



MLPD Update

**MLPD**

January 2011

## **Newsletter of the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities**

Produced by the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities  
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# MLPD Update January 2011

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## **A message from Louise McKean, Membership Chair**

**WE WANT YOU!**

We are working hard to make the MLPD a more effective organization that works hard to bring forth your issues, concerns and ideas.

Please add your voice to the effort today by contacting either:

Louise by e-mail: [loumckean@shaw.ca](mailto:loumckean@shaw.ca) or by calling 255-5144 or

Bonnie by e-mail: [bonnie\\_mlpd@shaw.ca](mailto:bonnie_mlpd@shaw.ca).

## **Christmas Open House by Bonnie Bieganski**

The staff and members of MLPD, once again, had a blast at the annual Christmas Open House! Despite the c-c-cold weather on December 16, 2010, MLPD offered refuge from the Winnipeg wintry climate for about seventy members and supporters

that dropped by over the course of the evening.

Diane, Provincial Coordinator, greeted visitors at the door and encouraged everyone to have a bite to eat. Josie, office manager, with the assistance of MLPD member, Valerie Wolbert busily prepared a fantastic display of tasty treats before the party and continued to keep guests' appetites more than satisfied throughout the evening. Bonnie, admin and resource support staff, greeted people at a table complete with door prizes, membership sign up forms, newsletters, note pads and pens.

MLPD would like to thank Jon Gerrard, Leader of the Manitoba Liberal Party, Devi Sharma, Councillor, Old Kildonan Ward and Ross Eadie, Councillor, Mynarski Ward and, of course, our members for celebrating the holiday season with us!

Also, a big thank you to those that donated door prizes: men and ladies' watch (Visions of Gold), gift certificate (Hoffman's Fine Foods), gift certificate for a

one hour massage (Gerry Agostini), gift certificate for a psychic reading (Emily Ternette), gift certificate for McNally Robinson (Colleen Watters) and chocolates (Louise McKean). MLPD sends out a big CONGRATULATIONS to the winners!



## **Twenty-five Per cent of Candidates Respond to Disability Election Questionnaire** **by Diane Driedger,** **Provincial Coordinator**

Twenty five per cent of the 51 candidates for Winnipeg City Council and Mayor responded to the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities Election Questionnaire. Only Judy Wasylycia-Leis responded from the candidates running for Mayor. There has been no response from the current Mayor concerning the issues of people with disabilities in

Winnipeg, even though MLPD has left messages with his campaign office.

The MLPD questionnaire that was sent out on October 14 by email included questions on problems with the Handi-Transit Bus system, problems with access to low floor regular transit buses, lack of accessible, affordable housing for people with disabilities and the need to ensure that the City of Winnipeg Universal Design policy is used on our roadways and sidewalks.

Five sitting City Councillors replied to the MLPD Questionnaire-- Gord Steeves, Grant Nordman, Jeff Browaty, Scott Fielding and Harvey Smith. Steeves' response to a question about problems with Handi-Transit services was "unfortunately, the demand is greater than the service can handle at this time. Our system of ensuring that the service is provided to those who need it most needs constant vigilance."

The MLPD will be vigilant with the new City Council to ensure that there are resources provided to Handi-Transit for those who need it. Over the past few years, riders have been cut from the Handi-Transit rolls, with Handi-Transit citing too much demand and abuse of the system. As a

result, MLPD has heard from many persons with disabilities who are not receiving any bus service at all, because they cannot move safely on inadequately ploughed sidewalks and bus stops to ride the regular bus.

In response to MLPD's Questionnaire, Councillor Harvey Smith suggested that he would meet with MLPD before the next budget meeting and bring the concerns of MLPD to city committees and Council Meetings.

Overall, the candidates who responded to the Questionnaire called for more accessible, affordable housing for people with disabilities in Winnipeg, and for increased training for Handi-Transit drivers and regular transit bus drivers in working with people with disabilities. A few candidates committed to ensuring that there is better snow clearing so that people with disabilities and seniors can travel on city sidewalks and streets safely in the winter. MLPD will work with all candidates elected on October 27<sup>th</sup> to ensure an accessible Winnipeg for all.

