

# **Recommendations for Improved Services for Islanders with Learning Disabilities**

**Prepared by: Provincial Joint Working Committee  
on Learning Disabilities**

**Submitted to: Shauna Sullivan Curley**  
Deputy Minister of Education

**Patsy MacLean**  
Deputy Minister of the Office of the Attorney General

**David Riley**  
Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services

**Date: November 17, 2004**

**Justice Rosalie Abella\*** of the Court of Appeal of Ontario put it so well when she said in a recent address:

***How can the benefit of access be compared to its cost? How much is the benefit of someone's dignity worth? Let's stop the indignity of unleashing accountants on the intangible question of whether we can afford to treat people as equals. There are not two sides to the justice ledger.***

She went on to state and I quote:

***All this talk of tightening our belt in hard times assumes that everyone has a belt. Some people can't afford one. Why do I always get the sense that when people talk about fiscal responsibility, they mean cut social programs; and when they talk about cutting social programs, they mean women and disabled persons and minorities can wait a little longer. For what? For the perfect economy we can never have? What gives us the right to declare the disadvantaged as the economy's ordained shock absorbers?***

\* Justice Rosalie Abella was appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada on October 5, 2004

## Representatives on the Joint Working Group

**Eric Donovan**, President of [LDAPEI](#), parent of LD child

**Lise Journault**, Special Education Consultant for French Programs and French Immersion, [Department of Education](#)

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# Table of Contents

	Page Number
1. Executive Summary .....	4 - 5
2. Background .....	6
3. Factors.....	7 - 11
3.1(i) National statistics	
3.1(ii) Literacy on PEI	
3.2 Implications of not offering timely assessment, diagnostic and intervention services for individuals with learning disabilities	
3.3 Rights of people with learning disabilities	
3.4 Cost Benefits to Early Identification, Diagnosis, and Intervention	
3.5 Support for people with disabilities	
3.6 Community support for the increased provision of services for individuals with Learning disabilities	
4. Recommendations .....	12- 14
4.1 Guiding Principles	
4.2 Action Recommended	
4.3 Four Year Plan (2005-2009) for Implementation of Recommendations	
5. Communication .....	14
6. Attachments .....	15 - 38

## 1. Executive Summary

The joint committee on Learning Disabilities is requesting that government allocate funding to increase human resources and technology in Education, Health and Social Services, and the Office of Attorney General. In addition, training for professionals currently working in these departments is necessary in order to increase services for individuals with learning disabilities. Although many resources are currently allocated for individuals with certain types of disabilities, a large proportion of Islanders with disabilities is going undiagnosed and not serviced. Individuals with learning disabilities can represent as much as 10% of the population in Prince Edward Island (*Information and Advocacy Manual, Third Edition, Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia, 2004*). These individuals have the right to obtain legal accommodations and protections necessary for success in education and employment, as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

It is well documented that the costs to our society are substantial when we wait too long or do not provide services for individuals with Learning Disabilities. Lack of professional support and services, combined with years of accumulated frustration and failure, place individuals with learning disabilities at risk for emotional and behavioural disorders, relationship problems, school dropout, addiction, suicide, crime, difficulty attaining and maintaining employment and over reliance on government financial services and supports (*Willms, 2004; Murray, 2004*).

In contrast, there is uncontroverted evidence that intervening early will substantially diminish the need for more costly and extensive services down the road and that the “wait and fail” model serves no one (*NASP, 2003*). For children with learning disabilities, research clearly indicates that early identification and intervention can have a profoundly positive effect on achievement, social-emotional, and behavioural functioning (*Perry, McNamara & Mercer, 2001*). In addition, when learning problems are addressed early, individuals become more self-assured and learn to cope more effectively with their specific learning disabilities throughout the life span (*McNamara, 2003*).

Learning disabilities are complex disorders that can have a significant impact on our social and economic systems if not addressed in a timely manner. Psychologists play a key role in early identification and intervention of individuals with learning disabilities (*NASP, 2003*). However, PEI lags behind other Provinces in the per capita resources dedicated for Psychological Services both in Education, Health and Social Services, and the Office of the Attorney General (*A11: Atlantic School Psychology Chart*). Psychologists have specialized training in linking mental health and learning difficulties to successful academic interventions. Hence, they are integral partners in the successful and effective application of services for individuals with learning disabilities (*NASP, 2003*).

Given the overwhelming costs to individuals, families and governmental agencies, PEI can no longer employ the “wait and fail” model (*Willms, 2004*). By adopting this proposal, PEI has the potential to positively impact a large percentage of its population and reduce social and economic costs. Lets help all Islanders achieve their potential!

## 2. Background

Learning disabilities refer to a number of disorders, which may affect a person's ability to acquire, organize, retain, understand and/or use verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. Learning disabilities are lifelong. (A2: *National definition*)

Eight to ten percent of the population have learning disabilities, of whom three to four percent have severe learning disabilities. Learning disabilities make up the largest group of disabilities amongst individuals four to eighteen years of age. (*Information and Advocacy Manual, Third Edition, Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia, 2004*)

