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PLEASE POST – BL10248

DATE: January 29, 2010

Attend vigil for autism services Monday, February 1

Despite wide-spread public outcry and media attention, the Early Intensive Behavioural Intervention (EIBI) program for children with autism is closing its doors this week due to government funding cuts.

At Queen Alexandra Center for Child Health on Vancouver Island, 40 experienced and highly-trained therapists have lost their jobs. Today is their last day of work.

These cuts were triggered this fall by Children and Family Development Minister Mary Polak, who announced funding for autism services for children under age 6 would be cut by more than \$3 million.

Polak tried to disguise the cut as an improvement in service, saying that eliminating a \$5 million intensive therapy program for some autistic children allows the government to increase funding for all autistic children under age 6 from \$20,000 to \$22,000. Given the number of autistic children in the province, this actually reduces overall funding to the under 6 group by more than \$3 million. Meanwhile, the \$2,000 per child increase will barely cover the increase in service costs when families begin paying HST on autism services next year.

HSA is urging members to join families of children with autism at a candlelight vigil Monday on the steps of the legislature. Please circulate attached poster from the mothers' group F.A.I.R. (Fighting Autism Intervention Reductions).

Vigil for autism services, Monday February 1

Time: 4:30-5:30

Place: Legislature steps, Victoria

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