## **Elections Canada Tests Assistive Voting Device by Bonnie Bieganski**

In October 2010, Elections Canada conducted a test of the new assistive voting device during the federal by-election in Winnipeg North. MLPD was asked by the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) to be part of the consultative process with Elections Canada. The assistive voting device enables electors with disabilities to mark their ballots independently while protecting the privacy of the vote. The device has an array of accessibility features that are especially useful for electors with visual impairments or limited dexterity.

Diane Driedger, Harry Wolbert, and I attended a townhall meeting at TenTen Sinclair for a demonstration of the device to learn about the device and had an opportunity to see the accessibility features in use. The voter selects the language and accessibility features then waits for the visual and/or audio instructions. The device includes an easy-to-read screen, a high-contrast screen with text that can be made bigger, tactile braille buttons, a sip-and-puff attachment that allows voters to select options using their breath, a rocker paddle and audio

with adjustable volume and speed. All accessibility features are further enhanced with an audio and/or visual review function to allow the voter to make their selection and provide the opportunity to confirm the selection before printing the ballot.

Privacy is often of high priority for people with disabilities because the medical world, that we're particularly familiar with, offers little privacy so in the areas of life that privacy is offered, it is valued. The assistive voting device offers privacy of the elector with disabilities in a variety of ways. The device is positioned so that the monitor faces a wall. The device also has a privacy screen and headphones. The device has a printer that marks a regular ballot using a mark that is similar to one marked by hand. There is also a secrecy box placed over the printer to further ensure the secrecy of the ballot. The elector, or if requested, an election officer, will reach inside the box, retrieve the ballot, re-fold it in the same way as it was previously folded and return it to the deputy returning officer who will place it in the appropriate ballot box. After the polls close, officials will count the ballots according to the usual process. With this new assistive device technology, Elections Canada is making privacy possible

in another area of one's life, voting.

Another benefit to the assistive voting device is that it gives greater independence to an elector with disabilities who may otherwise need the assistance of another person. For that reason in itself, I would try the assistive device technology. Would I recommend this new voting device to you? It is my personal belief that one can benefit greatly by trying new things. Although it might be different or awkward at first and it might not even work for you, the only way to know is by trying. You just might gain a new sense of independence! However, it is always your choice. Electors with disabilities still have the option to use alternative assistive methods, such as:

- Ask a friend, spouse, common-law partner, relative or an election officer to assist with marking the ballot
- Vote by special ballot – this allows electors with disabilities to vote by mail, at a local Elections Canada office or at home in the presence of an election officer and witness

Other services and tools available to electors with disabilities are:

- a Braille voting template for people with visual impairments
- a large-print list of candidates
- sign language interpreter services (must be requested ahead of time)
- help with registration at the advance polls and on election day, upon request on-site assistance and level access to polling sites

The disability community in Canada is now awaiting Elections Canada's final report about the use of the device in this by-election and whether it might be used in future federal elections. MLPD applauds the efforts of the Government of Canada to work towards private and independent voting for all citizens.

**Changes in Handi-Transit  
by Nick Ternette,  
Chairperson  
MLPD Transportation  
Committee**

The suggestion in a recent article in the Free Press that the city is moving cautiously to expand access to those with Alzheimer's or dementia is just not true. The fact is, Handi-Transit was

pressured! Five years ago, the Alzheimer's Society filed a human rights complaint against Handi-Transit with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission on the grounds that they were refusing rides to people with dementia and Alzheimer's disease, thus violating their human rights. They were successful and once the Human Rights Commission ruled, Handi-Transit had to sit down with them to formulate new policy.

On the issue of Handi-Transit fares, it will be as a result of pressure put on by students' and seniors' organizations, that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission will again force the hand of Handi-Transit to provide equal fares to students and seniors who take regular transit. As there are only 12 students registered with Handi-Transit, it would be a minimal cost to provide a reduced bus pass (20% off a regular adult bus pass). On the other hand, seniors presently make up 52% of Handi-Transit's ridership and 70% of total Handi-Transit registrants. Reduced seniors' fares would result in a \$240,000 loss for Handi-Transit. So, while Handi-Transit has accepted the equalization of fares between seniors and students, they will hold off implementing them until 2013.

