

Melinda's Speech - October 4, 2007

Good afternoon, Minister Richmond, Minister Taylor and assembled guests. I'm Melinda Rundle and I am representing the International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, better known as ISAAC. I'm honoured to talk to you on behalf of our Canadian chapter.

ISAAC is an organization of people who have speech impairments such as myself, family members, and professionals who work with people who use AAC. We have advocated for people who need AAC and we are thrilled that you have listened.

The generous grant you are announcing this afternoon will provide this vital equipment to my fellow AAC users who range from ages 19 to 27. It will also provide the training and support services that people need to learn how to use their equipment.

Although I'm no longer in this age group, I remember how important it was for me to have a communication device at that age. Not only did I make the transition from living at home with my parents and my siblings to living in a group home and having care attendants, but I made the transition from high school to college at the same time. Having a device allowed me to communicate my needs to my attendants at my new group home as well as to participate both academically and socially in college! I don't know how I could have done any of those things without a communication system.

I'm currently using a device that was funded through the adult program of Technology for Independent living. Devices like mine cost much as a small car.

Now suppose a 19 year-old AAC user just started college and just moved into an assisted living group home and urgently needed a reliable communication system like I did at their age. Nowadays, it's very difficult for parents to afford to send their children to college without putting the cost of an adequate communication device like mine on their shoulders.

But you have lifted that big burden off their shoulders! In fact, you will be giving the AAC user a voice!

On that note, my fellow members of ISAAC Canada and I would like to thank you and your government for giving CAYA the grant of \$4,200,000.00! It will put sunshine into the hearts of many young adults who use AAC!