Learning disabilities are listed in the national research-based listing of disabilities. (A3: *Persons with Disabilities*) Learning disabilities make up 50% of all disabilities. (*To Assure the Free and Appropriate Education of all People with Disabilities, 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual report to Congress, US Dept of Education, 2000, Washington, DC*) Recent research indicates that 14.3% of all Islanders have disabilities (*Statistics Canada, PALS (Participation and Activity Limitation) Survey, 2001*), therefore at the present time, approximately 7% of Islanders have learning disabilities.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Prince Edward Island (LDAPEI) has expressed concern about the need for identification and resources for individuals with learning disabilities on PEI. LDAPEI met with Premier Pat Binns and many of his Cabinet Ministers as well as the Leader of the Opposition, Robert Ghiz. (A4: *Timeline*) At the request of the former Minister of Health and Social Services, Honorable Jamie Ballem, the Learning Disabilities Association prepared an Implementation Plan for Services For Individuals with Learning Disabilities. (A5: *List of board members*; A6: *September 2003 LDAPEI Implementation Plan*)

On December 11, 2003 when LDAPEI met with representatives from Departments of Health and Education to present the *September 2003 LDAPEI Implementation Plan*, there was an agreement to explore how representatives could work collaboratively on a strategy for services for Islanders with learning disabilities. After two meetings, an outside facilitator, Julie Devon Dodd, assisted the representatives in working together.

The purpose of the joint committee is to make recommendations collaboratively on an implementation strategy for services for Islanders with learning disabilities to Deputy Ministers of Departments of Attorney General, Education, and Health and Social Services before pre-budget consultation meetings. Our objective is to ensure that individuals on PEI with learning disabilities are acknowledged and served.

### 3. Factors

#### 3.1(i) National statistics

- One in ten (10%) of Canadians have learning disabilities (*Information and Advocacy Manual, Third Edition, Learning Disabilities Association of Nova Scotia, 2004*)
- 30% of adults with severe literacy problems were found to have undetected or untreated learning disabilities. 80% of learning disabilities are in the area of literacy/reading and writing. (*Lerner, 2003*)

#### 3.1(ii) Literacy on PEI

- Literacy is a priority for the Council of Ministers of Education (A7: Press release September 28, 2004) and for PEI's Minister of Education (A8: Press release October 4, 2004)
- 63% of Islanders are reading at the two lowest levels\* of literacy (*Statistics Canada, 1997*) (A9: Literacy skills of Islanders)

\*Level 1

- these people have great difficulty reading and usually know they have a problem

\*Level 2

- these people can read, but not well
- they can deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out
- they often do not recognize their limitation

- 30% of PEI Grade 10 students do not meet British Columbia's Grade 10 literacy performance standards (*Murray, 2004*)
- Research has identified phonemic awareness, an expressive language skill, as the most potent predictor of success in learning to read. It is more highly related to reading than tests of general intelligence, reading readiness, and listening comprehension. (*Stanovich, 1986,1992; Hatcher, Hulme, & Ellis, 1994; National Reading Panel, 2000; Lyon, 1995*)

#### 3.2 Implications of not offering timely assessment, diagnostic and intervention services for individuals with learning disabilities

- It is well known that for every dollar spent on early intervention, seven dollars is saved in future health and social spending (*Graham Pollett, MD, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health, London ON, Mar 2000*)
- There is strong evidence for a genetic link, with children being significantly more likely to have a learning disability when one of their parents has a learning disability (*Reid Lyon, 1999*).

- 64.9% of school-aged children with disabilities had learning disabilities (*Disability in Canada: A 2001 Profile, Human Resources Development Canada, Participation and Activity Limitation Survey*).
- Studies show that the majority of children who exhibit reading problems by the end of grade 3, will continue to experience reading difficulties throughout the life span (*Reid Lyon, 1999; Torgesen, 1998*).
- When individuals with limited literacy skills are not identified early, they are likely to develop withdrawn and aggressive behaviours (*Sturomski, 1996*).
- 35% of students identified with learning disabilities drop out of high school. This is twice the rate of their non-disabled peers and does not include students who are not identified and drop out (*Washington Summit on Learning Disabilities, 1994*).
- 50% of females with learning disabilities will be mothers within 3 to five years of leaving high school (*Washington Summit on Learning Disabilities, 1994*).
- Almost 50% of adolescents who have committed suicide had been previously diagnosed with learning disabilities (*Young, Leenanis, Rourke, Journal of Learning Disabilities, Volume 22, Number 3 (pp. 169-175), 1989*).
- The Conference Board of Canada determined that dropouts for the high school class of 1987 will cost society more than \$1.7 billion in lost taxes (*Dr. Docherty, Zero to Six: The Basis for School Readiness, HRDC, 1997*).
- 62% of learning disabled adolescents are unemployed one year after graduating high school (*Eaton Learning Centre, October 2004*).
- 31% of learning disabled adolescents are arrested within three to five years after they leave school (*Wagner's, 1991 National Longitudinal Study*).
- Although it is difficult to confirm exact percentages, there appears to be a disproportionate number of individuals with learning disabilities in correctional institutions. The nature of their disability (ie. Impulsivity, poor social skills, memory and attention problems) may predispose them to problems with the law. Research has shown that individuals with learning disabilities are more likely than others to get caught, be found guilty and be sentenced (*Sturomski, 1996*).
- In order to be rehabilitative, correctional education must be responsive to the particular learning needs of offenders (*Sturomski, 1996*).
- While there has been a recent trend to provide alternate residential placements for youth in conflict with the law, the cost of detaining a young offender is approximately \$100,000 a year (*Andy Scott, Solicitor General of Canada, National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention, 1998*). Under the Youth Criminal Justice Act individuals will be placed in alternative programs. The cost of support systems, for example, court and legal costs, alternative resident placement, Youth Workers, alternative education programs, and other

rehabilitation programs will remain substantial. Getting to the root cause and having trained and knowledgeable front line staff in the area of learning disabilities would be a cost effective strategy.

