

PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP Fall 2006

Two important documents were released in June that will have great relevance to students with learning disabilities.

The first was the report of the Working Table on Special Education, ***Special Education Transformation***, released by the Ministry of Education after a yearlong process involving the members of Working Table. The full report can be found at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/speced/transformation/transformation.pdf, LDAO sent a letter to then Minister Papatello, congratulating the co-chairs, Kathleen Wynne and Dr. Sheila Bennett, and indicating that we commend and endorse the overall direction and content of the report. LDAO welcomed the proposed improvements in coordination of services, transition planning, teacher training, professional development, and accountability for student progress. After consultation with the LDAO Legislation and Policy Committee, a set of detailed comments and recommendations were sent to the Minister in August. You can find a copy of the submission on the LDAO website, under www.ldao.ca/who_helps/us.php.

Another consultation process led to the report of the Safe Schools Action Team, ***Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action***. The full report can be found at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/ssareview/report0626.html. In February 2006 LDAO had sent comments and suggestions on the safe school consultation questions to Chair Liz Sandals, and we were very pleased to see many of our concerns and ideas reflected in the report. There were many good recommendations on prevention, setting up a progressive discipline system, community and parental involvement, providing education and training to staff and students, and communicating with parents and students. A copy of comments sent to the new Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, can be found on the LDAO website, under www.ldao.ca/who_helps/us.php. On September 1st the Ministry of Education released a revised Policy/Program No.130, on *School Board Programs for Students who have received a Full Expulsion*. (www.edu.gov.on.ca/extra/eng/ppm/130.html), which appears to incorporate some of the recommendations from the Safe Schools report.

In the last edition of Communiqué, we shared a LDAO letter to Attorney General Michael Bryant, voicing our concerns about the proposed changes to the human rights complaints process. New legislation, **Bill 107**, was introduced in April, and it has passed second reading. There were public hearings before the Standing Committee on Justice Policy in Ottawa, London and Thunder Bay in August. Hearings in Toronto will take place after the legislature resumes sitting on September 25th. An organization called the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) Alliance has strong concerns about the proposed process for human rights complaints, and you can read about their efforts to get changes to the bill on their website: www.aodaalliance.org. Other groups, including ARCH Disability Law Centre, support the need for changes to the present human rights system. You can read ARCH's discussion of Bill 107 on their website: www.archdisabilitylaw.ca/index.asp.

LDAO contends that any reforms to roles of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario must maintain the types of supports that vulnerable members of the public require in order to proceed with human rights complaints, including access to investigation of their complaints and legal representation.

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