



A Message from the Chair

Stormy, cold and snowy winters will soon melt away to brighter and warmer weather that will encourage new young things to grow. Yes, that also applies to human beings as Spring heralds the blooms of fresh ideas. There is a fresh sense of optimism in our ranks as we try out new ideas to reinvigorate our LD communities across the country. We're also looking for fresh talent to bolster our various initiatives to support our families living with LD. If you believe you have the energy and imagination to bring about new ways to support our LD community, let us know! With Spring comes renewal and new initiatives.

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

The Opportunity for Workers with Disabilities Act

As you know, when people with disabilities start earning income, they not only pay taxes, but also face sharp clawbacks of their income, medication, housing, and other supports — meaning they can lose more than they gain from getting a job, earning a raise, or working more hours.

It is a story Linda Chamberlain knows all too well: “After three decades of battling schizophrenia and homelessness and poverty, Chamberlain finally got a job,” wrote former *Toronto Star* reporter Catherine Porter. As a reward, the government boosted Linda’s rent almost 500% and cut her disability payment, making her \$260 per month poorer because she got a job. So she had to quit her job and remain poor.

She is not alone. “According to Statistics Canada’s 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, there were over 650,000 disabled individuals aged 15 to 64 who were not in the labour force at the time of the survey and either used to work or indicated they were capable of working. Of these, roughly 94,000 reported that if they were employed, they felt that they would lose additional support. About 82,300 individuals reported that they expected their income to drop if they worked”.

The Bill

The Opportunity for Workers with Disabilities Act would allow workers with disabilities to gain more in wages than they lose in clawbacks and taxation. It does this through three steps:

1. Measurement. The bill would require that Finance Canada calculate how much people with disabilities in each province lose in taxes and benefit



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clawbacks as a result of each additional \$1,000 of income earned up to \$30,000. Calculations of the clawbacks would include lost benefits like income assistance, housing, medications, and so forth, and would use publicly available tax and benefit rules, not any person's private tax and benefit information.

2. Action. If the calculation finds that people with disabilities are losing more than they gain due to clawbacks, the Finance Minister would have to consider changes to the Working Income Tax Benefit Disability Supplement, the Canada Pension Plan Disability Pension, or any federal tax measure that would ensure people with disabilities always benefit from their work.

If the Minister deemed that provincial taxes and clawbacks were the cause of the problem, he would consult with the province to remedy it.

3. Enforcement. *The Opportunity Act* would attach another condition to the *Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act* requiring provinces to arrange their taxes and transfers so that people with disabilities never lose more than they gain from working.

Conclusion

This bill will only pass in Parliament with the help of organizations and their members like ours in the LDA network. So, if you agree that governments should reward rather than punish the work of people with disabilities, please add your voice to the *Opportunity Act*.

Here are two things you can do to help pass the bill:

- Please encourage your local Members of Parliament to vote for the *Opportunity Act*. And ask your friends, family, and supporters to do the same.
- Use **#OpportunityAct** on social media when endorsing and discussing the bill.

Claudette Larocque
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
Email: claudette@ldac-acta.ca

Committee Reports

Legal Committee: Seeking A Committee Leader

As the Legal Committee looks to continue its work, they are seeking someone to take the lead and organize quarterly teleconference call meetings. If you have an



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interest in legal issues related to LD and have good organizational skills, please consider volunteering for this position.

For more information please contact Claudette at the LDAC office. claudette@ldac-acta.ca

Research Committee

The Research Committee has been providing short features for the newsletter on Canadian research and researchers in the field of learning disabilities. This time we are featuring Dr. Karen MacMillan.

Dr. Karen MacMillan, Registered Psychologist, is an Executive Co-Director at Foothills Academy in Calgary. She is a member of the LDAC Professional Advisory Council (PAC) and talked recently about how new research is guiding current practice in the area of psycho-educational assessments.

She has seen a shift in recent years, particularly in the US, from assessments that focus on the RTI (Response To Intervention) model and ability-achievement discrepancy models to an approach that focuses more on identifying patterns of strengths and weaknesses. The Foothills Academy Psychology team appreciates the ability to use both the new DSM-5 guidelines and the LDAC definition of a Learning Disability, which is also used by Alberta Education.

In terms of frequency of assessments, Dr. MacMillan sees the need for new assessments at academic transitions points (e.g., elementary to junior high school; high school to post-secondary) or when significant instructional direction is needed.

