



Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

Kathleen Wynne, MPP

August 11, 2005

900 Bay Street  
Mowat Block, 22<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M 7A 1L2

Dear Kathleen,

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO) was pleased to participate in the consultations of the Adult Education Review, and to send a written submission, since many of the participants in adult education programs have identified or unidentified learning disabilities (LDs).

The report coming out of the review, **Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System**, contains many positive ideas that we support. The definition of adult education is comprehensive, and the recommendation to create a specific government entity for adult education could be a very useful step.

LDAO has always encouraged partnerships in communities, and sharing of best practices. We also strongly agree that a "one model fits all" approach will not work. With learners who have LDs it is particularly important to offer a flexible, individualized approach.

The concept of learner pathways, based on access to assessment and referral services, provides an excellent framework. For learners with possible LDs, the assessment and referral process is critical to success. We do not, however, agree with the statement in section 4 of the report that "not enough is known about how to assess adults for learning disabilities". Diagnosis of learning disabilities can only be done by qualified members of the Colleges of Psychologists or Physicians and Surgeons, and access to such diagnostic assessment is still a problem for adults and a major inequity. However, a number of useful screening tools have been developed in the past few years in the adult education field, which may give some direction to learning approaches when diagnostic assessment is not available. Another aspect of assessment and referral that is critical for adults with LDs is setting appropriate goals, which fit with their strengths and weaknesses.

The statement in Section 4 that there is not "sufficient expertise to address learning disabilities if identified" is a reflection of the need for professional development in the adult education field. The expertise does exist. Practitioners can be taught how to individualize their approaches, based on the strengths and weaknesses of the learner. However, there are learners with LDs who will need to be taught by practitioners who have higher levels of training. It should be noted that there is a body of knowledge about educating adults with LDs, in the postsecondary sector, in the reports of the Learning Opportunities Task Force (LOTF).

The use of technology supports (such as text-to-speech, speech-to-text and word prediction) has provided major benefits to students with LDs at elementary, secondary and postsecondary levels. Such supports could also be very useful for learners with LDs in adult education programs. This would require training for learners and practitioners alike in the use of such technologies, as well as addressing issues of access and technical support. Computer-based instruction programs could also be useful for some learners with LDs.

The section on access to adult education rightly identifies inclusiveness as an important goal. However, inclusiveness by itself is not enough unless there is individualization of programming and teaching approaches to meet individual needs.

In conclusion, LDAO wishes to commend you for your comprehensive and thoughtful report, and to offer any support we can give to implementation of the recommendations.

Sincerely,

Ruth Taber  
Chair  
LDAO Board of Directors

c.c. Gerard Kennedy, Minister of Education  
Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges & Universities  
Mary Anne Chambers, past Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.