

BULLETIN

## Why are the BC Liberals picking on our kids?

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**SEPTEMBER WAS A DEVASTATING** month for parents of children with special needs. First, the Ministry for Children and Family Development announced a dramatic cut in funding for children with autism. But, not to worry, the minister said, the \$3-million cut would be replaced with a \$1-million referral centre. Programs would be cut, but somehow, the ministry promises, families across the province will have more access to therapies and services for their kids.

Explain that to the families who count on the Queen Alexandra Centre for Children on Vancouver Island. 34 early childhood intervention workers have received lay-off notice. That means those professionals will no longer be at Queen Alex available to deliver the services families so desperately need.

Never mind the 70 severely affected children whose \$70,000 Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention programs will be cut off: going from 40 hours of intensive therapy a week to whatever patchwork of services a family can cobble together with \$20,000 in funding. Oh, make that \$22,000 as the minister promised increased funding per child to \$22,000 ... except that come July 1 with the introduction of the HST, that \$2,000 increase is moot ... since it will go to increased taxes on goods and services.

**AND FRESH ON THE HEELS OF** cutting funding for children with autism, the ministry abruptly cut off funding to the Infant Development Programs provincial office.

Imagine for just a moment the emotional turmoil of having an infant with developmental disabilities, and not knowing where to turn to find the help your baby needs to give her a fighting chance. That's just one service the IDP Provincial Office provides, and the Ministry for Children and Families is ripping that away from some of the most vulnerable people in our province.

In addition to acting as a referral service for families, the IDP Provincial Office provides professional training and clinical support to the infant development program consultants around the province. Through the office, staff who work with families are also connected to a range of early childhood intervention information, resources, and service.

The IDP Provincial Office has been the template for the development of Provincial Offices for Aboriginal Infant Development Programs and Supported Child Development Programs whose provincial offices were similarly cut. As sister programs, the Infant Development Program, Aboriginal Infant Development Program and Supported Child Development Program provide a continuum of care for infants and young children, many representing the most vulnerable children in BC.

Funding will or has already been discontinued for the Healthy Choices in Pregnancy initiative at BC Womens Hospital, which focused on reducing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Books for BC Babies program, and minor capital grants for child care centres have been reduced from \$5,000 to \$2,000.

There is no explanation for this attack on our future, other than the government feels that kids and families are dispensable.

It is a short-sighted, mean-spirited, and direct attack on families with children with disabilities, and we as a compassionate society have a responsibility to speak up for and defend the services families count on. 

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