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# Liberals urged to pay for treatment for older autistic kids

By Kathy Tait  
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The Children's Commission is urging the B.C. government to provide behavioural treatment to a 17-year-old Port Moody youth with autism and make it available to all other autistic children over the age of seven.

The recommendation was made after the boy's mother, Linda

Cusek, complained to the commission that the Ministry for Children and Family Development had failed her son.

"This treatment has only been available to children under seven," says Cusek.

Last year the B.C. Supreme Court ruled that autism is a medical disability. It said the government's failure to provide effective

treatment for sufferers violated their rights under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

"My son James has not been getting behavioural treatment and he should have had it years ago," says Cusek.

The boy was 13 before the Cuseks were able to obtain a diagnosis of James' problem. He has continued to languish on waitlists

for a behavioural consultant and a one-to-one childcare worker and his mom wants him to receive Lovaas autism treatment.

Autism is a neurological disorder that interferes with the normal development of the brain in areas of reasoning, social interaction and communication. Sufferers may exhibit repeated body movements, unusual responses

to people or attachments to objects and resist any changes in routines.

Behavioural therapy can make dramatic improvements in social and learning skills.

The Children's Commission had given the ministry 30 days to respond to their decision. That deadline ended last Thursday.

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