### 3.3 Rights of people with learning disabilities

- According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15, Equality Rights:

**“Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.”** (A10: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1985)

- The PEI Human Rights Commission interprets the PEI Human Rights Act to mean:

**“That every person is free and equal in dignity and rights...and that discrimination on the basis of physical and mental disability is prohibited. Examples of mental disabilities include depression and learning disabilities”** (A11: *Your Rights, Information on Grounds of Discrimination, PEI Human Rights Commission, 2003*).

- The PEI Disability Support Program (DSP) was designed **“to assist Islanders who have a qualifying disability to overcome barriers, to attain a satisfactory quality of life, and to strive to achieve financial independence”** (PEI Disability Support Program Policy, 2001, 1.1).

However, learning disabilities are specifically excluded from coverage for this program (PEI Disability Support Program Policy, 2001, 4.3.1b).

An independent formative evaluation of the DSP prepared at the request of the Provincial Government stated:

**“DSP policy has created classes of people with disabilities and, based on policy, some classes are deemed to be more worthy of government support than others. Many would find this objectionable on the basis of equality. For those excluded, there can be no doubt that quality of life is negatively impacted for a number of individuals and/or families.”** *Formative Evaluation: Prince Edward Island Disability Support Program. Prepared for Province of Prince Edward Island, Department of Health and Social Services, Baker Consulting, July 2003.*

- The Department of Education's *Philosophy of Education* states:

"The purpose of the Prince Edward Island public education system is to provide for the development of children so that each may take a meaningful place in society."

"Respect for the individual is exemplified in a number of ways. It includes promoting educational practices that reflect a variety of learning styles, that present intellectual

challenges appropriate to each student, that permit flexibility for students' interests and imaginations."

"The development of the child implies providing each student with the basic education required to participate in and contribute to society. It also means preparing students with the knowledge and intellectual training needed to enter the work force or to pursue post-secondary studies."

"The public education system demonstrates respect and support for fundamental human rights as identified in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the PEI Human Rights Act."

### **3.4 Cost Benefits to Early Identification, Diagnosis, and Intervention**

- It is estimated that every dollar spent on early intervention will save seven dollars on health and social spending (*Pollett, 2000*).
- Early identification and intervention will have a profoundly positive effect on social-emotional, behavioural and achievement outcomes for children with learning disabilities (*Perry, McNamara & Mercer, 2001*).
- Individuals whose problems are addressed early are more self-assured and better able to cope with their specific disabilities throughout their lives (ie. are better able to self-advocate, more likely pursue tertiary education and more likely to be successfully employed after school (*McNamara, 2003*).
- Fewer offenders who successfully participate in prison literacy programs recidivate, thus slowing the rise in prison populations and cost (*Sturomski, 1996*).
- Island students diagnosed with Learning Disabilities by registered psychologists, and who are eligible for a student loan, can access federal study grants worth up to \$8000 a year to support their learning needs (*Canada Study Grant for Students with Disabilities, 2004*) (*A12: Federal Legislation*).
- Islanders diagnosed with a learning disability are eligible for a Disability Tax Credit on their personal income tax (*Form T2201, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, 2003*).
- Individuals with learning disabilities are a heterogeneous group. No single intervention can be recommended due to individual differences. Interventions need to be based on the precise nature of the disability so that appropriate accommodations can be made (*Lerner, 2003*).
- Research indicates the need for Kindergarten programs to include LD screening and specific instruction in phonological awareness, the skills necessary for effective reading (*LDAO, 2004*).

### **3.5 Support for people with disabilities**

There have been significant increases in services and resources allocated for some PEI children with disabilities, for example, autism spectrum disorder, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disabilities and intellectual disabilities. This attention to children with disabilities is very positive. Learning disabilities are an example of an “invisible” disability. Therefore, it has been difficult for individuals with learning disabilities to be identified and receive appropriate services and/or resources.

### **3.6 Community support for the increased provision of services for individuals with learning disabilities**

Various organizations have been consulted and support the proposed strategy for Islanders with learning disabilities. These have included:

- PEI Teachers’ Federation
- Home and School Association
- PEI Speech and Hearing Association
- Psychological Association of PEI
- PEI Literacy Alliance
- Learning Disabilities Association of PEI
- Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

*(A14: Letters of Support)*

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1 Guiding Principles

Together, the LD Joint Committee unanimously agreed on the following Guiding Principles for the action plan:

- Equitable services across the province
- Equitable services across the life-span of the individual
- Screening tied to interventions
- Accessible and affordable diagnostic assessments and learning technology
- Availability and timely access to programs/services
- Consistency of messages and information across disciplines
- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy

### 4.2 Action Recommended

The committee unanimously determined that an action plan should include the following themes:

- To implement a **coordinated provincial approach** to support Islanders with learning disabilities throughout the lifespan
- To ensure that there is a focus by professionals and collaboration on **early identification and early intervention** of learning disabilities.
- To increase **\*professional capacity** regarding learning disabilities on PEI.
- To increase **public, \*family awareness and knowledge** about learning disabilities.

\*Professional refers to those paid to provide a service, including front line workers.

