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For Immediate Release



Multiple Sclerosis NZ Decries ‘Short-sighted’ Immigration Decision to Deny Visa

Multiple Sclerosis New Zealand (MSNZ) says a government decision to deny the Canadian husband of a New Zealand school teacher visa entry to this country is both unreasonable and unfair.

Jimmy Lambert has multiple sclerosis yet works full-time in his native Quebec. His wife Juanita Craig has reported through the media that Immigration New Zealand (INZ) officials have denied him a visa and will not let him into the country to visit her or the couple’s two children in Northland. Ms Craig, of Ngāpuhi descent, says she and her husband wish to raise their family here to build close ties with their whānau. However, Mr Lambert has not seen his family for eight months, since attempting to fly out for a visit last October when he was reportedly turned away by officials.

Ms Craig, who teaches at Kamo High School, says an INZ medical assessor last year ruled that Mr Lambert did not meet the acceptable standard of health for entry and that his condition was likely to impose significant costs on the New Zealand health system.

However, Ms Craig disputes this, stating that his medical needs would be relatively modest, requiring only six weekly intravenous injections of medication plus a six-monthly specialist visit, the cost of which would be covered by his own health insurance.

MSNZ says the decision is both short-sighted and non-sensical, especially considering Mr Lambert has apparently had MS for 20 years which would indicate it has not progressed greatly.

“From reports it is clear the father has the disease well under control so there would be minimal risk or cost to New Zealand” says Vice-President Neil Woodhams. “Immigration New Zealand clearly does not understand that with the newer MS drugs people can live full lives with minimal disruption, working and participating fully in normal activities”.

Mr Woodhams says Ms Craig’s qualifications, as a high school teacher also fluent and qualified in Te Reo, would be greatly missed if the family were forced to return to Canada.

“INZ needs to take into account the needs of the family and the substantial contribution to New Zealand society that his wife is making” says Mr Woodhams. “This is often overlooked by authorities when assessing the cost of MS. In our view, this offsets the low risk and cost of MS were the father allowed to live here”.

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For interviews and more information please contact:

Neil Woodhams. 021 531 654
Vice-President MSNZ vicepresident@msnz.org.nz

Amanda Rose 03 366 2581
National Manager MSNZ amanda@msnz.org.nz

Lorelei Mason. 021 555 024
Lorelei Mason Health Communications. lorelei@loreleimasonhealth.co.nz

Multiple Sclerosis Society of New Zealand Inc.

PO Box 1192, Christchurch 8148 Freephone 0800 675 463

Email info@msnz.org.nz Website www.msnz.org.nz