

BULLETIN

Slashing support for children is no way to balance budgets: HSA

September 23, 2009



HSA President Reid Johnson

-Government spin wont help autistic children and their families," Health Sciences Association of BC (HSA) President Reid Johnson said today in response to a massive government cut in support for autistic children across British Columbia.

HSA is the union that represents the team of health science professionals who work with children with autism spectrum disorder and their families, including autism intervention specialists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, and social workers.

Last week, Children and Family Development Minister Mary Polak 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.

At Queen Alexandra Center for Child Health on Vancouver Island, staffing will be cut significantly, as more than 40 staff have received layoff notice.

Polak claims autistic children will still receive adequate services, but with significant layoffs of the health professionals who provide autism services, such as those at Queen Alexandra, families will have a harder time finding qualified professionals to provide these services.

-Any way you slice it, cutting autism support by \$3 million is not good for kids," Johnson said.

[Printer-friendly version](#)

Type:

[Media Release](#)

Topic:

[Issues, Campaigns and Government Relations](#)

- [Print](#)
- [PDF](#)

180 East Columbia
New Westminster, BC V3L 0G7

Website
www.hsabc.org

Telephone 604-517-0994
1-800-663-2017