



*FEAT - Ontario*  
*Families for Early Autism Treatment*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ACTOR/COMEDIAN EUGENE LEVY GETS SERIOUS ABOUT AUTISM  
Celebrity Speaks Out on Need for a National Autism Strategy

Toronto – Canada’s highly acclaimed actor, director and screenwriter, Eugene Levy, is departing from his traditional funnyman role, but this time there are no scripts, no directors and no film cameras in sight.

“I feel extremely passionate about the need for a National Autism Strategy”, states Levy, who has signed on as a spokesman for the cause and will be teaming up with Senator Jim Munson for a **press conference in Toronto at 10:00 am on Wednesday, June 13, 2007 at the Intercontinental Toronto Yorkville Hotel (Portman Room).**

“Canada is blessed in so many ways but somehow some of our most vulnerable citizens are being wrongfully neglected,” Levy says. “It is time to address this wrong and provide these individuals with the same access to medically necessary treatment that the rest of us enjoy throughout our lifetimes under our country’s allegedly universal health care system.”

Autism is included in the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases, Revision 10 (ICD-10) and afflicts individuals of all races, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. It is fast becoming a North American epidemic of staggering proportions. According to the world-renowned *US Centers for Disease Control*, one in every 150 children (one in every 94 boys) is today being diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. It is more common than pediatric cancer, diabetes and AIDS, combined.

While there is no cure for this mysterious yet tragic neuro-genetic condition, proven effective, science-based treatment for autism does exist. It is called Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), also known as Intensive Behavioural Intervention (IBI).

Norrah Whitney, the mother of an autistic son and Executive Director of Families for Early Autism Treatment (FEAT) - Ontario, states, “Many are forced into privately funded treatment, with a price tag of \$70 to \$80 thousand per year. Families are losing their homes and cashing in their retirement savings yet are still not able to sustain treatment for their children. This is nothing other than a two-tiered healthcare system”, says Whitney, who in an ironic twist, is the granddaughter of the late John Leo Whitney, one of the founding architects of OHIP.

“We need more than a dedicated page on a Health Canada website, or a ‘stakeholders’ symposium’,” states Brenda Deskin, a long-time advocate for people with autism and plaintiff in the well-known Deskin-Wynberg court action. “We are seeking equal treatment under the law — the same approach that has been taken when our country faced other health-related emergencies. Canada has a

crisis on its door-step, one that demands a concrete and immediate plan of action, one that includes the provision of publicly funded, evidence-based treatment for people of all ages afflicted by autism.”

Levy will be sharing his personal views on autism. The event will also mark the unveiling of a practical, multi-faceted strategy that, if implemented by the federal government, would bring autism under Medicare and end the discrimination against people with autism in Canada.

“It is only when ABA – the most effective, science-based treatment for autism – is brought under the Medicare umbrella and made available to Canadians who suffer from this core health need, that we can rightfully claim to be a nation committed to the values of universal healthcare,” states Senator Jim Munson.

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Or visit **[www.featontario.org](http://www.featontario.org)**

**Media Note:** High resolution images of Eugene Levy and of the Deskin and Whitney families will be available online at [www.featontario.org](http://www.featontario.org) immediately after the press conference.

*It is with the utmost of appreciation that the event organizers recognize the Intercontinental Hotel for the most generous donation of their facilities for this event.*