

## **PUBLIC POLICY ROUNDUP Spring 2012**

### **Learning Disabilities Working Group**

In June 2011 the Special Education Policy & Programs Branch of the Ministry of Education set up a **Learning Disabilities Working Group**, to provide expertise and share knowledge with the Ministry of Education in the area of LDs, inform the review of PPM 8 *Learning Disabilities*, inform the development of Guidelines for Learning Disabilities, and support the development of a repository of relevant resources on LD that will be available to school boards electronically.

At their January meeting the working group members reviewed a draft of a new PPM and provided feedback. This feedback was incorporated into a new draft which was reviewed at the March meeting. Also at the March meeting, preliminary feedback was given to a draft *Guidelines for Special Education Programs and Services for Students with Learning Disabilities*. The process seems to be going well.

### **Review of Social Assistance in Ontario**

The *Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario* released in December a summary of what they heard in the fall consultation, and a second Discussion paper with suggestions for reforms: [www.socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications](http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications). LDAO submitted a response on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Among other points, we said that “the use of standard assessment tools and the concept of assessing for ‘work capacity’ can be fraught with difficulties for individuals with LDs. Learning disabilities are complex, and some of the difficulties they cause are not easy to evaluate without professional assessment ... Simple checklists or other standard tools used by service providers would not be sensitive enough to evaluate ‘work capacity’ in most individuals with LDs.”

### **Report of the Drummond Commission and the Ontario Budget**

In March 2011 the Ontario government established the Drummond Commission to provide advice on how to make long-term, fundamental changes to the way government delivers services, as part of its commitment to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 while protecting education and health care. The report was received in February 2012, and there were a number of issues addressed that had the potential to impact individuals and families who are dealing with LDs. LDAO prepared a response and sent this with a letter to Premier McGuinty, copied to the Ministers of Education, Children & Youth Services, Community & Social Services, and Training, Colleges & Universities. Not all recommendations in the Drummond Report were followed up in the March 27, 2012 Ontario budget, but the Ministry of Education did decide to limit funding for high school credits beyond 34 (four more than required for graduation) starting in 2013-14. In a March 29, 2012 memo to Directors of Education, an Assistant Deputy Minister stated “As the mechanics of this cap must meet diverse student needs, the Ministry will consult on how best to achieve this, including consultation on possible exemptions.” The memo went on to say that input would be sought from parents and students as well as sector partners.