Dr. MacMillan feels that many parents have an insufficient understanding of their children's diagnoses and she encourages professionals to do more to improve parental knowledge. Through their Community Services they now offer a follow up consultation after parents have had a chance to digest information from the initial assessment debrief meeting.

As best practices in the area of assessment continue to evolve, Dr. MacMillan encourages Registered Psychologists to take advantage of regular professional updating and parents to do their homework when seeking an assessment for their child.

Communications Committee

Launch of new LDAC Website

At the end of February, LDAC completed a redesign of its website: www.ldac-acta.ca.



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We launched the new website with a new look and feel and with new content. It was redesigned to allow for easier access and a better user experience. We added new content for selected audiences: For Parents, For Adults, For Professionals. The Learn More section of the site includes key information on LD Basics, with Position Papers and Research. A new Get Involved section contains links for support: Ways to Give, and ways to find help at Provincial LDA's.

We will continue to add new content to the site (including on the new News & Blog section), and all of this available in French. The site was conceived and developed by our web developer: Inter-vision.

Bob Cram –Chair

Members: Lorrie Goegan, Brendan O'Neill, Claudette Larocque, Gerald MacPherson, Scott Patterson

Advocacy

By Barbara McElgunn, LDAC Volunteer Health Policy Advisor and Lynn Green

The Canadian Partnership for Child Health and the Environment (CPCHE)
LDAC is a founding member of CPCHE. CPCHE with the Canadian Child Care Federation is coordinating Healthy School Day. Please sign the petition to get schools tested for radon.

Healthy Schools Day is April 3, 2018 <https://healthyschoolsday.ca>
#healthyschoolsdaycanada #cdnchildcare #ruleoutradon

Last month, Barbara took part in a consultation call with NGOs and Health Canada and Environment Canada regarding the risk management decision on Triclosan (TCS). The US has banned TCS and eighteen other antimicrobials in hand soaps. In the risk assessment Health Canada determined TCS does not pose a health risk at current levels of exposure. Since 2011 LDAC has submitted three comment papers on TCS, urging stronger action. Last year, and this month again, the Canadian Environmental Law Association, LDAC and other organizations submitted references and detailed submissions on the risk management proposal that does not include action on personal care products.

Fifth-generation wireless (5 G): This is an important matter relevant to population health. There is strong scientific disagreement about the risks from electromagnetic radiation exposure from these much higher frequency fields that will be added to current ambient levels of electromagnetic radiation from devices, routers and cell towers. 5 G will require numerous small but powerful antennae along urban streets and roads and close to people. The major media so far have



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been silent to date. Visit Environmental Health Trust online and see this fact sheet on 5 G.

https://ehtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/5G_What-You-Need-to-Know_International-2.pdf

U.S Moves to Safer Chemicals

In addition, Barbara McElgunn's article on US corporate moves to safer chemicals was published in the Canadian Centre for Policy alternatives publication, *Monitor*, and was sent to all P/T LDAs for distribution. It's also available in French. Please contact Claudette for the French copy.

The Jan/Feb 2018 edition of *Monitor* can be downloaded here:

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/monitor-januaryfebruary-2018>. Barbara McElgunn's article is on page 53.

Provincial/Territorial Updates

Manitoba

Dear LDA Executive Directors and Colleagues,

I would like to introduce you to Bob Essex and a big cycling project this young man is undertaking to raise LD awareness and support for LDA Manitoba and our network. This spring and summer, Bob is cycling across Canada for our cause!

Bob is a recent graduate from U of Winnipeg who struggled with a reading disability and ADHD until his diagnosis as a young adult. Life has changed for Bob since then. Bob found that his diagnosis, while a young adult student, first of dyslexia and later of ADHD, in his words: "changed my life."

So much so that he approached LDA Manitoba to pursue his dream of cycling from Vancouver to the east coast, in support of our organization and awareness about learning disabilities. We are proud and honoured to be part of Bob's Bike Ride in the spring and summer of this year.

We are excited about this adventure and the stories and messages Bob will share and hear, as he makes his trek across the country. We are hoping to make this into a focal point for our shared cause.

Bob represented LDA Manitoba in the Manitobans for Human Rights Torch of Dignity Run last summer. He also spoke at the LDAM-Mercer Golf Classic last August and our Date with a Star dinner, Jan. 31st of this year. He is on a journey



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to find his voice and reach out to help others With LD and/or ADHD to pursue their dreams.

