

CALGARY, Jan. 15, 2014 /CNW/ - A report published today by The School of Public Policy identifies staggering costs associated with autism and advocates increased support for families dealing with this challenge.

"An autism diagnosis of a high-needs child at age two represents the equivalent of telling the family that they must make an immediate lump-sum investment on that day of \$1.6 million, invested at a five-per-cent return, to pay for the lifetime costs of care and support their loved one will require," write

Herb Emery

and

Carolyn Dudley

, the report's authors.

These numbers form only a part of the authors' analysis, which charts lifetime support-care needs and costs for three hypothetical individuals living with varying degrees of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The annual value of caregiver time for a "high-needs" case is \$158,359

For a moderate-needs case it is

\$82,769

per year and for a lower-needs case it is

\$30,711

per year.

The authors argue that regardless of the case, costs are often underestimated by society and government, and families are left shouldering most of the burden.

"A scan of provincial programs finds a patchwork of unequal and incomplete supports for individuals living with autism spectrum disorders. Gaps are particularly evident once individuals leave the public school system, where they are at least provided with some form of day support. Sufficient adult day supports, evening and night supports, quality group homes, the availability of properly trained caregivers and respite services, recreational activities, post-secondary opportunities and employment supports all suffer varying levels of inadequacy across the country," the authors write.

Families with children with autism face staggering costs - report

Written by Australian Business

Emery and Dudley identify several approaches to relieve pressure on families. Increasing the current annual caregiver tax credit of \$300 is one option. Government can also show its support by providing funding to help boost the supply of caregivers and care centres. Introducing autonomy insurance, which has already been proposed in Quebec, is another government initiative that could assist adults with disabilities.

Removing the IQ screen for eligibility of services at age 18, which exists in some provinces, is another measure endorsed by the authors. This would help individuals living with ASD who have higher IQ but lack functional skills of independence. Offering these individuals support could assist them in gaining employment, which would eat into the overall costs associated with their disorder.

The report can be found at <http://www.policyschool.ucalgary.ca/?q=content/value-caregiver-time-costs-support-and-care-individuals-living-autism-spectrum-disorder>

SOURCE The School of Public Policy - University of Calgary

Video with caption: "Video: Carolyn Dudley details the staggering costs faced by families with children with autism and what policy measures would help alleviate this financial burden."

Video available at: http://stream1.newswire.ca/cgi-bin/playback.cgi?file=20140115_C9045_VIDEO_EN_35565.mp4&posterurl=http://photos.newswire.ca/images/20140115_C9045_PHOTO_EN_35565.jpg&clientName=The%20School%20of%20Public%20Policy%20%2D%20University%20of%20Calgary&caption=Video%3A%20Carolyn%20Dudley%20details%20the%20staggering%20costs%20faced%20by%20families%20with%20children%20with%20autism%20and%20what%20policy%20measures%20would%20help%20alleviate%20this%20financial%20burden%2E&title=THE%20SCHOOL%20OF%20PUBLIC%20POLICY%20%2D%20UNIVERSITY%20OF%20CALGARY%20%2D%20Families%20with%20children%20with%20autism%20face%20staggering%20costs%20%2D%20report&headline=Families%20with%20children%20with%20autism%20face%20staggering%20costs%20%2D%20report