All these changes are being done within the new fare collection technology - that is, a "Smart Card" being developed for regular transit. However, Handi-Transit won't be able to have "Smart Cards". There won't be a need for cash or tickets, but rather a photo identification (this would result in a \$10,000 saving in the printing of tickets and Handi-Transit passes). Two mechanisms are being looked at for billing. One is that clients will be sent a billing once a month with fares deducted from their account on the days of their trips. The second mechanism would be a once a month billing for the trips they have taken and they can send a cheque in the mail. Consideration has to be taken into account that some clients would have cognitive difficulties with receiving a monthly bill and would prefer to pay up front each time.

There is even discussion concerning attendant fares where attendants could ride free of charge when travelling with clients who require attendants (which would be a revenue loss of \$160,000). Attendants currently pay regular fare, even if they have their own bus pass, when accompanying a client on regular transit. This is definitely discriminatory and needs to be looked at!

So, the city must turn its mind now to how to manage Handi-Transit when the number of elderly will double in a couple of decades. Presently we have 95,400 seniors in Winnipeg. Within a decade there will be 125,100 seniors (65+). In 2030, it is projected that we will have 167,500 seniors. Remember to take into account that 70% of those people will be registered with Handi-Transit and 52% will use it regularly, as well as decisions like those made by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission vis-a-vis discrimination against people with Alzheimer's or dementia and equalization of fares between regular Transit and Handi-Transit will have a significant financial impact on the entire Transit system **now**, not, as the Free Press suggested, in a decade.

**Have an issue that you think MLPD should be addressing?**

Email [mlpd@shawcable.com](mailto:mlpd@shawcable.com)



**“Living The Edges - A Disabled Women’s Reader”**  
- edited by Diane Driedger,  
INANNA Publications and  
Education Inc., Toronto

**A Book Launch To Remember**  
- by Emily Ternette

On Monday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, McNally Robinson Booksellers in Grant Park hosted a book launch for “**Living The Edges - A Disabled Women’s Reader**”, compiled and edited by our very own Provincial Coordinator, Diane Driedger! What seemed fitting to me about that particular date was that it was the anniversary of the “Montreal Massacre” where 14 women were killed at École Polytechnique, and December 6<sup>th</sup> is now a “National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women”. Women are being recognized and given a voice. This event couldn’t have fallen on a more meaningful date! Women with disabilities’ voices were being heard!

There, about 40 of us sat, to hear those voices who shared their stories in this unique book. I say unique because the women’s stories came in various forms - poetry, prose, visual art and researchers explaining their work

and their findings. The women represented in the book came from all socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels, and many types of disabilities, and were from many parts of Canada. We were honoured to hear from a number of Winnipeg women that night who bravely stood in front of us and spoke their truth - their story.

I came away from the book launch that night feeling uplifted and proud of my women peers! It’s not easy to tell your own story - much easier to tell someone else’s. And what was so powerful about this particular night was that we were hearing the stories in the book by the women themselves!

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*If you are interested in purchasing a copy of Living the Edges: A Disabled Women’s Reader (\$30.00 a copy) edited by Diane Driedger, please contact Diane at the MLPD office or visit McNally Robinson Booksellers.*



Contributors to *Living the Edges* at the Book launch



## **Travelling With a Disability by Bonnie Bieganski**

Are you sick of this white stuff we call snow? Tired of having to bundle up in two or three layers every time you need to go outside? Feeling a bit cabin feverish? Winnipeg's nose-nipping, ear-tingling, toe-numbing bitterly cold winter temperatures have a tendency to make us yearn for some place hot and sunny. Traveling with a disability can seem daunting, scary or maybe even impossible but the Independent Living Resource Centre's travel workshop says you CAN hit that hot and sunny vacation spot you have always dreamed about! All you have to do is prepare, prepare, PREPARE!

Whether you want to arrive at your vacation destination by bus, train, plane or even a cruise, the key to making sure your trip goes without a hitch is to educate yourself on available accommodations and special requirements that must be met by the company and you. The travel workshop outlined accommodations, special requirements and contact information for people with disabilities for Greyhound bus, VIA Rail, as well as the major airlines,

Air Canada and West Jet, and Carnival Cruise Lines.

The workshop facilitators described what a person with hearing, visual or mobility disabilities can expect when booking their trip, board and departure, and during their trip. Knowing these things helps one determine how their needs will be met, which requirements will not be the responsibility of the company and to allow time to figure out a way to independently meet these needs.