\*Family refers to parents, guardians, and caregivers who are at home or in a family setting

### 4.3 Four Year Plan (2005-2009) for Implementation of Recommendations:

For the first year, the focus will be on the school age population, with subsequent years focusing on early childhood and adulthood. This will allow for the greatest impact upon initiation of the strategy.

#### **YEAR ONE – Coordination and Development**

##### **A) Coordination and Planning**

- Establish a provincial Learning Disabilities Steering Committee that includes representatives from both government and community (LDAPEI)
- Hire a Learning Disabilities Specialist (Registered Ph.D. level Psychologist with expertise in LD) Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Develop a coordinated, provincial approach, including evaluation of the approach from the preschool years through adulthood
- Conduct a capacity assessment
- Train professionals to conduct ongoing core training for all staff  
Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Implement department-specific early intervention approaches (early screening and intervention; reduce age for Public Health Nursing screening)
- Focus on parent education to identify and support children at risk and develop a public awareness approach Cost: \_\_\_\_

##### **B) Increasing Capacity for Identification of Needs and Intervention**

- Increase capacity for diagnosis (\*Hire 3 additional Registered Psychologists with expertise in learning disabilities for the school age population. Ideally, one of these positions will be a bilingual position) Cost: \_\_\_\_

\*In order to meet the average ratio of students to School Psychologists in the Atlantic provinces, PEI requires approximately 10 full-time School Psychologists (*A1: Atlantic School Psychology Chart*). Currently, there are 3 Registered Psychologists working in the PEI school system.

- Assessment materials for Psychologists (i.e., diagnostic tools) Cost: \_\_\_\_

## **YEAR TWO – Increase Capacity, Knowledge and Skills**

- Increase capacity for intervention (Train the existing human resources in the Departments of Health, Education, and the Office of the Attorney General, ie. Youth Workers, Correctional Officers, Pediatricans, Public Health Nurses, Mental Health Therapists, School Counselors, Early Childhood Educators, Resource Teachers, Special Education Consultants, etc... to allow for increased expertise in learning disabilities)  
Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Increase adaptive technology and leadership for that technology (Hire 2 LD Technology Specialists with expertise in learning disabilities)  
Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Hardware and adaptive software Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Increase capacity for Speech-Language services\*\* (Hire 3 Speech-Language Pathologists) Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Continued public awareness Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Continue professional development in the area of learning disabilities  
Cost: \_\_\_\_

\*\*In order to meet the average ratio of students to Speech Language Pathologists as found around the Maritimes, PEI requires approximately 8.5 full-time Speech Language Pathologists (*A13: Atlantic School Psychology Chart*). Currently, there are 5.7 Speech Language Pathologists working in the PEI school system. To obtain the recommended OAFCCD Model, the ratio of speech-language pathologist to school age children should be 1:1500 (OAFCCD, 1996) which would see 15.4 Speech Language Pathologist serve the school aged population. Currently, PEI has only 15.9 Speech Language Pathologists for the entire province serving all age groups.

## **YEAR THREE – Continue to Increase Capacity**

- Increase capacity for diagnosis of preschool aged children and adults (Hire Registered Psychologists – one for the adult population and one for the preschool population with expertise in learning disabilities). Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Increase capacity for Speech-Language services (Hire 3 Speech-Language Pathologists) Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Hire 1 Occupational Therapist and 1 Audiologist Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Expand on adaptive technology Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Continued professional development and public awareness Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Evaluate progress to date and begin to develop a plan to sustain the strategy

## **YEAR FOUR – Maintain Capacity**

- Build on previous years
- Continue to increase capacity for diagnosis of preschool, school aged, and adults (Hire 3 Registered Psychologists – one for each) Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Increase capacity for Speech-Language services (Hire 3 Speech-Language Pathologists) Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Continued professional development and public awareness Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Expand on adaptive technology Cost: \_\_\_\_

## ***BEYOND THE 4-YEARS ...Sustaining the Plan***

- Professional development Cost: \_\_\_\_
- Technology Cost: \_\_\_\_\_
- Human resources Cost: \_\_\_\_\_
- Public awareness Cost: \_\_\_\_\_

### **5. Communication:**

The LD Joint Committee requests a meeting with the Deputy Ministers of Education, Health and Social Services, and Office of the Attorney General in order to present the *Recommendations for Improved Services for Islanders with Learning Disabilities*. As government proceeds with these recommendations' please consult with the LD Joint Committee, so that we can continue to offer support in this area.

The contact information is as follows:

Sandra LeBlanc, Executive Director  
Learning Disabilities Association of PEI

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## A1: School Psychology Chart

<u>Province</u>	<u>Student Population</u> <u>2003-2004</u> <u>School Yr.</u>	<u>School Psychologists</u>	<u>Mean Ratio</u> <u>School Psychologist:</u> <u>Students</u>
<u>Nova Scotia</u>	148,514	51	1:2912
<u>New Brunswick*</u>	118,869	56.8	1:2093
<u>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</u>	81,634	40	1:2041
<u>Prince Edward Island</u>	23,083	3	1:7694

\*New Brunswick has 18 Anglophone School Psychologists; and 38.8 Francophone School Psychologists.

The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) recommends a ratio of one school psychologist per 1000 students.

A NASP survey (2000) of 2,195 school psychologists in the United States indicated a mean ratio of one school psychologist per 1,816 students. The median was one school psychologist per 1,500 students. Ninety percent of the school psychologists indicated a ratio below 1:3000, and ten percent indicated a ratio above 1:3000 (For further information, refer to [www.nasponline.org/publications/cq282sp2000.html](http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq282sp2000.html)).

