

For Discussion:

**The Report  
of the Inter-  
ministerial  
Working  
Group on  
Learning  
Disabilities**

*October 1992*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Background and History</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Definitions</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Discussion of Issues</b>	<b>6</b>
Assessment Services for Adults	8
Focussed Programming	8
Financial Benefits	9
Services	9
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO)	9
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Setting an Agenda for Action</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>17</b>
Program Summaries	
<b>Appendix II</b>	<b>18</b>
Background Research	
<b>Appendix III</b>	<b>21</b>
Working Group Special Consultations	
<b>Appendix IV</b>	<b>22</b>
Written Submissions	
<b>Appendix V</b>	<b>23</b>
Terms of Reference	

# REPORT OF THE INTERMINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP ON LEARNING DISABILITIES

## PREFACE

### FEAR

*The Following is the personal account of a student with a learning disability.*

*"O.K. let's all take turns in reading the following passages. Frank, you start."  
An ancient response takes over the body. The hair begins to stand on end. Blood volume increases; body temperature rises. Blood is diverted from the digestive processes; a nauseous feeling develops. Pupils dilate to let in more light. The brain releases adrenalin, a stimulant. Blood sugar levels rise. More air is breathed in than out. The eyes blink more. Muscles tense. Mouth dries. You realize you can not swallow. Heart rate and blood pressure increases. The time to fight or flee has arrived. You can not do neither so your body decides to try to escape through your pores. You become drenched in your own sweat.*

*.All this occurs the same instant you realize that you may be called on to read aloud but you forget about this fear because you have a new one; you feel like vomiting. You desperately try to search for a safe place into which you can vomit peacefully. There is none. If you keep your head forward, you will mess up your notes. If you turn your head to either side, you will mess up your classmates. At this moment Frank starts to read. You realize that you have a few minutes to avoid death through humiliation.*

*You glance back to the passage that Frank is reading. He is on the third word of the second sentence. While trying to hide behind the person in front of you, you glance over to your Professor. He caught your glance which can only mean one thing--you are going to be reading next. You look at the next passage, your passage. GREAT! It is short. The time has come to be grateful for any small miracle. You scan the passage for any word that may be difficult to read. You find one in the second sentence.*

*You know the word; the professor just used it about five minutes ago. You close your eyes and try to concentrate which is extremely difficult. The pounding of your heart is drowning out all thoughts but the mental image of vomiting an ocean over each person in the class as they snigger at your stupidity over such an easy word. You try violently to shake the thought from your head. It is time for a deep breath.*

*You can see in your mind the professor saying the word. You can see your mouth pronouncing the word. At a much deeper level, one at which you cannot hear, you know the sound of the word is being produced. You cannot, unfortunately, make a connection between the word and the sound. The harder you concentrate the more garbled the sound becomes. It is time to come up with creative solutions. You relax slightly as you convince yourself that you can mumble a sound for that word quickly enough that most of the people in the class will be fooled.*

*You hear Frank say a phrase. Time to turn to Frank's passage to see how much time you have left. You frantically search for the passage and find it at four lines from the bottom of the paragraph. Quickly you turn back to your own passage. As you look through the six lines, which comprise your passage, you find four more words which you have trouble with.*

*It is time to leave the class.*

*"Many service providers and facilities feel that learning disabilities are an "educational problem". This is despite good knowledge that children with learning disabilities can have other difficulties in the social, behavioural, attentional and emotional areas. If one does have an auditory processing problem, this affects an individual at school, at home, in the workplace, or wherever that individual might find him or herself. It is essential that services outside of the educational system therefore, are able to recognize how such difficulties may interfere with someone's performance, and develop ways of helping, recognizing, and accommodating the existence of a learning disability. If a person with a learning disability requires assistance, it is important that services exist that can provide this in the places where the problem is occurring, not just when the child is attending school." -- Dr. W. J. Mahoney, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University*

## **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY**

It has been estimated that 10% of the general population have some form of learning disability. This means that, in Ontario alone, the lives of some 500,000 adults and 300,000 children are affected.

Although educators have gradually come to accept and deal with invisible disabilities, including those which affect learning, recognition of learning disorders is not widespread outside the school system.

This problem is compounded by the fact that, until recently, most service providers and policy makers assumed that learning disabilities were primarily a children's problem. We are now increasingly aware that adults with learning disorders also encounter a variety of problems arising from their disability.