Here are the social media links re this initiative.

<https://www.bobsbikeride.ca/blog/>

<https://www.gofundme.com/bobs-bike-ride>

Or contact me directly for more information: ldamanitoba4@mymts.net; ph. 204 774 1821 -14. Hoping we can all be part of Bob's journey!!

Marilyn MacKinnon
Executive Director, LDA Manitoba

Saskatchewan

Hello Everyone,

I am very happy to join Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan (LDAS) as the new Executive Director. I am looking forward to meeting many of you in the months and years to come. I welcome collaboration with others from across Canada and I hope to meet many of you in person if possible as I settle in to my new role.

However, I have much to learn in my new role. I embrace every new challenge as an opportunity for growth. Since my first day (January 22) I have been familiarizing myself with the many different portfolios within LDAS and have now met with each staff member at all three of our Saskatchewan locations. I can honestly say that every single employee has an altruistic personality and is very dedicated to meeting the needs of the clients we serve. I am truly blessed to be working with such a wonderful team of highly skilled and dedicated professionals.

I have been afforded many professional opportunities throughout my career. Having worked within both the secondary and post-secondary levels of education as well as various government organizations over the past 30 years, I have had the privilege to collaborate and network with LDAS on many occasions over the years. As I move forward in my career, joining LDAS as Executive Director will allow me the opportunity to focus on the needs of the diverse populations of learners in Saskatchewan and beyond. Being a part of an organization that works with the many different people who require supports for various disabilities in our communities is very exciting. I hope to continue with and expand upon the wonderful work that has made LDAS successful to date. In doing so, I also look forward to networking and partnering with you on a national level in the hopes of meeting the larger objectives of LDAC.



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On a personal note I have six children. My two youngest daughters (11-year-old twins) were born very prematurely at 24 weeks gestation. Due to their severe prematurity they now live with several significant challenges. My wife and I spend a great deal of time and resources navigating the various systems in our community and schools to enhance their learning and life experience, allowing them to be as independent as possible. As with many parents we are often faced with hurdles and roadblocks. Therefore, personally and professionally, taking this position at LDAS was not a hard decision to make.

So far, my transition into this new role has been a very positive step both professionally and personally. I look forward to working with you all to enhance the learning potential of our communities.

Respectfully,
Wayne Stadnyk, Executive Director
LDAS

Events, Conferences and Other News

Accessible Summer Reading Clubs

Every year, libraries run summer reading clubs to encourage summer reading, but children with learning disabilities can sometimes experience barriers to participating in these programs.

The Centre for Equitable Library Access (CELA) works with libraries across the country to make programs like the TD Summer Reading Club (TDSRC) and others, work for children with print disabilities by providing materials or books in accessible formats.

The TD Summer Reading Club program includes accessible versions of the top recommended reads, as well as an accessible notebook, audio story on CD, and e-text of the notebook's contents. Kevin Sylvester, this year's featured TDSRC author, will also be publishing a serial audio story on the TDSRC website. Accessible TDSRC notebooks include audio and braille components, and are available for free through participating public libraries.

CELA encourages all libraries, whether they participate in the TDSRC or develop their own summer reading clubs, to plan inclusive, accessible programming and offer books in accessible formats through CELA.

CELA serves 96 % of the estimated 3 million Canadians with print disabilities. The CELA collection of more than 80,000 accessible titles includes books for all ages, in all genres, as well as 150 magazines and 50 newspapers and CELA



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patrons are eligible for a free Bookshare.org account. Educators may also access CELA resources on behalf of their students with print disabilities. Please encourage members to visit their local library or celalibrary.ca for more information.

Conferences

EdRev Conference. For the 1 in 5 with learning or attention challenges. April 21, 2018, San Francisco: <https://www.edrevsf.org/>.

Future conferences

The dates of the following conferences have gone by but you may want to consult their programs for next year's date and location.

Learning Disabilities Association of America Annual Conference, February 18-21, 2019, Fort Worth, Texas: <https://ldaamerica.org/events/annual-conference/>

44th Annual Conference on Learning Disabilities

Institute of Learning Disabilities

Spring 2019 in Montreal (date has not been selected yet)

<http://www.institutta.com/congres/>