**What is a School Psychologist\*?** School psychologists are registered psychologists who have an expertise in the provision of school-based psychological services. School psychologists provide a wide range of services to meet the needs of students with learning, and behavioural/emotional difficulties. Depending on the nature of the role of a school psychologist in a school board, and the number of school psychologists employed, school psychologists are skilled in providing five levels of intervention:

- **student-focused indirect intervention** (includes consultation, program planning, parent contact, goal setting, teacher assistance, inter-agency networking, referrals)
- **student-focused direct intervention** (includes individual counselling and therapy, group behaviour skills development, individual psychological assessment)
- **school-wide intervention** (includes liaison, collaboration, in-service education, prevention, consultation, best practises, planning, postvention, and teaching)
- **district/system-wide intervention** (includes in-service education, screening, evaluation, best practises, intervention programs, outreach, networking, and advocacy).
- **research**

\*School psychologists are not necessarily school-based, however they are trained to provide psychological services for the school-aged population.

For further information, refer to the *Guidelines for Professional Practise for School Psychologists* (June 2001). This document was published by the New Brunswick, Education *Student Services*, and the guidelines were adopted by the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA).

[www.cpa.ca/documents/Guidelines\\_School\\_Psychologists.pdf](http://www.cpa.ca/documents/Guidelines_School_Psychologists.pdf)

To use the professional title of “psychologist”, a person must be registered with the *Prince Edward Psychologists Registration Board (PEIPRB)*. The role of the registration board is to regulate the practice of psychologists in the province in accordance with the Psychologists Act, to promote established standards, and to safeguard the welfare of the public with regard to the services of psychologists.

## A2: National Definition

### National Definition of Learning Disabilities

Adopted by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada  
January 30, 2002

Learning Disabilities refer to a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrate at least average abilities essential for thinking and/or reasoning. As such, learning disabilities are distinct from global intellectual deficiency.

Learning disabilities result from impairments in one or more processes related to perceiving, thinking, remembering or learning. These include, but are not limited to: language processing; phonological processing; visual spatial processing; processing speed; memory and attention; and executive functions (e.g. planning and decision-making).

Learning disabilities range in severity and may interfere with the acquisition and use of one or more of the following:

- § oral language (e.g. listening, speaking, understanding);
- § reading (e.g. decoding, phonetic knowledge, word recognition, comprehension);
- § written language (e.g. spelling and written expression); and
- § mathematics (e.g. computation, problem solving).

Learning disabilities may also involve difficulties with organizational skills, social perception, social interaction and perspective taking.

Learning disabilities are lifelong. The way in which they are expressed may vary over an individual's lifetime, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual's strengths and needs. Learning disabilities are suggested by unexpected academic under-achievement or achievement which is maintained only by unusually high levels of effort and support.

Learning disabilities are due to genetic and/or neurobiological factors or injury that alters brain functioning in a manner which affects one or more processes related to learning. These disorders are not due primarily to hearing and/or vision problems, socio-economic factors, cultural or linguistic differences, lack of motivation or ineffective teaching, although these factors may further complicate the challenges faced by individuals with learning disabilities. Learning disabilities may co-exist with various conditions including attentional, behavioural and emotional disorders, sensory impairments or other medical conditions.

For success, individuals with learning disabilities require early identification and timely specialized assessments and interventions involving home, school, community and workplace settings. **The interventions need to be appropriate for each individual's learning disability subtype and, at a minimum, include the provision of:**

- § specific skill instruction;
- § accommodations;
- § compensatory strategies; and

§ self-advocacy skills

### **A3: Persons with Disabilities**

- people who have physical disabilities and/or chronic health impairments
- people who have sensory impairments (hearing and vision)
- people who have intellectual disabilities
- people who have emotional/behavioral disorders
- **people who have learning disabilities**
- people who have pervasive development disorders (autism)
- people who have communication disorders
- people who have health and neurological disorders
- people who are gifted

Reference: *Report of the Review of Special Education, prepared for the Department of Education by Mackey & Associates, PEI, 1998-99*

**“Learning disabilities make up 50% of all disabilities.”**

Reference: *J. Lerner, (Learning Disabilities Theories, Diagnosis, and Teaching Strategy) Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 2003*

## **A4: Timeline of Political Meetings**

### **Recent Political Activities of Some LDAPEI Board Members**

#### **Aug 22, 2003**

Eric Donovan and Joanne McCabe met with the Premier and his Assistant to inform them about services needed for people with learning disabilities.

Results: They were directed to the Health Department (Honorable Minister Jamie Ballem) and to Kathy Flanagan-Rochon, Director, Children's Secretariat. Ms. Flanagan-Rochon has ensured that LDAPEI will be on the Exceptional Needs/Screening and Assessments Committee.

#### **Aug 28, 2003**

Eric and Joanne met with Liberal Leader Robert Ghiz and his Administration Assistant to share the same information as with the Premier. He said he would support our actions.

#### **Sept 2, 2003**

Joanne and Eric met with Minister Jamie Ballem and Susan Birt, Director of Social Policy Development in Health. The Minister requested that LDAPEI develop a recommended implementation plan for PEI services for people with learning disabilities. This was done.

#### **Sept 2003**

LDAPEI Board members Joanne, Sandra, and Eric attended the Education All Candidate Forum during the election and again had an opportunity to talk with the Premier and to ask public questions.

