotional, psychological and economic consequences, to ask for your support in providing cost efficient and effective healthcare for British Columbians who struggle with this condition all day every day.

Lymphedema is not a condition acquired through life style. The causes include:

* congenital malformation of the lymph system
* traumatic injuries, burns, surgery
* and most commonly and frequently occurs as a direct consequence of cancer treatment.

 It can lead to irreversible malformation in the limb(s), life threatening infections that require hospitalization, physical disabilities that result in missed days of work, unemployment, isolation, and depression. The effects can be debilitating for the individual, devastating for the family. The costs to BC’s healthcare system and social system though the hospitalization, out-patient visits, and the Income and Disability Assistance program are high.

Lymphedema is a progressive condition that will get worse without adequate treatment. It is heartening that the rates of cancer survival are increasing, but since some types of cancer treatment can cause lymphedema, the number of people living with this condition has increased.

I am appealing to the Ministry of Health to consider supporting those living with lymphedema by providing funding for:

1. Coverage for prescription compression garments for all areas of the body affected by lymphedema and discontinuation of the current policy of discrimination. Currently only post mastectomy or lumpectomy lymphedema arm sleeves and gauntlets are covered under PharmaCare.
2. Early identification and intervention with Combined Decongestive Therapy (CDT) including compression therapy, lymphatic drainage, skin care education to avoid infections, & exercise to promote lymphatic function. These have proven effective in managing this condition so that it does not develop to its most severe stages with very costly results.

Similar to support for smokers and safe injection programs for drug addicts, coverage of the above interventions for people living with lymphedema would result in economic benefits for the provincial government. Support would lead to reduction of costs for government services including employment insurance, disability benefits, home care expenses, reduced hospitalization and outpatient costs as well as improved workplace productivity.

I am appealing to the Ministry of Health for support for us, your many BC constituents living with lymphedema, who struggle with this condition night and day, every day.

Yours truly,

Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ *(please send a copy to your local MLA)*