

# InsideFront

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■ Court

# High court hears autism battle

**A six-year fight for proper medical treatment for autistic children in B.C. is headed to the Supreme Court of Canada.**

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Langley resident Dr. Sabrina Freeman, who has spearheaded the case for full medical treatment for autistic children, is hoping that a ruling in her favour will change health-care in B.C. and across Canada.

"How many court cases must there be before government is forced to do the right thing for these children?" asked Freeman, executive

director of Families for Early Autism Treatment of B.C.

Both the B.C. Supreme Court and the B.C. Court of Appeal have ruled that proper medical treatment is necessary for autistic children – and both rulings have been appealed by the provincial government.

The B.C. courts ruled that the government's failure to provide adequate care amounts to discrimination against autistic children.

"The courts have determined

[current] treatments are ill-suited," Freeman said.

Freeman and her group want the B.C. government to provide Lovaas treatment, which is based on the findings of a researcher from UCLA.

Freeman said that, of autistic children who underwent Lovaas treatment, 47 per cent became indistinguishable from people without autism and 53 per cent have made progress.

The cost of treatment is expensive, at about \$60,000 per child per year, Freeman said, but added that the government isn't lacking money.

"The money is already in the system," she said. "It's just being wasted

on ineffective services."

She said parents lobbied the government for \$60,000 per child last year, but were offered only \$20,000.

"Treatment has been declared medically necessary by four judges," Freeman said, "and you can't do it on a third of the costs."

Fort Langley-Aldergrove MLA Rich Coleman said the province's appeal is aimed at clarifying points of law, to determine whether or not the courts have authority to force specific courses of action on the government.

Coleman said the province doesn't see the Lovaas treatment as the only way to deal with autism: "There is no one-size-fits-all solution."

■ Court

■ Missing person