

A Message from the Chair

Fall brings fast-fading memories of lazy summer days and a big ramp up in “back-to-work-and-school” activities. At the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, our dedicated staff and volunteers did not take much time off during the summer. I am sure you will join me in gratitude for all the people in our provincial/territorial network who are working hard on our committees and projects to build LDAC to become stronger than ever.

Thealzel Lee
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

A Message from the Executive Director

Retirement of Gordon Bullivant

On behalf of the LDAC board of directors, staff and volunteers, congratulations are in order! After 35 years, LDAC co-founder Gordon Bullivant retired on July 15 from his role as Executive Director at Foothills Academy in Calgary, Alberta.

Gordon’s passion and commitment to learning disabilities has contributed immeasurably to the field of learning disabilities and he has been a staunch advocate for individuals with learning disabilities at the local, provincial and national levels for decades. His many contributions have been invaluable.

Gordon served on the LDAC board from 1997 to 2002 as President, Past President and Director at Large, and has been a member of the Professional Advisory Committee since 2002.

Gordon was instrumental during his time as President of LDAC, leading the charge in the organization’s initial involvement as intervenor in the Moore case at the British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal. He was also part of the LDAC team that developed the definition of learning disabilities that is still used today in many provincial and territorial governments, in several federal government departments and published in many university textbooks. Gordon was involved in the development of several policy statements, such as educational inclusion and most recently the position statement on the DSM5.

Gordon, it is with great pleasure that we at LDAC acknowledge your many contributions to the learning disabilities community across the country. You have made a positive difference in how we understand and support people with learning disabilities. We extend our heartfelt thanks and would like to wish you the very best at this important milestone in your life and hope that you enjoy many years of a healthy and happy retirement.

Gordon is now Founder Emeritus at Foothills Academy, and has moved to a part-time consultant role to support the new Executive Director, and continues to be involved with LDAC.

LDAC Annual General Meeting

The LDAC’s Annual General Meeting was held on September 26, and I would like to extend a warm welcome to the following individuals nominated to the LDAC board of directors for 2015/16:

Chair: Thealzel Lee

Provincial/Territorial Representatives:

- British Columbia: Brendan O'Neill
- Alberta: Lorrie Goegan
- Saskatchewan: Lynne Wawryk-Epp
- Québec: Colette Charest
- Atlantic provinces: Millie Leblanc
- Yukon: Colleen Segriff

Directors at Large:

- Thealzel Lee
- Bob Cram

Claudette Larocque

Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

Email: claudette@ldac-acta.ca

Globe & Mail – Letter to the Editor

The Globe & Mail recently published a letter to the editor written by Barbara McElgunn, LDAC's Health Liaison Advisor, in response to an article about BPA substitutes in lunchboxes advertised as BPA-free. Below is a link to the original article, followed by Barbara's letter.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/parenting/back-to-school/why-the-bpa-free-label-on-your-kids-lunch-box-isnt-a-safety-guarantee/article26092776/>

Shop with care

Published August 28, 2015

Re: There's No Such Thing as a (Worry) Free Lunch (Life & Arts, August 26): BPA and its chemical replacements are allowed into commerce with little or no toxicity data to assess risks to human health. Even when hundreds of independent epidemiological studies show harm, there are insurmountable barriers against actions that would restrict or ban their use in, or on, products.

For bisphenol A, and other chemicals of concern, a major stumbling block seems to be the need for "conclusive proof" of harm. What would constitute conclusive proof, and whether this can ever be obtained, has never been defined.

Governments need to update and strengthen pre-market test requirements, especially to assess risks to fetuses, infants and children. The little-used precautionary principle implies a duty to act when there is evidence of harm, such as the research showing effects of BPA replacements on neurodevelopment, alongside other similar studies. Meanwhile, the public is left with choosing and shopping with care.

Barbara McElgunn, Health Policy Adviser, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

Committee Reports

Strategic Planning Committee

The Strategic Planning Committee is focusing on two main areas: 1) developing the Business and Operating Plan and 2) the implementation of the Rally Projects. These Rally Projects were chosen by those in the learning disabilities network as a way to connect the passion, knowledge and experience within the community. The Committee is implementing new, collaborative ways of working together. Highlights include:

- Recruiting and developing leadership for the Rally Projects and the LDAC committees
- Ongoing preparations for informational seminars for the Rally Projects
- Continued development of a Business and Operating Plan for LDAC to become financially sustainable

Operations Committee

Moving forward has been an important part of the progression in the last year. With the approval of the LDAC Board, the investment account was moved from a full service broker to BMO's Investorline, a discount broker, which was largely completed at the beginning of 2015. This account allows us to accept stock donations.

A large focus of the Operations Committee's activities in recent months has been reviewing the results of the fundraising audit and developing a plan with a timeline to implement the recommendations. The first step is implementing new fundraising database software since our old platform was being discontinued. The new platform selected is expected to play a key role in not only fundraising but also the management of committee and board activities, as well as the website. Claudette Larocque and Mary Pal have worked through the summer for the database to be transferred, which should be accomplished in early fall. Next steps include a more active donor page on the website and developing the communities segment of the platform. The last step will be to move the website to this new platform.

Governance Committee

The Governance Committee has not been active since the bylaws were revised; however, it will be reactivated soon and address policy and procedure developments related to governance that flow from the bylaw revisions and development of strategic and business planning that have been part of the Phoenix Project.

