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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Children and Family Development

### **GRANTS SUPPORT CHOICE, ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY**

VANCOUVER – B.C. families of children with special needs and individuals with developmental disabilities will benefit from \$40 million in grants, Children and Family Development Minister Stan Hagen announced today. Two funds, being managed provincewide by Vancouver Foundation, will help families buy equipment, convert vehicles and renovate homes so loved ones may remain at home and gain greater access to their communities.

“We are committed to choice and opening up opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and special needs,” Hagen said. “Our partnerships with Vancouver Foundation mean more families can, among other benefits, adapt their homes to provide an opportunity for their children or family members to remain in, or return to, their homes.”

The \$30-million Family Independence Fund is provided by Community Living BC (CLBC), which supports a vision of full citizenship in which people with developmental disabilities lead good lives, have choices in how they live their lives and are accepted and valued as citizens. The Ministry of Children and Family Development has also established the \$10-million Children and Youth with Special Needs Supports Fund for families of children with special needs.

Building on its provincial mandate and successful grant-making processes, Vancouver Foundation will create volunteer advisory committees to review requests for funding. Over the summer, the foundation will develop the funding guidelines and granting criteria, and the advisory committees will begin to review grant applications in the fall.

“The Family Independence Fund will help families stay together. It will assist individuals to have rich relationships with family and friends and realize full participation in community life,” said CLBC chair Lois Hollstedt, at an event that included an open house to mark the first anniversary of Community Living BC.

“The ministry and CLBC work together to provide services for children and youth with special needs and children with developmental disabilities, and their families, in a way that is simple to access,” added Hagen.

“Vancouver Foundation is uniquely positioned to effectively deliver these grants to families throughout British Columbia,” said Robert Fairweather, Vancouver Foundation board member. “We have proven expertise in managing similar funds, we are involved with communities across the province, and we can bring attention to the important issues of community support for children and adults with disabilities and special needs.”

“These funds will be a tremendous help to families of children with special needs and adults with developmental disabilities,” said Angie Kwok, executive director of the B.C. Centre for Ability. “When their loved ones can stay at home and actively participate in community activities and services, everyone benefits.”

Today’s grants are part of Balanced Budget 2006, which provides an additional \$421 million to help ensure the well-being of vulnerable children, to enhance services for children with special needs, and to better support caregivers and family members caring for children and youth at risk.

1 background(s) attached.

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