Many, for example, have trouble finding and keeping jobs. If they turn to literacy programs for help, their specific problems may not be recognized. Without accommodation, licensing examinations for some trades and professions are difficult or impossible to complete. The frustration of living with learning disabilities often leads to behavioural problems. It is a fact that teenagers and adults with learning disabilities have a disproportionately high rate of incarceration.

Many people with learning disabilities also have problems in adapting to accepted social norms. Despite average or even superior intelligence, they typically have uneven cognitive or behavioural functioning. Because of their handicap, they may appear restless and jittery, interrupt constantly, and have difficulty writing, listening, remembering a set of instructions, or maintaining eye contact.

At a time when other disability groups are preoccupied with issues like 'integration' or 'delabelling', many people with learning disabilities remain second or third class citizens whose needs are unrecognized by service delivery networks.

The concept of disability itself is, in large part, a 'social construction'. Because disabilities are protected under the 'human rights' umbrella, people with those disabilities that society has accepted, gradually gain access to a range of services and programs. People with learning disabilities are not so fortunate, despite the fact their disability is recognized in the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario (LDAO), which is the provincial advocacy and service organization for this population, has repeatedly raised concerns about lack of equity faced by their consumer members. In October 1988, at the LDAO Annual General Meeting, the following motion was passed unanimously:

'That the membership approve in principle the establishment of a Provincial Task Force on Learning Disabilities with a mandate to review all significant issues relating to this population, including the status of the learning disabled adult in Ontario.'

In December of 1988, a brief was presented to the Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, CCSP. As a result, a sub-committee of the CCSP was established under the leadership of the Minister of Education. This sub-committee met on May 4, 1989, with representatives of the LDAO, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister for Disabled Persons, and representatives from the Ministries of Health and Colleges & Universities.

The Task Force, renamed the Interministerial Working Group on Learning Disabilities (WGLD), was formed in 1990 under the leadership of the Office for Disability Issues and expanded to include representatives of the ministries of Correctional Services and Skills Development. LDAO was represented in an ex-officio capacity.

The members of the Working Group on Learning Disabilities (WGLD) approached their task from the basic assumption that learning disabilities do exist and that concerted action is needed to ensure the availability of appropriate services and consistency with the intent of the Ontario Human Rights Code.

The LDAO urged that the WGLD review government policies, programs in an effort to identify exclusionary policies and practices as well as gaps in services and funding. The LDAO also recommended that the task force refrain from trying to develop its own definition of learning disabilities and that school-based educational services for children with learning disabilities not be a focus for discussion. The rationale for these recommendations was, as follows.

1. The America Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities, which reported to the U.S. Congress in 1987, was unable to develop a satisfactory definition of learning disability, although it spent most of its time on this activity.
2. The Ontario Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing special education terminology, including the definition of learning disabilities.
3. While there is certainly room for improvement in the delivery of educational services to children with learning disabilities, 1980 amendments to the Education Act, have resulted in more equitable access and the right to an appropriate education.

The WGLD incorporated these recommendations into its interpretation of the terms of reference (See appendix).

## DEFINITIONS

Dr. Samuel Kirk is credited with having coined the term "learning disabilities" at a 1962 psychology conference in Chicago. Since then, several definitions of the condition have been proposed. Although the WGLD agreed that it would not attempt to redefine the term 'learning disability', it decided to examine issues within the context of the three existing definitions listed below. It was felt that these definitions built on each other, and as such, created a solid working framework for the WGLD.

- (i) Learning disabilities: disorders in which the main feature is a serious impairment in the development of other learning skills which are not explicable in terms of general intellectual retardation or of inadequate schooling. -- *from World Health Organization, Classification of Diseases, Vol. 9, 1975.*
- (ii) Learning disabilities is a generic term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders due to identifiable or inferred central nervous system dysfunction. Such disorders may be manifested by delays in early development and/or difficulties in any of the following areas: attention, memory, reasoning, coordination, communicating, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, social competence, emotional maturation.

Learning disabilities are intrinsic to the individual and may affect learning and behaviour in any individual, including those with potentially average, average or above average intelligence.