One important governance-related change in the last few months was the revision of the bylaws to allow the board to appoint directors in between AGMs. This allows the board to address vacancies that may occur during the year and to appoint provincial representatives that the provincial and territorial associations may wish to add or alter. This bylaw change has been confirmed by the membership at the AGM, and with this amendment, any directors appointed by the board will also need to be confirmed by the members at the next AGM.

Research Committee

The Research Committee's Research Database Project has made progress over the course of the summer. Gabriela Grabic is the Project Team Leader for British Columbia and Judy Craig is the Project Team Leader for Alberta, and Lorrie Goegan and Lauren Goegan have joined

Thealzel Lee and Dr. Christina Fiedorowicz in this endeavour as well. The Committee is looking for more volunteers to help accomplish the ambitious goals of establishing a database of current, relevant Canadian research on all aspects of learning disabilities and developing a network of Canadian researchers engaged in learning disabilities research. Several articles and papers from researchers in British Columbia and Alberta have been screened and stored in a temporary database. The Committee will be working with Steven Forth from British Columbia to determine the most efficient and effective database so that the information can be easily accessible online from the LDAC website. A longer term goal is that once established and functional, the Canadian database would be expanded to include research from all of the provinces and territories.

Key individuals from universities and colleges in both provinces have been contacted and Eric and PsychINFO have been searched. Any ideas or comments about this project would be appreciated. Please contact Claudette Larocque, Executive Director, LDAC at claudette@ldac-acta.ca

Provincial/Territorial Updates

British Columbia

The Learning Disabilities Association of British Columbia is moving forward and great things have happened over the summer. We launched a newly renovated website with improved technical capacity, and with the help of our volunteer videographer, we are preparing new videos for the site. Currently, we are working on short video interviews of the Chairs of LDABC and the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada that will explain what these organizations do. Our social media has exploded and we are getting regular inquiries and offers of support. People are literally coming out of the woodwork looking for help and we regularly refer to the appropriate Chapter. If there is no Chapter in their location, we provide as much information and supportive encouragement as possible. We have engaged Community Liaison members in four communities where we do not have a Chapter and they are spreading information and resources across the province. Our Live Learning online program is doing well for the fall. We will have a booth at the Learning Assistance Teachers' Association conference in October, which will help build new connections with special education teachers and share information about LDABC, and we are updating and improving our promotional materials in preparation for that event. We have also engaged a volunteer graphic artist to help us launch an LDABC newsletter. It is exciting to see the amount of interest and support that is out there for us. We are finding new ways to tap into it and engage more people in our work.

Lynne Kent
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of British Columbia

Saskatchewan

At the Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan, we are continually stretching in order to keep up the pace of demand for our service. We have offices in Saskatoon, Prince Albert and Regina. The Arrowsmith Program has classrooms in both Saskatoon and Regina. Our Annual Learning and Leadership Corporate Events will feature Margaret Trudeau as the guest speaker. A breakfast will be held in Saskatoon followed by a dinner in Regina. GED and literacy classes are held in all three centres where we have approximately 50-60 students. We are an approved Pearson Vue Testing site in all three centres as well.

We continue to operate at capacity with our Neurofeedback Therapy. Two of our staff psychologists are participating presently in Level 2 Neurofeedback Training in New Jersey. This therapy has been life changing for many people who have been struggling with anxiety, depression and distractibility.

We are gearing up for Learning Disability Awareness Month in October and plan to follow the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario's lead with the "don't dis my ability" slogan. And, we are partnering with the Psychological Association of Saskatchewan in order to provide the Woodcock Johnson IV Training with Nancy Mather in late September.

For a full listing of programs and services please visit our website at www.ldas.org

Dale Rempel
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Saskatchewan

Newfoundland and Labrador

The Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador has once again seen growth in both outreach and programming of our community. Highlights of our year include:

- The 11th annual Blind Date with a Star! Event was a huge success. With the support of 50 restaurants and venues throughout St. John's, as well as local and national celebrities, the event once again provided a major addition to our fundraising activities.
- Our tutoring program continues to grow and we once again provided intensive and specific instruction to hundreds of individuals in the area of reading. We recently received a grant to create a similar program in math, a growing need in our community, which will begin in this fall.
- LDANL, with the support of the provincial department of education, offered several professional development opportunities in the form of conferences. We received a tremendous amount of interest, resulting in a second conference to meet the demand.
- LDANL continued its partnership in the Atlantic Learning Disabilities Executive Directors network by hosting this year's Symposium on Learning Disabilities.

In addition, LDANL continues to offer support and advocacy to our community and helps guide and influence public policy to ensure a more inclusive community.

Lynn Green
Chair, Learning Disabilities Association of Newfoundland and Labrador

Yukon

The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon had another great summer of camps and tutoring. We ran eight weeks of day camps in Whitehorse and two weeks in Dawson City. Our camps, made possible with funding from the territorial government, United Way Yukon and many other organizations, provided children and youth with a supportive, fun and creative

experience. Outside of camp, students worked with our tutors to stave off summer learning loss – a definite hazard during a summer with long, sunny days.

Our work to support adult learners continues as well. LDAY's AURORA Workshops works with businesses, government agencies and training organizations to create engaging workplaces and maximize the learning potential of all learners and employees. To learn more about AURORA Workshops, please visit www.auroraworkshops.com

Stephanie Hammond
Executive Director, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon