



A Message from the Chair

Summer has arrived and with the end of the school year, many of us are planning our family vacations. We continue to support our families living with LD through these summer months to help them prepare for when school begins again in the fall. Your LD associations are also taking some time to re-group and plan our activities in support of our LD community. We have lots of exciting projects underway and can really use your input to bolster our activities to support our families living with LD. If you have ideas, we'd love to hear from you! Have a great summer!

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

The fiscal year 2017-2018 has been a busy time at the National office with a lot of activities and movement on several fronts. Below are just a few activities that LDAC continues to be involved in:

Spotlight on Invisible Disabilities

The Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, The Honourable Kirsty Duncan, was mandated by the Prime Minister to develop and introduce accessibility legislation. As part of this commitment, the Government of Canada held a nationwide consultation, which brought together over 6,000 people and over 90 community organizations, to learn about what accessibility means to Canadians.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and its 19 Spotlight Partners of which LDAC was a member, sought to consult and engage invisible disability stakeholders in Canada, during a two year project, to provide information contributing to the development of federal accessibility legislation.

A report submitted on March 31, 2017 at the end of year one of the project, generated 15 priority recommendations. These came from much input provided by individuals, stakeholders and members representing youth, seniors and veterans with non-visible disabilities on issues relating to mental health, learning disabilities and hearing loss.

Based on the priority recommendations from year one, five focus areas were identified that provided the Spotlight Project's focus for the second year of the consultations. The discussions identified ways in which the legislation could put the recommendations into practice and how to measure the success of its outcomes.



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On March 31, 2018, a final report from the Spotlight on Invisible Disabilities project, ([see final report here](#)) was submitted to the Honourable Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Sports and Persons with Disabilities.

An Act to ensure a barrier-free Canada

Exciting news !

Minister Duncan tabled Bill C – 81 An Act to Ensure a Barrier-Free Canada in the House of Commons Wednesday, June 20th.

The draft legislation can be viewed at:

<http://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/42-1/bill/C-81/first-reading>

The government's plain language version can be viewed at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/accessible-people-disabilities/act-plain-language-summary.html>

Federal Accessibility Legislation Alliance (FALA)

Under the leadership of Spinal Cord Injury Canada, with six other organizations as the leadership team –

- Council of Canadians with Disabilities,
- Canadian Hard of Hearing Association,
- Native Women's Association of Canada,
- Canadian Association of the Deaf,
- BC Aboriginal Network on Disability Society, and
- Communication Disabilities Access Canada

LDAC and 51 disability-related and Indigenous partner organizations stand behind the introduction of federal accessibility legislation.

...we have joined together to ensure that we work with the government to pass strong and effective legislation. Our goal is simple: We want everyone to be able to say "My Canada includes me!"

The purpose of the Alliance:

1. To prepare and broadly disseminate information and resources related to the impact of the federal accessibility legislation
2. To provide individuals who feel excluded within our communities the opportunity to express their views and priorities relating to the proposed federal accessibility legislation, and the impact it will have on their lives.

Claudette Larocque

Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

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Accessible Summer Reading Clubs at local libraries

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 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.

The Canadian Partnership for Child Health and the Environment (CPCHE)

LDAC is a founding member of CPHCE. A new report from RentSafe, led by the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE), aims to address unhealthy housing conditions affecting tenants living on low income in both urban and rural communities in Ontario. The information is useful to all provinces and territories, and originated with the active involvement of public health, legal aid clinics, municipal property standards/by-law enforcement, and social service sectors as well as housing providers and tenants. RentSafe aims to build awareness and capacity across sectors so that tenants, when faced with mold, pests, lead, radon and other unhealthy housing conditions, are better able to get the support they need. Ultimately, the goal of RentSafe is to support the right to healthy homes for all. Reports in English and French: www.rentsafe.ca / www.logementsain.ca



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jp7pKi9psSM> video

Canadian Environmental Protection Act

I have been involved in numerous teleconference calls organized with many Canadian NGOS, and others organized by Health Canada and Environment Canada, on the renewal of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. There is potential for real change for the better, but progress is complicated and somewhat daunting.

We ask that you take a couple of minutes to distribute and/or sign the petition <https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-1659> initiated by Kerry Mueller MP from Waterloo, Ontario, that calls upon the House of Commons to pass legislation to modernize the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 (CEPA) without delay, including (i) stronger protections from toxic exposures, (ii) enforceable national air quality standards, (iii) recognition of the basic human right to a healthy environment, as well as adequate protection for vulnerable populations. Note that an inclusion of children (fetuses to late adolescence) should be in the legal text of the Act.

LDAC has signed on to the open letter sent to minister McKenna (ECCC), urging a ban on the use of lead in ammunition and fishing gear. This strong and referenced submission has been supported by a number of indigenous organizations and many NGOS. The government's response was disappointing inasmuch as they will be considering received comments in the winter of 2019 toward designing an approach. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ammunition-lead-gun-owners-1.4636598>

Barbara McElgunn, Health Policy Advisor
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC)

Committee Reports

Communications Committee

The Communications Committee will be continuing to work with LDA Ontario to provide other provincial/territorial associations with materials for LD Awareness month developed by LDAO. Provincial/territorial EDs and CEOs should watch for communications from the LDAC office about this initiative. Our thanks once again to LDAO for their generosity in helping out the national network in this way.

Bob Cram –Chair
Members: Lorrie Goegan, Brendan O'Neill, Claudette Larocque, Gerald MacPherson, Scott Patterson



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. Rhonda Rubin, a Speech Language Pathologist in New Brunswick and member of the LDAC Board.

Optimizing Classroom Acoustics

Classroom acoustics contribute to a student's ability to hear, understand and learn. Only 31% of the kindergarten to grade 3 classrooms in a Canadian study (Rubin et al, 2011) met the recommended standard, while hearing screenings revealed a prevalence of hearing problems between 12%-29% in the students. Poor classroom acoustics caused by ambient noise, reduced intensity of the teacher's voice and the reverberation time means many learners are often working in below standard classroom listening conditions. This may hinder their performance, particularly those with learning disabilities, hearing loss or with limited grasp of the language to be able to fill in the gaps.

Classroom amplification may be beneficial and one solution to the problems posed by poor acoustics. This technology amplifies the speaker's voice so students can hear at a steady level over extraneous noise regardless of where they sit in the room or how much the teacher moves while speaking. When a teacher must raise their voice to be heard, the vowels become louder, but consonants are obscured, distorting the speech signal.

In an ideal classroom, words are heard and understood with little effort. In the Rubin et al (2011) study, acoustic measures showed better signal to noise ratio in amplified classrooms and the flow of communication improved. Students focused better and exhibited fewer distracting communicative behaviours when they could hear the teacher clearly. Both teachers and students felt that the technology enhanced the learning process, resulted in more efficacious communication and facilitated inclusion of students with special needs.

Rubin, R.L., Flagg-Williams, J.B., Aquino-Russell, C., & Lushington, T.P. (2011) The classroom listening environment in the early grades. *Canadian Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology* 35(4):344-359.

Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282159000_The_classroom_listening_environment_in_the_early_grades



Provincial/Territorial Updates

Prince Edward Island

The new Lt Governor of PEI Her Honour Antoinette Perry has granted LDAPEI vice-regal patronage for her five year term of office. As a former teacher she understands the issues faced by those in our community and, amongst other opportunities, she will host an LDAPEI get together at Government House at which she will present the Educator of the Year Award. This award is sponsored by Staples and the winner, who has demonstrated exceptional support for those in the LD community, receives \$1,000 of Staples gift vouchers.

For the Summer we will be tutoring students throughout the Province and have the benefit of some grant money which allows us to ease the financial pressure on some families. We are also introducing a French language option using materials focussing on phonemics in a game format. This is a long overdue addition that we hope appeals to and helps the younger students especially those in Immersion from Anglophone families.

We do not pretend to claim it was purely from our direct conversations however, we are delighted that two more School Psychologists and two new Assistive Technology Assistants have been hired by the Province. Our conversations and those of other interest groups who benefit appear to have been listened to and this is a welcome step.

And lastly, we are at the table with Government regarding a Provincial Disability Support Program. LD claimants were specifically disqualified for erroneous reasons. We do not want the negativity that sometimes is associated with a label but we do want to ensure all individuals receive a fair and equitable share of society's benefits. Our Government, at present and only in dialogue, is in agreement.

Manitoba

In the last newsletter, Manitoba reported on the forthcoming Bob's Big Bike Ride, which is a national cross-country bicycle tour by Bob Essex, who recently graduated from university. Bob has dyslexia and ADHD and is undertaking this national ride to raise awareness about learning disabilities.

Despite a scary fall on his very first day resulting in some nasty scrapes, Bob has been continuing his ride across the western provinces, starting from the west coast. He has now reached Ontario. Provincial associations have been providing support for Bob as he makes his way, so please help out and do what you can to support Bob's ride and raise awareness about learning disabilities.



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You can follow Bob's ride at these sites:

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

Events, Conferences and Other News

The Council for Learning Disabilities Annual Conference, October 11-12, 2018, Portland, Oregon, <https://council-for-learning-disabilities.org/2018-annual-conference>.

International Dyslexia Association Annual Conference, October 24-27, 2018, Mashantucket, Connecticut: <https://dyslexiaida.org/conference/>.

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

The U.S.-based National Center for Learning Disabilities has released its latest version of its regular report, *The State of Learning Disabilities*. It can be found here: <https://www.nclld.org/the-state-of-learning-disabilities-understanding-the-1-in-5>.

Here are some good resources on how to help struggling readers during the summer months: <http://www.ldonline.org/article/15569/>.