Learning disabilities are not due primarily to visual, hearing or motor handicaps; to mental retardation, emotional disturbance or environmental disadvantage; although they may occur concurrent with any of these. Learning disabilities may arise from genetic variation, biochemical factors, events in the pre- to post-natal period or any other subsequent events resulting in neurological impairment.-- *Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (1984). (Approved by the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario 1985)*

- (iii) A learning disorder evident in both academic and social situations that involves one or more of the processes necessary for the proper use of spoken language or the symbols of communication, and that is characterized by a condition that:
  - a) is not primarily the result of impairment of vision; impairment of hearing; physical handicap; mental retardation; primary emotional disturbance or cultural difference, and
  - b) results in a significant discrepancy between academic achievement and assessed intellectual ability, with deficits in one or more of: receptive language (i.e. listening, real language processing (i.e. thinking, conceptualizing, integrating); expressive language (i.e. talking, spelling, writing) and mathematical computations and
  - c) may be associated with one or more conditions diagnosed as: a perceptual handicap; a brain injury; minimal brain dysfunction; dyslexia or developmental aphasia. -- *The Ministry of Education (under review) 1984.*

The Working Group decided that several noneducational programs, which people with LD need to or wish to access, should be included in its review. These included programs designed for people with other types of disabilities, those specifically designed for persons with LD, and those which are generic. Also included in the review were programmes of training and education that, while generally available, may not accommodate or properly support persons with LD.

Each Ministry was invited to provide a description of the programs for which it had responsibility and which fell into any of the above categories. Members of the WGLD then reviewed these program descriptions with a view to identifying gaps in policy, service and funding.

Since the Working Group on Learning Disabilities had a relatively short time in which to complete its work, the consultation process was selective. The Working Group met with members of the LDAO, the Community College Special Needs Group, the University Special Needs Group, representatives of the Ministry of Education's demonstration schools for students with severe LD, and members of the Ministry of Education Advisory Council on Special Education.

The recommendations in this report were based on the program review and information received through the consultation process.

The Interministerial Working Group on Learning Disabilities also solicited written submissions and consulted with the public and expert groups. This process confirmed that there are significant gaps in services for people with learning disabilities and their families.

## DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

### **MR. EMPLOYER, I'LL TELL YOU WHY YOU DIDN'T HIRE ME**

**by  
Lucie Milne**

*"You never watched me work. In fact, you have never even seen me. The nearest that you ever came to knowing about me was a glance at my application form. I say a glance, because you couldn't read it, not much of it anyway. My writing isn't so hot, and I can't spell at all. You see, I'm a learning disabled person for whom time ran out."*

*"School was bad news for me - all the way. I just couldn't seem to learn in the way that the other kids did. I had a hard time learning to read and I kept getting my letters mixed up when it came to spelling. There wasn't any special help for kids like me. I got more and more behind. I felt as if I were always running for a train. Every time I thought I would catch hold of the handrail, the train would pick up speed. And finally, I couldn't run any more and the train was gone. I became a school dropout. In school nowadays, they help all the kids who are like me in special ways. But the time for such help, for me, has passed by."*

*"I would sure like to work in your company. I'm good with my hands. I had really good marks in the shops I took in high school before I left. I like the feel of tools, and I would work hard too. But you will never know that, because the nearest you came to knowing about me was that piece of paper that passed over the desk and into the wastepaper basket."*

*I'm back on the pavement, walking - looking for a sign "HELP WANTED"! Yeah, I sure could use some help."*

\* \* \*

The Working Group found that inequity is the current reality for people with learning disabilities and those who advocate on their behalf.

Systemic discrimination against those with learning disabilities is largely the result of misunderstanding and scepticism. In practical terms, this inequity results in;

- lack of access to appropriate assessment services for adults;
- lack of focussed programming, especially in the areas of vocational training, employment and support;
- lack of access to benefits;
- lack of access to family support services such as respite care and Special Services in the Home; and
- the inability of the LDAO to secure access to funds for service delivery and advocacy.



Although the Ontario Human Rights Code specifies 'learning disabilities' as a distinct disabling condition, many Government statutes, regulations and policy statements fail to include 'learning disabilities' within their overall definition of 'disability'.

It may be that because learning disabilities are invisible, widespread scepticism about their validity persists. Whatever the reason, there are gaps in understanding and controversy over the prevalence of learning disabilities.

Early appropriate intervention, including money spent up front to deal with learning disabilities, is an investment that can result in potential future cost savings. For example, there is a strong correlation between incarceration and learning disabilities. In a 1986 study entitled 'The Learning Disabled Young Offender in Ontario Training Schools', by the Ontario Ministry of Education, A.D. Mackey and W. Moffat estimated that 10 to 12 per cent of young people with learning disabilities became incarcerated, as compared with only 2.5 per cent of the general population.

