

Families Appeal NDP ‘cure’ for Autism Problem Dosanjh government’s answer is same discrimination with a brand new name

After winning a landmark judgment against the provincial government in BC Supreme Court, the families of children with autism have been forced to file a Notice of Appeal today against the approved remedy which heaps more injustice on defenceless children.

Despite the court ruling that government has and continues to violate their constitutional rights, the government has created a new program that does nothing but continue the illegal discrimination. Under the NDP’s proposed P-CARD (Provincial Centre for Autism and Related Disorders), every child over the age of six will be totally and permanently excluded. Only one of five children with autism under age six will be included this year, and even by the end of 2002, two out of three children under age six will still be shut out of the program. Even for those who do manage to win this lottery for treatment, what they will receive is worse than no treatment at all — the NDP program is to be created and operated by the same hacks who were discredited in the original judgment against the government.

The BC Supreme Court has ruled that medically necessary autism treatment must be provided. The government’s answer is to dress old discredited programs up in new clothes, and pass them off as fitting the ruling. In her July 2000 Auton decision [2000 BCSC 1142], Justice Allan recommends government include “intensive behavioural treatment” in Medicare or fund it through the Ministry of Health, since the Ministry for Children and Families “operates on a social services model that has neither the mandate nor the expertise to deliver treatment.” The NDP’s new P-CARD is to be created and operated by the Ministry for Children and Families. Justice Allan ruled that “*the very limited treatment services provided by the [government] not only fail to meet the gold standard of scientific methodology; they are positively discredited by one of the [government’s] own expert witnesses.*” The NDP’s new P-CARD program is being created and operated by the same “experts” who operate those discredited “treatment services.”

The reaction to these latest events from FEAT BC Executive Director Dr. S.K. Freeman: “If government said, “*Sorry, your child with cancer needs to wait three years for treatment, and then we’ll give her the treatment which we know doesn’t work,*” it would be an intolerable outrage. But that is exactly what this government is proposing to do to children suffering from autism. This is their answer to a judgment ruling they are violating the rights of children in pain. We will not allow Government policy to continue harming children who urgently need proper, proven health care.”

Parents struggling to save their children from the ravages of autism must still pay privately for medically necessary health care. Families who cannot afford the \$40,000-\$60,000-per-year treatment costs cannot get necessary treatment for their children at all — with terrible consequences. For all their sakes, we have no choice but to continue the struggle against government in the BC Court of Appeal.

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**For more information on Lovaas Treatment, the case against the government, and Families for Early Autism Treatment of BC (FEAT BC), call Dr. Sabrina Freeman at (604) 534-6956 email to info@featbc.org, or visit the website at <http://www.featbc.org>
FEAT BC QuickTime movie: <http://featbc.org/slideshow>**