

# UPDATE NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2009



## **Council Update**

Since the spring, the MLPD has been very active in the community advocating on behalf of its members on a number of issues. One of those issues is Bill C-384 which would legalize euthanasia in Canada. The MLPD has joined with the Council of Canadians with Disabilities in its opposition to assisted suicide and euthanasia because of the adverse impact it would have on persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities would bear the negative social consequences of any legislation that allows the killing of people perceived to be suffering.

We are also very concerned over the recent announcement made by Greyhound Bus Lines to cancel passenger bus service in Manitoba and North Western Ontario. If the company decision is not reversed it will result in persons with a disability having fewer transportation options and thus having a more difficult time in getting around the province. We find this totally unacceptable! The MLPD will continue to monitor the situation and will respond in the best interests of all Manitobans with a disability.

The MLPD continues to play an active role on the Social Planning Council's Poverty Advisory Committee. We recently took in a forum on poverty which was hosted by the City of Winnipeg. Our city is currently in the process of developing a brand new 25 year plan and has been consulting with interested groups and citizens.

Finally, the MLPD continues to implement the strategic plan which it unveiled almost a year ago and is looking to its future with great optimism.

Harry Wolbert  
MLPD Co- Chair

***We are trying to use e-mail as much as possible to send updates on MLPD activities. If you have e-mail, please send your e-mail address to Josie at [MLPD@shawcable.com](mailto:MLPD@shawcable.com)***

## **Introduction to the new Thumbs Up for Access Program**

The thumbs up program originated in St. Thomas, Ontario several years ago. The program recognizes stores that are accessible to customers with mobility barriers. Stores voluntarily participate in the program and if they meet a list of criteria. The store is provided with a thumbs up decal to display and is given a certificate. This summer, the MLPD initiated a similar pilot project with Dan Halechko and Derek Legge sharing the role of coordinator.

The original thumbs up decal used a wheelchair in its design. Our project wanted to not limit the idea of accessibility to wheelchairs and just uses the thumbs up logo (a hand in the thumbs up position) with the words "thumbs up for access"

The project runs from July to mid October, 2009. The objectives set were

- 1.) To pilot the program focusing on the downtown business community,
- 2.) Develop materials for the project and
- 3.) Develop a blueprint for future campaigns elsewhere in the city or in the province. A letter of introduction was distributed with the support of the downtown biz to over 3000 businesses. A small advisory committee was also created to provide input.

The toughest question in this project was setting the accessibility criteria for issuing the thumbs up for access decal and certificate. There are so many aspects to accessibility, access and

safety that if there were too many requirements, there would be next to no stores qualifying. This project was not looking to compete with the city of Winnipeg's accessibility awards which looks for great examples of accessibility and is usually recognizing larger facilities, e.g. regional health facilities, MTS centre. The thumb up project is aimed at retail stores, most of which are small. The Thumbs Up decal will not indicate that a store is universally accessible and useable, but will only be issued to those businesses that have basic access and no clear barriers or safety hazards.

Perhaps of more lasting benefit, the project will be distributing a "helpful hints of accessibility ideas" handout to all downtown businesses. It will also be available after the project from the MLPD office. The ideas list will make suggestions for retail stores, services, churches and restaurants. Things like large print menus or church service bulletins, benches in large lobbies for people and waiting for pickups, better contrast on stairs and lower counter levels are some examples. If anyone reading this has suggestions for our handout, please contact the MLPD office.

It is not clear if the pilot project will turn into an ongoing program or not, but the MLPD will certainly share its experience with anyone looking to promote accessibility elsewhere in the province.

**Members Sought for Participation in Sinclair Inquest**

No doubt, many of you have heard or read about the case of Brian Sinclair, the 34 year old disabled man who sat in a hospital waiting room for 34 hours waiting for treatment for a bladder infection and died there without receiving the attention he needed. Following this, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority subsequently implemented procedures to ensure that people seeking treatment in hospital emergency rooms are seen and their needs addressed in a timely manner. An inquest has also been called into Mr. Sinclair's death although a specific date for this has not been set.

The issues presented by Mr. Sinclair's death are important for the MLPD and people with disabilities. The MLPD believes that all Manitobans regardless of ability have the right to be treated equally and fairly under the law and by service systems (including healthcare facilities and hospitals) designed to meet their needs.

As such, emergency rooms and other healthcare facilities should have policies and procedures in place to ensure that citizens (including those with disabilities) who require treatment are seen in a timely manner and those in crisis are dealt with expeditiously and fairly so that they do not come to harm as a result. In addition, staff employed in health care facilities such as clinics and hospitals (including those working in emergency rooms) should receive training on an ongoing basis so that they acquire the necessary skills to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These measures

would go a long way to mitigate circumstances such as Mr. Sinclair's from recurring and endeavor to meet the needs of all Manitobans.

Although the MLPD was unable to obtain formal intervention status at the inquest due to insufficient financial resources and the difficulties in obtaining pro bono legal representation, we plan to make ourselves visible at the inquest by attending the hearings and to speak with the media where opportunities present themselves.

We are looking for MLPD members who would be available to attend the inquest and feel comfortable in speaking with the media.

Please contact Colleen Watters at 488-0466 or [wattersc@mts.net](mailto:wattersc@mts.net) if you would like to participate in this important activity.

Once a date for the inquest has been set, I will contact those interested in participating and we will get together to go over a prepared statement on MLPD's position on Mr. Sinclair's case and discuss your role at the inquest.

Colleen Watters  
Chairperson  
MLPD Ethics Committee

**Upcoming Events:**

**Multicultural Disability Awareness Night**

October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009, 7:00pm  
Deaf Centre Manitoba 285 Pembina Hwy  
Guest speaker Jon Gerrard (MLA River Heights & Manitoba Liberal leader) Tickets are \$25 which includes dinner cash bar will also be available.  
To make a reservation call CMDC Executive Director Zephania Matanga 453-0391.

**Make Poverty History Manitoba Forum**

Monday October 5, 2009 6:30-8:30  
Eckhardt-Grammate Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Centennial Hall, U of W. NDP Leadership candidates will answer questions brought forward by community organizations regarding poverty concerns followed by questions from the audience.

**REES Open House**

Thursday October 22<sup>nd</sup> 3-6.  
305-1200 Portage Ave. We hope you can join them at their open house as they recognize and celebrate their many donors and supporters.

The Canadian Centre on Disability Studies presents:  
*Creating a more inclusive world by learning and acting together*

Thursday September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
12:00-5:00 pm  
International Symposium

Friday September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
9:00 am-1:00 pm  
Research Symposium  
2:00 pm- 3:00 pm  
CCDS AGM  
Red River College  
Princess Street Campus,  
Multipurpose Room  
(Refreshments Provided)  
160 Princess Street, Winnipeg, MB  
call 287-8411 for more information



**The 2009/2010 MLPD Provincial Council:**

**Harry Wolbert (Co-chair), Terry McIntosh (Co-chair),  
Paula Keirstead ( Vice- Chair), Dean Richert, Colleen  
Watters, Clare Simpson (Treasurer), Ross Eadie  
(Secretary), Zanna Joyce, Theresa Swedick, Pauline  
Mason, Gary Dyson, Louise McKean, Ted Roots  
(Souris Branch)**