



NEWS RELEASE

BC LIBERAL OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

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PUT CHILDREN FIRST AND FUND AUTISM PROGRAMS

Richmond – Yesterday's court ruling is a victory for families of children with autism – the NDP government must honour it and immediately move to fund the early intervention programs that children with autism desperately need, said BC Liberal Children and Families Critic Linda Reid.

"We've been calling on the government repeatedly to get its priorities right, recognize the crucial need for early intervention programs for children with autism and get on with funding it," said Reid. "Once again, British Columbian families were forced to go to court in order to have their concerns addressed. These families can't afford any more delays or inaction from the NDP like we saw on the secure care legislation. Minister Gretchen Mann Brewin must stop delaying and immediately undertake to put funding in place for these programs."

"We've been telling the government for years that it has its priorities all wrong. Instead of providing treatment for children with autism, they've chosen to waste money on other things. It's time to put children's interests first."

"We know from extensive behavioural and developmental research that early intervention programs are essential for young children with autism, and parents simply cannot afford the cost. In fact, families have been forced to move to Alberta to obtain the treatment they need. The government's recently announced pilot project for children with autism is far from adequate, and only came on the eve of a court action that finally forced the NDP to act."

"This is an issue that many Opposition MLAs are deeply concerned about, and I'd like to particularly credit the hard work of Okanagan-Penticton MLA Rick Thorpe who has worked closely with families of children with autism to raise awareness of the need for funding. We applaud the parents and families who have sacrificed so much to finally force the government to address their concerns. It's time for the NDP to accept responsibility and act," Reid concluded.

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