#### **Dec 11, 2003**

LDAPEI Board members (Nicole Leger, Eric, Tracy Dixon, Ellen MacPhail, and Joanne) met with Health and Education officials to outline the implementation plan requested by the Health Department.

Results: Wanda Whitlock, Director of Student Services, Department of Education indicated that a focus on Learning Disabilities would begin January 2005 for school age children. She invited Board members to sit on a planning committee with Health and Education to fine tune the implementation plan.

#### **Dec 15, 2003**

Eric and Joanne met with Robert Ghiz and Carolyn Bertram to update them and to ask for their continuing support.

#### **Dec 19, 2003**

Board members (Sandra, Eric, and Joanne) meet with the Finance Minister, Mitch Murphy and the Deputy Minister to discuss moving the implementation date to April 1, 2004 (new budget year). We did not ask for more funds, but that the existing funds be divided in an equitable way to include people with

learning disabilities. Minister Murphy advised us to meet with the Attorney General to discuss the Charter of Rights and Freedom issues.

**January 22, 2004**

Meet with Premier Pat Binns to update him on our progress since August 2003. He would look into the delay of getting a meeting with Minister of Education Mildred Dover. He mentioned looking into the possibly of sharing information among the provinces in the area of learning disabilities.

**February 5, 2004**

Meet with Attorney General Jamie Ballem and Patsy MacLean to discuss the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, PEI Human Rights Act, Federal Legislation, the Disability Support Program Policy (DSP), and MacKey Report. Minister Ballem told us it was the numbers that kept learning disabilities from being included into the DSP. Also, if policy was going to change it would be through meeting with the Departments of Health, Education, and Justice. Eric mentioned we would like to work with them, but if no process is to be made, a Human Rights case on discrimination would not be ruled out.

**February 9, 2004**

Requested meeting with Minister Chester Gillan, Minister Responsible for People with Disabilities. Informed to met with him after the LD Joint Committee work is finished.

**February 16, 2004**

Eric, Catherine, Sandra, Jane Ralling (Bob Tocchet's substitute), Dr. Barbara MacLeod met with Wanda Whitlock, Lise Journault, Winnifred McInnis, Jill Wakelin, Joan MacFarlane to discuss an action plan for services for learning disabilities. Unable to attend Nicole Leger. Next meeting March 11, 2004.

**March 4, 2004**

Eric, Joanne, and Sandra met with Honorable Minister of Education Mildred Dover to discuss services for learning disabilities within the Education department.

## **A5: List of LDAPEI Board Members (2003-2004)**

Learning Disability Association of Prince Edward Island (LDAPEI)

### Executive

**President:**

Catherine O'Bryan

**Vice-President:**

Eric Donovan

**Secretary:**

Raeanne Garnhum

**Treasurer:**

Sharon MacNeill

**Executive Director:**

Sandra LeBlanc

*Board Members*

Joanne McCabe

Darlene MacLean

Tracy Dixon, Registered Psychologist

Ellen MacPhail, Registered Psychologist

Nicole Leger, Speech Language Pathologist

Robert (Bob) Tocchet, Lawyer

Joel Palter

Keefe Deighan

2004-2006 **President:** Eric Donovan

**Past President:** Catherine O'Bryan

**Vice-President:** Keefe Deighan

## **A6: September 2003 LDAPEI Implementation Plan**

(Submitted to Honorable Jamie Ballem 2003)

### Services For Individuals With Learning Disabilities

Four-Year Implementation Plan

2003 - 2007

#### I. Objectives

1. To ensure that individuals with learning disabilities are acknowledged and served on Prince Edward Island.
2. To ensure that people with learning disabilities have equitable services compared to people with other disabilities.
3. To ensure that assessments by registered psychologists and intervention services are available for people with learning disabilities, regardless of age.
4. To ensure that services are accessible within a reasonable time frame.
5. To ensure community-based services.
6. To ensure that there is a focus by professionals on early identification and early intervention of learning disabilities.
7. To ensure that there is sufficient personnel and expertise on Prince Edward Island regarding learning disabilities.
8. To enhance the level of public awareness regarding learning disabilities.
9. To provide on-going education and training for individuals who work directly with everyone with learning disabilities.
10. To ensure on-going monitoring and evaluation of services for individuals with learning disabilities.

## **II. Implementation Plan**

The following implementation plan would allow us to successfully achieve our above objectives. We will monitor, evaluate, and adapt the implementation plan yearly to obtain the best quality of life for people with learning disabilities.

### *Year 1*

#### Provincial Learning Disability Specialist

Duties:

- Acts as a mentor for three specialists-in-training (see below)
- Assesses needs
- Develops policy, procedures, and guidelines
- Develops a more specific implementation plan for services for people with learning disabilities
- Links with disabilities specialists and others
- Develops public and government awareness
- Provides training to other professionals
- Monitors and evaluates progress

#### **Three Regional Learning Disabilities Specialists-in-Training (one per county)**

Duties:

- Take training/courses related to learning disabilities
- Job shadow the Provincial Learning Disabilities Specialist
- Consult with daycares, kindergartens, schools, and communities

#### **Three Regional Registered Psychologist (one per county)**

Duties:

- Consult, observe
- Do diagnostic assessments, reports, and consultations
- Make recommendations for accommodations and interventions

#### **Technology Acquisition**

Make available:

- Hardware, printers, scanner, Kurzweil, Dragon NaturallySpeaking, Text Help, etc...

