



Les Bazso — The Province

Sixteen-year-old James Cusek, with mom Linda Cusek, needs help.

Mom tackles gov't for failure to help

By Kathy Talt
Staff Reporter

A Port Moody mother has launched a human-rights complaint against the Ministry for Children and Families claiming her son has been discriminated against by the ministry on the basis of his disability.

Mother Linda Cusek said yesterday that the B.C. Human Rights Commission has accepted her complaint and appointed a lawyer for the family.

Her 16-year-old son James is bright and loaded with musical talent. But he is also autistic and schizophrenic and the family says the ministry has consistently failed to give the boy the help he needs.

She says many valuable years have been lost that could have been used to help the lad to function normally.

Among his bizarre behaviours are urinating in places other than the bathroom, pacing, constant need for attention and supervision, poor attention span, emotional outbursts and obsessive acts such as sniffing people.

The boy was 13 before the Cuseks were able to obtain a diagnosis of James' problem, says his mom, despite her many efforts to get one.

It was only last year that the ministry began providing him any service.

He continues 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.

Cusek says the ministry wants to put the boy in a group home, which she says is more expensive than treating him. She wants him to live at home.

The Cusek complaint comes on the heels of the ministry filing a notice of appeal last week of a B.C. Supreme Court decision in July in which Justice Marion Allan ruled that the B.C. government discriminated against four children with autism who were denied funding for Lovaas treatment.

The judge also found the government's failure to provide effective treatment for autistic children violated their rights under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Allan said the Lovaas treatment ameliorates the mental disability. She said autism "is a medical disability just as cancer is and . . . both require treatment."

Cusek said the government's intention to appeal is "outrageous."