A 1976 American study by D. A. Murray, 'The Link Between Learning Disabilities and Juvenile Delinquency: Current Theory and Knowledge', painted a much more serious picture. It estimated that the incarceration rate of learning disabled juveniles was as much as 90 per cent. Whatever the true figures may be, it is clear that timely recognition and support for children with learning disabilities can help to prevent the escalation of emotional and behavioural problems which often lead to anti-social behaviour.

In 1989, school boards in Ontario identified 3.5 per cent of the total student population as being exceptional students with learning disabilities. In 1988, the Office for Disability Issues 'Statistical Profile of Disabled Persons' reported that 16 per cent of the population of Ontario had learning disabilities. These inconsistencies reflect confusion and lack of understanding about the definition of a learning disability and its application. The edges blur between what conditions constitute a 'learning disability' and what simply falls within the normal range of learning. Definitions are also influenced by changes in 'testing technology', and one test is not necessarily compatible with another.

Nevertheless, experts such as pediatrician Dr. W.J. Mahoney of McMaster University say that learning disabilities are, without doubt, the most common disabling condition affecting children, adolescents and adults. It is also expected that the incidence of learning disabilities will increase as advances in neo-natal technology result in more 'successful' premature births and a growing knowledge of how this condition correlates to fetal-alcohol syndrome.

Children with learning disabilities, for the most part, are supported in the educational system. A wide range of tests are now available to accurately identify and validate the existence of suspected learning disabilities. In accordance with the Education Act, students who are assessed as learning disabled are now entitled to special help and accommodation which enables them to perform up to their academic potential. But what happens after they finish school, or in areas of their lives that aren't directly related to school?

The Working Group found significant gaps and fragmentation in Government services for persons with learning disabilities. These are identified in the Program Summary Review section (see appendix).

## MEMBERSHIP

### STEERING COMMITTEE

Mr. Clem Sauvé  
Senior Adviser  
Office for Disability Issues

Dr. Ralph Benson  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Colleges and Student Support  
Ministry of Colleges and Universities

Ms Jane Marlatt  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Family Services and Income Maintenance Division  
Ministry of Community and Social Services

Mr. Wally Beevor  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Learning Programs Division  
Ministry of Education

Mr. C.A. Bigenwald  
Executive Director  
Consumer Services Division  
Ministry of Health

### WORKING GROUP

Tim Nichols/Sandra Carpenter  
Office for Disability Issues (Chair)  
Ministry of Citizenship

Nancy Kelly/Jane Kirkwood  
Program Services Division  
Ministry of Colleges and Universities

Don Werner  
Special Education and Provincial Schools Branch  
Ministry of Education

Kirby Rowe  
Health Programs Unit  
Ministry of Health

Charles Hinds  
Corporate Policy  
Ministry of Correctional Services

Another problem is that some of the programs and policies that were designed to benefit persons with disabilities do not define learning disorders as disabilities. As a result, people with learning disabilities are excluded from eligibility and do not have equity within these programs.

In other cases, people with learning disabilities, who are theoretically eligible for certain programs, cannot benefit from them because no accommodation is made for their disability. Although this appears to be primarily due to a lack of awareness of the problem, inequity is the result.

The findings of the WGLD supported the key concerns raised by members of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario. Although the root concern is equity, there are five primary aspects to this.

## **I ASSESSMENT SERVICES FOR ADULTS**

The WGLD found that one of the most crucial problems facing learning disabled adults is the difficulty in being properly assessed when they attempt to obtain services. This problem is compounded by scepticism and ignorance about learning disabilities.

Despite the requirements of the Education Act, some school boards are reluctant to formally identify children with learning disabilities. Without a formal assessment and disability identification, pupils have trouble obtaining appropriate services both inside and outside the school system.

The problem is exacerbated for post-secondary students who may need up-to-date assessments. Policies with respect to who pays for these assessments, and the nature of testing, vary among community colleges and universities.

Last but by no means least, evidence of current, formal assessments are required for adults seeking access to certain government programs and services. People with learning disabilities all too frequently end up paying for their own assessments -- an out-of-pocket cost of up to \$1,000. By contrast, "proof" of other disabilities can generally be provided by a medical doctor's signature, and is therefore covered by OHIP.

## **II FOCUSED PROGRAMMING**

The general public has a very limited understanding of "learning disabilities", because it is easy to ignore something you can't see. This compounds the isolation that people with LD and their families encounter. The public must be made aware of the causes and manifestations of learning disabilities, and the fact that the disability can be verified with testing.