### **Year 2**

- One learning disabilities specialist per family of schools
- One registered psychologist per family of schools
- One speech and language pathologist per family of schools
- One occupational therapist per family of schools
- Additional technology and other resources

We recommend that all professionals are at arms length from the school boards

### **Year 3**

- Three speech and language pathologists (one per county)
- Three occupational therapists (one per county)
- Additional technology and other resources

### **Year 4**

- One adult learning disability coordinator
- One registered psychologist for adults
- One speech and language specialist for adults

Throughout this four year plan, there will be **continuous awareness- raising, education, training, professional development** and **technology acquisition** on learning disabilities. These will be available for all people who provide direct interventions for the learning disabled, such as, parents, daycare workers, kindergarten teachers, resource teachers, classroom teachers, tutors, youth workers, and teacher assistants.

**A7: Press Release September 28, 2004  
(Council of Ministers of Education)**

# Press Release

Orford (Québec), September 28, 2004 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *Three Key Priorities For Ministers Of Education*

Provincial and territorial ministers of education met today to define their national leadership role in education. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) approved a new mandate: to work collaboratively to build the best education systems in the world where every learner succeeds.

The ministers agreed on three key priorities on which they will do joint work in the coming years: literacy, Aboriginal education, and postsecondary capacity. All three of these priorities are areas in which the ministers will engage the federal government.

In the area of literacy ministers agreed to work together on increasing the literacy levels of all students. Their actions will include a national forum on literacy in the near future.

Ministers also agreed to cooperate on developing a shared approach, in consultation with Aboriginal peoples, to engaging the federal government in developing strategies to improve educational success for aboriginal students.

The third priority is increasing postsecondary capacity. Ministers will decide on key issues affecting the postsecondary sector, some of which they will discuss with the federal government, including funding for infrastructure costs, the indirect costs of research, and increased access.

Ministers agreed that they would report back to Canadians yearly on their success in these endeavours through CMEC.

“We believe that all our actions have to be aimed at success for all learners. This goal must guide our policies at all levels of learning,” said the Honourable Pierre Reid, Quebec's Education Minister, who chairs CMEC. “My colleagues and I feel that these priorities respond to Canadians' expectations for leadership in education and we will continue to work with all our partners as we have done in the past in addressing these priorities. Learners are the big winners when we work together.”

Other initiatives on which provinces and territories will continue to collaborate include special needs, online learning and connectivity, student financial assistance reform, copyright, and promoting healthy schools.

For further information, contact

Boyd Pelley

CMEC

(416) 962-8100, ext. 241

[b.pelley](mailto:b.pelley)

**A8: Press Release October 4, 2004**

# **News Releases**

**Monday, October 4, 2004**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Education**

## **MINISTERS OF EDUCATION SET NEW PRIORITIES**

CHARLOTTETOWN, PEI -- At a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Education held recently in Quebec, provincial and territorial ministers of education agreed to work together toward three major priorities: literacy, Aboriginal education and post-secondary capacity.

Education Minister Mildred Dover advised that the ministers will engage the federal government in all three areas.

Provinces and territories will work together on initiatives to increase the literacy levels of all students, beginning with a national forum on literacy. They will develop a shared approach to improve educational success for aboriginal students, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and the federal government. To increase post-secondary capacity, ministers will identify key issues affecting the post-secondary sector, including funding for infrastructure, research and increased access.

"I feel that these priorities respond to Islanders' expectations for leadership in education and we will continue to work with all our partners to address them. Learners are the big winners when we work together," said Minister Dover.

Provinces and territories will also continue to work together to address other priorities such as special educational needs, online learning and connectivity, student financial assistance reform, copyright, and healthy schools.

Prince Edward Island and British Columbia are the lead provinces in a major new pan-Canadian partnership of health and education ministries to promote healthy schools. Following a presentation by Minister Dover and Minister Christensen of BC, the organization of the new Health Promoting Schools initiative was approved. School health coordinators will now be named in twelve provinces and territories. The program will be officially launched next month. "We are extremely pleased to provide leadership in the area of school health," said Minister Dover. "Working together, Islanders have had some tremendous accomplishments in health promotion, many of them in the school setting. We have a lot to offer in this area and we look forward to learning from new opportunities to work with others."

The ministers, most of whom represent Canada's Copyright Consortium, agreed to seek an urgent meeting with federal ministers to object to proposed changes to the Copyright law. The changes would require payment for educational use of Internet materials. Under the new law, students and teachers could have to pay a fee for the educational use of Internet materials that are free to the public.

Ministers agreed to report to Canadians each year on their progress through the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC).

## A9: Literacy Skills of Islanders

Percentage of people at each literacy skill level by PEI federal riding:

<b>Cardigan</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4/5</b>
Prose	30%	35%	29%	6%
Document	34%	32%	25%	8%
Quantitative	27%	36%	30%	7%
<b>Egmont</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4/5</b>
Prose	32%	35%	27%	6%
Document	36%	32%	24%	8%
Quantitative	30%	35%	29%	6%
<b>Hillsborough</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4/5</b>
Prose	25%	34%	33%	8%
Document	26%	33%	30%	11%
Quantitative	30%	35%	35%	9%
<b>Malpeque</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4/5</b>
Prose	28%	35%	30%	7%
Document	31%	32%	27%	10%
Quantitative	24%	36%	32%	8%

