

15th Legislative Assembly
Fifth Session
February 7-22 & March 5-12, 2007
Third Sitting / Budget Session

FEB 21, 2007

Special Needs of Children Born With Autism

MR. RAMSAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to share with my colleagues today a situation that is currently at play with a constituent and her two children.

My constituent is a single mother who has two children, a daughter who is two years old and a boy who is three. Her son is autistic. Because of the needs of her son, she cannot work. His care is a 24-hour-a-day job. Obviously, without the ability to work, she and her children are in need of social housing. Social housing is not designed nor does it allow for special provisions when a child with special needs is involved.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention some examples of what my constituent is up against each and every day in her household. Her son bangs his head on the walls. He knows no pain, and just last week, he put his head through her patio door. His mother has asked for Plexiglas to be installed to no avail. The boy eats the paint off the wall in his room. In fact, he needs constant supervision as he will try to eat non-food items including toys, batteries, coins and paper.

Mr. Speaker, stairs are very dangerous to the boy and to his little sister who is in constant danger of aggression from her brother. The boy needs a bar or special locks on his window as he throws anything he can get out the window of his room which is on the second floor. So he is always in danger of jumping out of his window. His mother must keep a constant vigil and watch on him.

My constituent needs help from a number of different angles. Her housing situation is inadequate. No safety upgrades are available for her children and it would appear that, for children diagnosed with autism, there is little to no help between the ages of two and four. The prevalence of autism in birthrates has grown from one in 2500 births in 1970, to one in 285 in 1999. Today, Mr. Speaker, those rates are even much higher.

As a government, I feel it is important that we recognize this and begin to look at options to help families deal with the special needs of children born with autism. The Department of Health and Social Services has to be able to work with the Housing Corporation to come up with a workable plan to address the special needs of my constituent.

Mr. Speaker, I will have questions for the Minister of the Housing Corporation at the appropriate time. Mahsi.

--- Applause