Similarly, greater awareness on the part of professionals can lead to better and earlier identification of learning disabilities and the need for improved access to services. This could alleviate a great deal of suffering, and ensure that fewer individuals 'slip through the cracks'.

When adults with significant but undiagnosed learning difficulties seek help from generic literacy or skills development programs, they often discover that those who operate such programs have little or no familiarity with specific learning disabilities.

This is also true of various vocational training, employment and support programs. Generally there are no focussed programs for the trainers, counsellors or other staff of these programs. This can lead to unnecessary frustration and failure on the part of undiagnosed LD participants.

These problems could be partially remedied if those associated with these programs were trained to recognize some of the problems specific to program participants who evidence a learning disability.

### **III FINANCIAL BENEFITS**

The social assistance safety net has also failed in its response to this population. A diagnosis of learning disability, alone, is not sufficient to qualify a person for Family Benefits/GAINS D allowance. Unless people with learning disabilities have other disabilities, or are sole support parents, they are denied access to these programs.

### **IV SERVICES**

Learning disabilities should be identified in all pertinent statutes, regulations and policies as a distinct and separate category of disabilities. In addition to ensuring that benefits are made available to those with learning disabilities, this would be an important first step toward raising awareness.

Adults and children with learning disabilities can also experience exclusions when they seek help from specific programs. People with learning disabilities and their families have specifically cited their lack of access to the Ministry of Health's *Assistive Devices Program*, or the Ministry of Community and Social Services *Special Services in the Home*. The Assistive Devices Program does not offer ongoing access to technical support throughout life for the LD population.

In post-secondary educational facilities, assessments and labels are only useful to the extent that appropriate accommodations are available. There should be more emphasis on developing and sharing teaching strategies that work.

Recognition of the non-academic needs of persons with learning disabilities is also essential. The Special Needs Office of one community college, for example, offers a useful course on social skills.

Faculties are often reluctant to allow in-class accommodation, because of the belief that students should be as independent as possible. As a result, those students with learning disabilities attending post-secondary institutions often have a very difficult time.

### **V LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO (LDAO)**

Many Government policies and programs, and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) in particular, do not recognize learning disabilities as broadly as developmental and physical ones. Therefore, there has been no agreement to date to enter into fee for service agreements with LDAO for counselling and other services provided by the Association to persons with learning disabilities, even if referred by MCSS. This has in part contributed to the Association's financial difficulties.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The WGLD formulated the following recommendations after reviewing the results of its consultations with interested public and expert groups (Appendix III), summaries of government programs (Appendix I) and select background documents (Appendix II).

The recommendations fall into two categories: those areas thought to be strategic initiatives, and those which relate to specific ministries.

### **Recommendation 1**

#### Strategic Initiatives

The WGLD proposes that ministries develop appropriate, concrete action plans and timetables.

#### Equity

That, in Government legislation, regulations, policies and programs referencing persons with disabilities, consideration be given to referencing "learning disabilities" as a distinct category of disability.

Reference is made to the following ministries, in particular:

- Education
- Colleges and Universities
- Health
- Correctional Services
- Community and Social Services
- Skills Development
- Labour
- Tourism and Recreation
- Industry, Trade and Technology
- Ministry of Citizenship, Office for Disability Issues
- Attorney General
- Housing; and

that, as part of its review to assess compatibility and compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedom and the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Government

- review all legislation, regulations, policies, and programs to determine where references are made to persons with disabilities, in general;
- determine whether or not such legislation, regulations, policies, and programs are explicitly or implicitly exclusionary to persons with learning disabilities and/or limit access due to accommodation inequities;
- where no exclusionary elements are noted, indicate how persons with learning disabilities are accommodated;
- identify changes required to provide equity for persons with learning disabilities;

- develop an action plan to address the exclusionary issues; and,
- that the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario be recognized as an expert source of training and sensitization, and that consideration be given to purchasing training services from them in this regard.

The WGLD also makes the following recommendations with respect to specific issues as they relate to one or more ministries:

## **Recommendation 2**

### Ministry of Education/Correctional Services

- (a) That those who develop and deliver literacy programs be required to receive appropriate training about learning disabilities.
- (b) That social skills training for persons with learning disabilities be provided.