Projections based on International Adult Literacy Survey data, 1997 \*

### Literacy Skill Levels

#### Level 1

- these people have great difficulty reading and usually know they have a problem

#### Level 2

- these people can read, but not well
- they can deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out
- they often do not recognize their limitation

#### Level 3

- these people can read well, but have some problems with more complex tasks
- many jobs require a higher skill level

Level 4/5

- these people have a high level of literacy and can meet most reading demands

## Kinds of Literacy

Prose - knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, such as news stories, magazines and novels

Document - knowledge and skills needed to find and use information from documents, such as job applications, maps and tables

Quantitative - knowledge and skills needed to apply arithmetic operations, such as balancing a cheque book or figuring out a tip

## **A10: Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms**

### Equality Rights

**15.** (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

(2) Subsection (1) does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

### *Enforcement*

**24.** (1) Anyone whose rights or freedoms, as guaranteed by this Charter, have been infringed or denied may apply to a court of competent jurisdiction to obtain such remedy, as the court considers appropriate and just in the circumstances.

### **Application of Charter**

**32.** (1) This Charter applies

- a) to the Parliament and government of Canada in respect of all matters within the authority of Parliament including all matters relating to the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories; and
- b) to the legislature and government of each province in respect of all matters within the authority of the legislature of each province.

## **A11: PEI Human Rights Act**

Definitions:

“Discrimination” means discrimination in relation to age, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, family status, marital status, physical or mental handicap, political belief, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or source of income of any individual or class of individuals.

“Physical or mental handicap” means a previous or existing disability, infirmity, malformation or disfigurement, whether of a physical or mental nature, that is caused by injury, birth defect or illness, and includes but is not limited to epilepsy, any degree of paralysis, amputation, lack of physical coordination, blindness or visual impediment, deafness or hearing impediment, muteness or speech impediment, or physical reliance on a guide dog, wheelchair or other remedial device.

### Part 1 DISCRIMINATION PROHIBITED

- 2.** (1) No person shall discriminate
- (a) against any individual or class of individuals with respect to enjoyment of accommodation, services and facilities to which members of the public have access; or
  - (b) with respect to the manner in which accommodations, services and facilities, to which members of the public have access, are provided to any individual or class of individuals.

(2) Subsection (1) does not prevent the denial or refusal of accommodation, services or facilities to a person on the basis of age if the accommodation, services or facilities are not available to that person by virtue of any enactment in force in the province.

**13.** No person shall discriminate against an individual or the class of individuals in any manner prescribed by this Act because of race, religion, creed, colour, sex, marital status, ethnic, or national origin, age, physical or mental handicap or political belief of any person with whom the individual or class of individuals associates.

## **A12: Federal Legislation**

The Federal Government of Canada recognizes learning disabilities as legal disabilities. Proper documentation is necessary. The Federal Government of Canada addresses the needs of learning disabled individuals in the following:

- Tax Exemptions
- Grants

(For example: Human Resources Development Canada application for Students with Disabilities)

All other provinces and territories recognize learning disabilities as legal disabilities, and provides services, both assessments and interventions for learning disabilities. This is a form of discrimination against learning disabled Islanders.

### A13: Speech Language Pathologist

<u>Province or Region</u>	<u>Student Population 2003-2004 School Yr.</u>	<u>Speech Language Pathologists</u>	<u>Mean Ratio Speech Language Pathologists to Students*</u>
Prince Edward Island	23, 083	5.7	1:4050
Halifax Regional School Board	58,000	20.8	1:2788
Moncton Francophone Health Region (Districts 1, 11)	13,253	5	1:2650

**\*Ratio: As proposed in the OAFCCD Model, the ratio of speech-language pathologist to school age children should be 1:1500 (OAFCCD, 1996).** *Education Equality Task Force, Presentation by the Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders (OAFCCD), Presented by Dr. Genese Warr-Leeper, University of Western Ontario, September 25, 2002*

### A14: Speech Language Pathologists on PEI

PEI Area	Full Time Equivalent	Pre-school Children	School Children	Adults
West Prince	1.5	.8	.5	.2
Prince	3.5	1.8	1.5	.2
Queens	8.2	5.8	2.2	.2
Kings	2.7	1	1.5	.2
<i>Totals</i>	15.9	9.4	5.7	.8

15.9 Speech Language Pathologists serve 140, 000 Islanders which gives a ratio of **1: 8805**.

## A15: Quotes

“Individual assessment is necessary to avoid discrimination as individual assessment avoids the need to set an arbitrary standard by which people can be excluded.” *W. MacKay and P. Rebin, Study Paper on Psychological Testing and Human Rights in Education and Employment, (Toronto: Ontario Law Reform Commission, 1996)*

“Ideas of equality live at the heart of Canadian promise of community. Yet we know that communities are built in two ways: by welcoming and by keeping out.” *Bill Pentney, Council to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*

“Equality in education means structuring the system so that every student’s needs are met and their potential can be met.” *Bill Pentney, Council to the Canadian Human Rights Commission*

“Employer, service providers and property owners must accommodate the needs of individuals or groups protected by the Human Right Act to the point of “undue hardship”. Sometimes it is necessary to adjust policies and procedures or modify physical surroundings to accommodate the special needs of protected individuals or groups. “Undue hardship” means that accommodating the special needs of protected individuals or groups imposes an unreasonable burden on employers, service providers or property owners.” *Prince Edward Island Human Rights Commission “Your Rights”, Information on Grounds of Discrimination, p. 10.*