If you are planning a trip and need advice, tips or inspiration, there are a few websites that are worthwhile to check out:

<http://www.transitionsabroad.com/listings/travel/disability/index.shtml>

<http://emerginghorizons.com/>

<http://www.flying-with-disability.org/index.html>

<http://www.disabledtravelers.com/>

The last two websites are loaded with information for people with a variety of disabilities and destinations.

Although, I am not planning a winter getaway (I wish I was), I am making plans to fly to Ottawa for a week long stay for Canada

Day celebrations. After a nightmarish experience about 8 years ago of flying with a wheelchair and a respirator, I had a lot of anxiety and an endless number of concerns when thinking about getting on a plane again. But once I get an idea, it becomes a mission to figure out how to make it possible. I was definitely overwhelmed at first but through a step-by-step process, my Canada Day vacation is becoming more doable. And if you are unable to have a winter getaway, I can tell you from experience, the excitement of planning a trip in itself makes the winter more tolerable!

## **Lou's View**

### **Gripe Session**

Most of us don't like to complain, yet there are times when being disabled in an able world can be a big added pain. Sometimes, just getting from Point A to B and dealing with people along the way can be exhausting and demeaning.

I thought I'd kick off the New Year by getting a few things off my chest, and inviting you to sound off to your heart's content, as well. Without further ado, here are some of my top frustrations that, with continued political will

and education, will hopefully be one day banished forever:

**1. Limbo land of the chronically ill.** Those of us with "invisible" illnesses walk between the able and disabled world. Because we don't "look" disabled, people – even friends and family -- often have a hard time accepting that we are. Chronic pain and fatigue are not well understood or sometimes dismissed as being "all in our minds." While such attitudes won't go away in the near future, continuing education is the solution.

**2. "You're too young for that."** Oh my God, if I haven't heard that once I've heard it a thousand times. You'd think that the general public would know a thing or two about common illnesses like rheumatoid arthritis – that it's not an "old person's" disease. I've had it since I was 13! Now that I'm 50, I guess I only have to wait another decade or two before such comments won't get under my skin. Still, more education and tongue biting are needed.

**3. Rude people:** Ok, folks using wheelchairs or walking aids don't expect red-carpet treatment but a little consideration would go a long way. Beefs include: people who don't get out of the way; stare; make rude remarks; don't hold

open doors or offer help when needed; use disability parking when they don't need it (a big one!); and so many more. The list is, unfortunately, endless.

**4. Common barriers:** Poor snow removal -- sidewalks, parking lots not properly cleared; icy walkways/stairs; heavy doors or broken automatic doors; low benches in malls; and so on. MLPD members are only too familiar with these stumbling blocks – and we're actively focused on eliminating them.

**5. Healthcare:** Wow, what a big topic! I'm not talking about research, which is making remarkable strides in new treatments and medication for many illnesses, but rather hospital standards and doctor care in general. I remember, for example, when the 6<sup>th</sup> floor Rheumatology ward, at the Rehabilitation Centre in the Health Sciences Centre was a place where people suffering from chronic illnesses could go for prolonged stays to "get better". It was clean, cheery and very well run with excellent care and programs. Now it is crowded and depressing. Twenty years ago, you could see a doctor when you needed to and rely on follow-up care. The health care system is chronically ill, and, despite study after study, and many efforts to

bring improvement, quality care and good, old-fashioned bedside manners continue to slide downhill. Just ask the doctors and nurses who really care. They feel powerless, too. The time is overdue for real change.

**6. The customer is never right:** Many of you may not know this but MLPD played an instrumental role in establishing Handi-Transit in Winnipeg in the mid-seventies. It's always had its challenges but is becoming steadily more unreliable. Drivers are not held accountable enough. They are frequently late or too early or, in some cases, claim they show up when they don't. While some drivers deserve medals for professional and kind, patient service, growing numbers are rude, short-tempered and even dangerous drivers. Some of the vans are rundown and there isn't enough supply for the demand. When there is a complaint or dispute between a driver and passenger, the driver is always right. I'm glad we have strong advocates on this case and am hopeful that we will see positive changes in the near future.

So, that's enough griping for now. I feel much better, thank you! Feel free to share your frustrations and any other stories by e-mailing me at [LouMcKean@shaw.ca](mailto:LouMcKean@shaw.ca)  
And...Happy New Year!