## **Recommendation 3**

### Ministry of Education/Skills Development/Correctional Services/Colleges and Universities

That a committee, led by the Ministry of Education, be formed to facilitate an agreement regarding the portability of assessments:

- (a) That any ministry or government agency which requires a formal assessment of the individual who wishes to access its services, pay for the cost of that assessment.
- (b) That appropriate mechanisms for sharing the results of assessments with other government funded programs or services be developed, but that such information only be shared or transferred with the permission of the assessed individual, in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA).
- (c) To ensure that psychological assessments for learning disabilities be conducted by duly qualified professionals, and that the results, together with any recommendations, be communicated in a way that can be clearly understood by both the client and the receiver.

## **Recommendation 4**

### Ministry of Colleges and Universities

That post-secondary facilities and service providers should be encouraged to;

- (a) provide specialized English courses for persons with learning disabilities who require them; and
- (b) develop and implement policies that accommodate the needs of students with learning disabilities.

## **Recommendation 5**

### Ministry of Colleges and Universities

That all community colleges and universities, which have not already done so, be encouraged to establish special needs advisory committees.

## **Recommendation 6**

### Ministry of Health

That the Ministry of Health, as part of its periodic review of the Assistive Devices Program, take into consideration the needs of persons with learning disabilities.

## **Recommendation 7**

### Ministry of Citizenship

That future Office For Disability Issues public awareness campaigns specifically address learning disabilities.

## **Recommendation 8**

### Management Board of Cabinet - Human Resources Secretariat

That information about learning disabilities (which is appropriate to the particular discipline) be used in the training and upgrading of professionals in the human service field.

## **Recommendation 9**

Management Board of Cabinet - Human Resources Secretariat

(a) That support staff in front line 'customer service' positions in the public sector programs or services should be trained in being sensitive to persons with learning disabilities.

(b) That public sector employees whose work leads to interaction with persons with learning disabilities should be trained in the needs of learning disabled persons and made aware of the issue.

## **Recommendation 10**

Ministry of Community and Social Services

That people with learning disabilities and their associations be given the same consideration for equal access to funding and services as other persons with disabilities and their organizations.



## SETTING AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

The Ontario Government is committed to ensuring the equal participation of people with disabilities. We have entrenched the right to accommodation of disabilities through the Ontario Human Rights Code and, for people with disabilities, this includes the right to appropriate services. For those with learning disabilities, however, 'right of access to services', is still far from being a reality.

If Ontario is truly committed to the concept of equal participation for people with disabilities, that commitment must be supported with action and the equitable treatment of people with invisible disabilities.

Our findings clearly point to the need to provide people who have learning disabilities with focussed services. "Equal treatment" does not necessarily mean the "same treatment".

Concern has been expressed that a broad recognition of learning disabilities will lead to an unmanageable increase in demands for services and related costs. Demands will increase, but learning disabilities vary widely in severity. The Ministry of Education's recognition of these disabilities, coupled with early intervention, should eventually result in a decreased demand for adult services. Only the more severe conditions will need additional access to those programs delineated in the foregoing recommendations.

Although cost savings arising from prevention and early intervention will not be realized immediately, the WGLD believes that Government should take action now. Further work must be done in terms of developing a plan to manage the resulting demand for disability services.

Recommendation #1 is specifically constructed to form the basis of a Government-wide plan of action that will result in equity for people with learning disabilities. It is hoped that the expedient identification of barriers and inequities will result in their elimination.

In the best of worlds, we would have an education system that provides individualized learning for all children. When that happens, 'learning disabilities' may cease to exist. It may take its place on the curve of 'normal' human experience - like wearing glasses - but until then the problems of older children and adults which have not been addressed in the current system, will need to be addressed through initiatives such as those contained in this report.

The findings in this report, and the process by which the WGLD obtained them, are only a beginning. The WGLD feels quite strongly that the financial and human resource implications of these recommendations will have to be developed for specific Ministry programs. It is hoped that this report will act as a catalyst to facilitate positive action.

Doreen Seddon/Ava Arron  
Employment Services Unit  
Community Services Branch  
Ministry of Community and Social Services

Nancy Sagmeister  
Corporate Policy Unit  
Ministry of Skills Development

Ex Officio

Eva Nichols  
Executive Director  
Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario

## APPENDIX II

### **BACKGROUND RESOURCES**

#### REPORTS FROM GOVERNMENT

##### *UNITED STATES:*

PRESIDENTS COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF THE HANDICAPPED; "Supervising with Learning Disabilities," (7 pages, 1986)

"The Link Between Learning Disabilities and Juvenile Delinquency: Current Theoretical Knowledge", by D.A. Murray, 1976.

