



Public Policy Roundup

Fall 2016

Ministry of Education Consultation on Provincial Demonstration Schools

In the spring of 2016 the Ministry of Education held consultations with students, families, staff, education partners and community partners on the English language Demonstration schools (for students with severe learning disabilities), Centre Jules-Leger French language Provincial & Demonstration school, and the Robarts School for the Deaf in London. On August 8, the Ministry announced its response to the consultations and released a thorough, well-written consultation summary by The Strategic Counsel, which conducted the consultations.

Based on the consultations, over the coming year the province will:

- Keep all provincial and demonstration schools open
- Pilot intensive reading intervention projects in school boards to increase the availability and responsiveness of supports for students with severe learning disabilities in their local communities
- Establish a reference group to provide guidance and input on strengthening supports for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing
- Pursue legislative changes to transfer the governance structure of Centre Jules-Léger to the 12 French-language school boards to better support French-language students.

The Ministry commitment to “pilot intensive reading intervention projects in school boards” is very welcome, and is in line with the recommendations made by LDAO over the last few years, as research continues to support the need for intensive evidence-based interventions, especially in reading, for students with learning disabilities.

The Ministry’s goal of “increasing the availability and responsiveness of supports for students with severe learning disabilities in their local communities” is admirable, and if implemented well by school boards should go a long way toward reducing the secondary effects of learning disabilities on self-esteem and social-emotional functioning.

The commitment to keep all provincial and demonstration schools open over the coming year is also important. The consultation summary documents the many positive effects of the demonstration schools both for students and for school boards. These effects are shown to go well beyond reading, although the increases in reading achievement in the demonstration school students are dramatic. The consultation summary notes recurring themes in what stakeholders said provided positive experiences for students with severe learning disabilities.

These included specialized teaching focussed on individual learning styles, the supports in the residential program, immersion in the academic and social programs 18 hours a day, and the use of assistive technology, with trained teachers and adequate IT support.

AODA Review of Information & Communications and Employment Accessibility Standards

The Information & Communications and Employment Accessibility Standards, parts 2 and 3 of **ONTARIO REGULATION 191/11, Integrated Accessibility Standards**, are being reviewed under provisions of the **Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005**, which require review of the standards after 5 years. The Accessibility Directorate has been consulting with various stakeholders, including provincial ministries, the business sector and representatives of the disability community. LDAO participated in a consultation on July 22, 2016.

Government of Canada Accessibility Consultation

The Government of Canada recently launched a consultation process that will inform the development of planned accessibility legislation. Canadians can share their views online or in person, by email, mail, fax or telephone, or by submitting videos in the language of their choice (English, French, American Sign Language or Langue des signes québécoise). The consultation process will run until February 28, 2017.

Interested individuals can read the [discussion guide](#) and submit [responses via the online questionnaire](#) or by [email](#). There will also be in-person consultation sessions, in Ottawa on Wednesday, November 30, 2016 and in Toronto on Wednesday, February 8, 2017. For more information: Canada.ca/Accessible-Canada.