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*Louise McKean, MLPD's Membership Chairperson, is a Social Worker and regular contributor to this Newsletter. She has had rheumatoid arthritis since she was 13 and has had 24 major surgeries in 25 years.*



## **RebELLES with a Cause by Bonnie Bieganski**

Hi! This is Bonnie (Administrative and Resource Support Staff, MLPD) here bursting with excitement at an upcoming opportunity to be involved with greatness!

The Winnipeg RebELLEs of the Manitoba FemRev collective is organizing the 2<sup>nd</sup> RebELLEs Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering to be held in Winnipeg,

May 20-23, 2011. When I heard about FemRev, I was immediately interested but when MLPD had a much informative and inspiring meeting with Lissie Rappaport, one of the organizers from the Winnipeg RebELLEs, I knew I had to get involved!

It is important that young disabled womyn will have a presence at the 2nd Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering so let's make it a good one! I am so excited to get involved with the Winnipeg RebELLEs and hope that you might be, too!!!

The objectives of the 2011 Gathering are: to empower young women and girls and to mobilize, energize and strengthen the feminist movement, provide opportunities for women and girls to develop leadership skills, share analyses and strategies for action, collectively work to improve the lives of young women, and to work within diversity in order to make meaningful contributions to the communities we are a part of. It is a fantastic opportunity to collectivize our struggles and make create concrete plans for change. Doesn't this sound great?!

MLPD could really use some energetic forces to represent womyn with disabilities

at the 2nd Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering. If you're a womyn with a disability and under 35 who would like to get involved in helping organize with the gathering, give feedback and suggestions as well as participate in May, contact me for more information by telephone: 943-6099 or e-mail: [bonnie\\_mlpd@shaw.ca](mailto:bonnie_mlpd@shaw.ca).

For more information, visit <http://www.rebelles.org/>

They can also be found on Facebook, just search: FemRev - new rebELLEs OC

## Upcoming Events:

### **International Women's Day Celebration**

**Date:** Tuesday, March 8, 2011

**Presented by:** Manitoba Status of Women

Details to be announced

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### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> RebELLEs Pan-Canadian Young Feminist Gathering**

**Location:** University of Winnipeg

**Date:** May 20-23, 2011

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### **Poverty Advocacy Training Program-Manitoba Low Income Intermediary Project; Co-Sponsored by Winnipeg Harvest**

If you or somebody is affected by poverty or work with those affected by poverty, and wish to gain advocacy skills to help those marginalized in our society, this program is for you!

**Date:** Monday, January 31, 2011-  
Monday, June 31, 2011

**Place:** 280 Smith Street,  
Mezzanine Floor

**Cost:** \$100 for 20 weeks

Call 947-2220 to reserve your spot today!

# For Sale!

INVACARE TDX SP  
Custom made power chair  
Like new – Purchased November  
2008  
10% seat recline – Gel seat  
cushion  
Original Price: \$16,500  
Asking Price: \$4,500  
  
Call: Irene (204) 975-2738

## New Option to Donate!

MLPD is a Canadian registered charity. For an alternative method of donating, go to our website and look for this icon on the top right hand corner.



Or go to [CanadaHelps.org](http://CanadaHelps.org) and search 'MLPD - MANITOBA LEAGUE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES INC.'

# Lost and Found

Burgundy scarf—left behind at  
MLPD's Christmas Open House.

White jacket—left behind at UN  
Convention in June 2010.

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Please contact our office for more  
information.



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## **Who We Are**

The MLPD is an organization of people with disabilities that works on concerns affecting the lives of people with various disabilities in Manitoba.

MLPD strives for improvement in areas such as accessibility, education, employment, housing, transportation, income security, and support services.

The MLPD supports Manitobans with disabilities with social policy research and consultation, public education programs, information and referral services.

### **MLPD Staff:**

Diane Driedger (Provincial Coordinator), Josie Concepcion (Office Manager), Bonnie Bieganski (Administration and Resource Support Staff)

### **The 2010/2011 MLPD Provincial Council:**

Harry Wolbert (Co-chair), Terry McIntosh (Co-chair), Paula Keirstead (Vice-Chair), Justine Kiwanuka (Treasurer), Daniel Halechko (Secretary), Gary Dyson, Kevin Johnson, Louise McKean, Carlos Sosa, Nick Ternette, Mindy Tucker, Jesse Turner

**This newsletter is available in alternate media upon request.**

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