##### *CANADA:*

EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION CANADA;

"The Job Accommodation Network in Canada: Accommodating Disabled Persons on the Job", pamphlet, 1989

##### *NOVA SCOTIA:*

"Learning Disabled Students in the Nova Scotia Public School System," by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Feb. 1990

##### *ONTARIO:*

MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES;

Vision 2000: Quality and Opportunity. A Summary, The Final Report of Vision 2000 Review of the Mandate, 1990

College Committee on Special Needs: Special Needs Statistical Report, April 1, 1989 - March 31, 1990. May 1990, Data Collections Sub-Committee. Chair: David Robertson.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES;

Report on Special Education Pilot Project, April 1990. (Pilot project - course for dealing with special education - at Faculty of Education, Department of Continuing Studies, Brock University.)

Report by David Robertson, Co-ordinator, Counselling and Special Needs, Centennial College, Central Region Representatives, College Committee on Special Needs.

MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION, HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES;

Interministerial Guidelines for the Provision of Speech and Language Services, September 1988.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION;

"The Learning Disabled Young Offender in Ontario Training Schools", by D.A. Murray and W. Moffat, 1986.

Policy/Program Memorandum No. 81: July 19, 1984: "Provision of Health Support Services in School Settings."

Memorandum: Revised 1982, Policy Memorandum # 8, Learning Disabilities.

Memorandum: August 14, 1989: "Catheterization and Suctioning: Clarification of Policy/Program Memorandum No. 81, Model for Provision of School Health Support Services, Group III"

Memorandum: Revised 1982, Policy Memorandum # 11, Early Identification of Children's Learning Needs.

Memorandum: Sept. 29, 1988, Policy Memorandum # 54. Ministry of Education Training Programs for Teachers.

Memorandum: Feb. 6, 1990. Policy Memorandum # 89. The Residential Demonstration Schools For Students with Learning Disabilities: General Information and Details of the Referral Process.

Memorandum: April 18, 1988. To Regional Directors of Education, Application Procedures for Admission to Demonstration Schools.

Brochures on Residential Demonstration Schools

- 1) Ministry of Education, Education for Pupils with Special Needs, 1987. Learning Disabilities, 1987. The Trillium School.
- 2) Sagonaska School, Belleville, Ontario. Programs and Services.
- 3) The Robarts School, London. A Regional Resource Centre for Communication Exceptionalities; The Residence Counsellor; Professional Development Opportunities At the Robarts School, London; Robarts Demonstration School Program: Learning Disabled.

Brochure: A Parent Guide to Special Education Services, Education for Every Child. The Bruce-Grey County, Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

Brochure: A Parent's Guide to Special Education, The Sudbury Board of Education.

MINISTRIES OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND RECREATION, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES;

Human Resource and Training Needs in Ontario's Hospitality Industry, 1990.

OFFICE FOR DISABILITY ISSUES

Guide To Ontario Government Programs & Services for Persons with Disabilities, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1990

*LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATIONS:*

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA;  
LDA Eligibility Position Paper and Supporting Documents, 1990

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF NORTH PEEL;  
(Report of) Pilot Employment Program, 1990 (30 pages)

Resource Guide, 1989 (48 pages)

Resource Guide Research Study, Nov. 1989 (21 pages)

Newsletter, November 1990

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO;

Electronic Library: A computerized list of specific resource information (from LD/ library)

Document: "Input to the Provincial Task Force on Learning Disabilities," August 1989, 8 pages

Document: "Proposed Provincial Task Force on Learning Disabilities, More for Less Strategic Planning," April 1989, 3 pages.

*OTHERS:*

Bridges magazine, vol. 7, spring 1990. (Article "Dyslexia," page 12.)

Cambrian College (Sudbury): package of information from Academic Support Program Division; Adaptive Curriculum, English

Canadore College (North Bay): informative pamphlets & student guide for LD students

Computer printouts from Metropolitan Toronto Library on LD sources  
"Identifying Alterable Patterns in Employment Success for Highly Successful Adults with Learning Disabilities," executive summary, by Paul Gerber, Rick Ginsberg and Harold Reiff. (School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University, Oct. 1990). Also, complete version in "final draft," undated, submitted to Journal of Learning Disabilities)

Integra Study of the Mental Health Needs of Children and Youth with Learning Disabilities in Metropolitan Toronto, 1991 (52 pages plus appendices). Also, Summary Report of Integra Study (23 pages)

"S.O.L.D. A Futures Model for Successful Employment." Draft March 1st, 1988. Submitted and prepared by Susan Shannon, conducted by St. Lawrence College Saint-Laurent, Brockville Campus. (funded by the Ministry of Skills Development.)

