

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**March 23, 2007**

**STOFFER SLAMS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR NOT PROVIDING AUTISM FUNDING IN BUDGET**

**OTTAWA** – NDP Leader Jack Layton and Peter Stoffer (Sackville-Eastern Shore) slammed the federal government today for not providing funding in the federal budget to help families with autistic children.

“Families with autistic children are in crying need of support,” said Layton. “They are very disappointed that the Conservative government has ignored their needs in the budget. Providing support for these families should be a bigger priority for the federal government than corporate tax cuts.”

“It is also hypocritical that the Harper government is ignoring the autism motion M-172 passed by the House of Commons last December,” said Stoffer. “When Harper was in Opposition, he constantly criticized the Liberal government because it did not respect the votes of the House of Commons. It is surprising how quickly the Conservatives have become just like the Liberals.”

M-172 requires the federal government to work in cooperation with the provinces and territories to establish national standards for treatment and delivery of services, study funding arrangements, create a national surveillance program, and provide more funding for health research on autism.

“The federal government must work with the provinces and territories to find a way to include autism therapy in the health care insurance plan of every region across this country,” said Stoffer. Stoffer introduced a private members bill (C-211) to this effect last fall.

Stoffer also expressed his profound disappointment with the federal government in failing to recognize the Veterans First Motion and ignoring the issue of Agent Orange and Agent Purple in the budget. The Veterans First motion was passed in November 2006 and suggested five key reforms that would deliver long overdue fairness and security for Canadian Forces veterans and their families.

“With a \$14.2 billion dollar surplus, how can the federal government not provide more funding and services for families with autistic children and for veterans and their families? It is absolutely shameful. It is time for the federal government to be proactive in the lives of Canadian families living with autism.”