

June 16, 1998

Rick Thorpe, Member of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 277, 113-437 Martin Street
Penticton, B.C. V2A 5L1

Dear Mr. Thorpe:

Please find attached the most recent letter from the Government in their efforts to deny my child his fundamental rights. As you know, I have just recently won my struggle to obtain some funding toward my son's Lovaas-type Applied Behavior Analysis Program. This contract with the Ministry of Children & Families was supposed to be for a six month period, upon which time I would have to go through the whole fight again. Yet in the mail today, I receive this letter telling me I now have only two weeks upon which to get in touch with a social worker and try once again to get funding for my son. This is outrageous and just another ploy on the part of the NDP Government to deny funding for our autistic children.

We have just started our Lovaas-type Applied Behavior Analysis program with Jeremy at the end of April. As you know, Jeremy is 4-years-old, has no language, no self-help skills (doesn't dress/undress himself, doesn't feed himself), isn't toilet trained, has no social skills and until recently doesn't play with toys appropriately. Well, in two weeks of our Lovaas program, Jeremy made more gains than he had in two years of Government/Community sponsored programs.

There is a reason that this is the only scientifically proven method of treating autism.....because it does work. I am watching my son "wake up" to the world and those around them. It is wonderful to see. While Jeremy will need much intensive Lovaas therapy and the road ahead is long, for the first time we are seeing our son make real gains. He is moving ahead on the developmental charts instead of falling farther and farther behind.

I have **begged** the Government and the professionals here to help my child. No one but you ever cared or even listened. Now I have found a proven treatment to help my child and the Government is denying him that right. The NDP Government must be accountable and provide this therapy to ALL autistic children. I find it ironic that Mr. P. Calendino of the NDP can say that Lovaas-type Applied Behavior Analysis is the best method of autism treatment, yet the NDP Government won't cover it. I also find it ironic that Mr. P. Calendino helps one of his own constituents' receive this funding yet the NDP is denying that same funding to other families all over the province.

Our group, FEAT of B.C. is fighting for an independently appointed Autism Policy Task Force, much like the one in the Gove Inquiry. This must be done to insure that our children are all treated equally and fairly. The NDP will not do this on their own. They will have to be forced into it.

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As to this treatment being expensive. Well, we all know that the data shows that caring for an untreated autistic adult far outweighs the cost of intensively treating our children now.

On that note, should we stop treating heart disease, cancer or asthma because that's expensive? Should we cut back on treatment and rehabilitation for accident victims? How expensive is it to treat premature babies? Is that too expensive? Would it be acceptable to stop treatment for them? No, of course not! It would not be acceptable and it would not be allowed. So I ask you, "What gives the NDP Government the right to deny treatment to our Autistic children?" Who decided that our children are not deserving of treatment? Who decided that my son's life and his hope for a brighter future isn't worth the effort or the price tag?

You can also let the NDP Government that Barbara Rodrigues is no longer begging for help for her son . . . she is now **demanding** it.

I sincerely thank you Mr. Thorpe for all your help and your kindness. Jeremy is truly lucky to have you on his side.

Barbara Rodrigues

Penticton, B.C.