The Wellesley Learning Disabilities Program: covering letter to Tim Nichols from Chapman, June 25, 1990 and "Proposal for Financial Support for the Wellesley Programme for Children with Motor Handicaps."

York University, "Modified Admission Procedures for Students with Learning Disabilities," Sept., 1990, (with covering letter) 2 pages

### APPENDIX III

#### **WORKING GROUP SPECIAL CONSULTATIONS**

OCT. 28, 1990: LDAO Annual General Meeting

NOV. 20, 1990: Presentation at provincial committee of the college committee on special needs

JAN. 21, 1991: Working Group at meeting of inter-university association on special needs

JAN. 25, 1991: Working Group consultation at meeting of the Ministry of Education Advisory Council on Special Education

## APPENDIX IV

### WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston, Dec. 8, 1990
2. Learning Disabilities Association of London Middlesex, Oct. 1990
3. Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough, Dec. 11, 1990  
from Coordinator of Resource Centre
4. Letter from assistant professor of pediatrics at McMaster University.
5. Letter from Trent Valley Literacy Association, Peterborough, Dec. 11, 1990
6. Letter from an adult with learning disabilities, Oct. 19, 1990, accompanied by a letter from the adult's mother.
7. Letter with no return address, Dec. 19, 1990
8. Letter from parent of student with learning disabilities, Jan. 14, 1991
9. Letter from parents of student with learning disabilities, Kemptville, Dec. 3, 1990
10. Letter from parents of child with learning disabilities, St. Catharines, undated.
11. Letter from father of child with learning disabilities. eight pages, undated, no return address.
12. Letter from pediatric psychiatry consultant, chief of psychiatric services at Joseph Brant Hospital in Burlington. Nov., 5, 1990.
13. Letter from professor of developmental neuro-psychiatry, University of Western Ontario, Nov. 7, 1990.

### From written submissions to the Working Group:

**"A mother was standing looking at our library and crying. She said 'Why did no one tell me there was information for me. I was so alone.' And she listed the professionals she had been to." -- Betty Borg, Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association of Peterborough.**

## APPENDIX V

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The following objective, tasks and timeframe were announced by the Minister for Disabled Persons in February, 1990.

#### Objective

The Working Group on Learning Disabilities, WGLD, will investigate the availability and accessibility of provincial government services for the benefit of adults and children with learning disabilities by identifying where there are services gaps and/or duplications, and how well existing services are meeting those needs.

This will be undertaken with the understanding that in the present fiscal climate, it is not anticipated that new funds will be available and that any identified gaps would have to be covered, to the extent possible, by redeployment of existing funds and programs.

#### Tasks

1. Determine working definitions of and for learning disabilities.
2. Determine need and scope of services required by persons with learning disabilities.

What Government is doing:

3. Review outstanding issues.
4. Identify relevant existing programs and services.
5. Determine access to programs and services for adults and children with learning disabilities by looking at eligibility criteria, targeting of funds, support services and resource materials.
6. Determine availability of programs and services.
7. Conduct assessment of gaps in services.

What Government should be doing:

8. Carry out a community consultation process in which groups will be invited to offer their own priorities and concerns related to the issues that have been identified.
9. Review the recommendations from the community.
10. Develop and draft a report with findings, recommendations and a timetable for action.

#### Timeframe

The working group was initially expected to complete its task by January 1991.

The timeframe was amended to accommodate the need for the initial round of consultations.



## WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU ...

1. The overall direction taken in this paper focuses on the right of people with learning disabilities to access services and programs focused on persons with disabilities. Do you have comments on this approach?
2. Do you have any comments related to any specific recommendations?
3. With regard to these recommendations, what are the most important priorities to be addressed?
4. Are there key issues not addressed in this consultation paper?
5. Do you have other general comments or recommendations on this subject for the Government, the Working Group, or the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, regarding the issues raised in this report?

If you would like, please provide the following information:

- \_\_\_\_\_ a person with a learning disability
- \_\_\_\_\_ a family member of a person with a learning disability
- \_\_\_\_\_ a professional working in the field of learning disability
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please send your reply by January 29, 1993 to:

Chair, Working Group on Learning Disabilities  
Office for Disability Issues  
700 Bay Street, 3rd Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5G 1Z6

Fax: (416) 327-4080