

READERS WRITE**Premier urged to
end the suffering****Open letter to BC premier Ujjal Dosanjh**

Dear premier Dosanjh,

I write to ask that your government act quickly to fund the Lovaas treatment program for all autistic children in British Columbia.

I am a single parent to a seven-year-old autistic child. My son has had the benefit of the Lovaas treatment program which was, as you know, recently ruled as "medically necessary" by Justice Marion Allen in the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

Funding for my son's program was denied by the provincial government.

For years I have incurred huge personal debt to provide my son with this treatment because it is the only scientifically proven effective therapy and, accordingly, his only chance to lead a normal life – or at least diminish the debilitating condition of autism.

My elderly parents also sacrificed the dreams they worked a lifetime for by donating their retirement nest egg to help pay for the therapy.

While you may understand the monetary issues, I am willing to bet you have virtually no idea how difficult and stressful it is to care for a severely mentally handicapped child on a daily basis.

And if rehabilitation does not occur during those critical early years, this highly demanding care must continue for a lifetime.

In the end, it's the taxpayers who must pay for this life-long care and the negligence of the provincial NDP to the tune of millions of dollars per individual.

By contrast, Lovaas therapy costs about \$60,000 and has an 87 per cent success rate. The cost-benefit analysis is not a hard one to win.

I am intensely disappointed that you have allowed the appeal of Justice Allen's ruling. However, I am confident the ruling will be upheld in the Supreme Court of Canada and will thereby set an important precedent for the entire country.

And, less importantly, the discrimination of the provincial NDP government towards a large sector of its handicapped children will go down in history as a great injustice. (Discrimination is not too strong a term, at least it wasn't in Supreme Court Justice Allen's mind.)

The suffering of autistic children and their families due to your government's continued and deliberate refusal to fund effective, early intervention therapy has been deemed unnecessary by the Supreme Court of BC.

Autistic children should be given a chance to lead normal lives and become functional members of society. After all, I'm sure it's no picnic being autistic.

I hope your conscience will lead you to take a special interest in guiding your government accordingly.

Yours truly,
Monika Lange,
Kittimat