



MLPD Update

**MLPD**

October 2011

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

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## **Provincial Coordinator's Report** **by Diane Driedger**

MLPD has had a busy summer and early fall! We participated in an Election Forum with other disability stakeholders in Manitoba to pose our questions to the parties before the October 4<sup>th</sup> Provincial Election.. Deanna Ng has an article in this issue of Update about the parties' positions on our issues. We look forward to working with all elected members of the Provincial Legislature on disability issues over the next four years.

In addition, the MLPD Ethics Committee organized a very successful vigil at the Manitoba Legislature for Harvey Sanderson, the wheelchair user who was beaten and then died. Colleen Watters outlines the event and the issue in her article.

MLPD staff has been transitioning over the past two months. Josie Concepcion, our long time Office Manager extraordinaire is now working two

and half days a week at her request. MLPD has hired Deanna Ng to work the other two and a half days of her job and to also edit the Update newsletter and to work with the MLPD Committees. Welcome Deanna! Derek Legge, who was working two days a week with the Thumbs Up Project has left the Project and Daniel Halechko continues to work three days a week on the Project. They finished up the Windsor Park area assessment and now looking at access in Wolseley. See their report in this issue of Update.

Our Financial Literacy and People with Disabilities Project with the Community Financial Counseling Services has almost completed its first phase: finding out what resources exist for persons with disabilities. Zanna Joyce, the consultant on the project, found little information that relates to the financial literacy needs of people with disabilities. MLPD will continue its partnership with CFCS in the next stage of the project where we will work on financial literacy materials that pertain to our issues.

Finally, Jennifer Howard, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities, has appointed me as a representative of MLPD to the Provincial Disability Advisory Committee that was established by Bill C 47 to look at drafting access legislation. The Committee has not met yet. MLPD is pleased that organizations of people with disabilities are being consulted!

### **Introducing New Program Assistant by Deanna Ng**

My name is Deanna Ng and I am excited for this great opportunity to start as your new program assistant. I have a visual impairment and only see out of my right eye with 5% vision. I have had my visual impairment since birth. I was raised in a small town called Minnedosa in a family of three siblings. I visit my home town quite frequently. In 2009, I graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a BA in Psychology and Academic Writing. This June, I graduated with my Diploma in Disability and Community Support through Red River College. This program was very enjoyable and I learned much from it. My favourite courses were on employment, communications, and advocacy. I have lived in Winnipeg for eight years and am now more familiar with getting

around the city, thanks to Navigo. I am glad to work on the newsletter and if you have any suggestions, I would be happy to hear them. I look forward to meeting and hearing from you.

### **Elections Forum on Disability Issues by Deanna Ng**

The Elections Forum on Disability Issues tackled a number of very important issues that many people with disabilities share. It was held on Tuesday, September 13 from 7:00-9:30 at the Viscount Gort Hotel co-chaired by Brian Stewart & Anne Krista. There were four candidates on the panel; Heather Stefanson (PC), Jennifer Howard (NDP), Shirley Robert (Liberal), and Harold Dyck (Green). Representatives from different disability organizations, including MLPD, helped organize the Forum. Each organization asked one question at the event. The questions were as follows:

- How will your party support more affordable, safe housing for people with disabilities?

First, the Progressive Conservative promised to work with all levels of government as well as with the private sector to build rental units and lower income units. On the other hand, the New Democratic Party listed the success of the Mental

Health/Homelessness Initiative, At Home/Chez Soi, 1010 Sinclair, and Bernard/ Place Lacherette, as examples of NDP dedication to affordable housing for persons with disabilities. Then, the Liberals promised to transition public housing into Co-op housing and make home ownership following the idea of Habitat for Humanity. A suggestion by the Greens is that housing subsidies need to be raised to the private market rate. Increased supports are needed as we require new housing.

- How does your party plan to increase the number of people with disabilities in the workforce?

The NDP reflected on the creation of the Access Advisory Council. It was pointed out by the Liberals that improvements are needed for Adult Education and the party would focus on specialized education. On the other hand, PC wants to make it a priority for learning or capacity building for persons with disabilities to be ready to be part of the workforce through agencies such as Reaching Equality. However, the Greens stated social inclusion means a guaranteed annual income and no one should be living below the poverty line.

- How will your party ensure that children with disabilities

are educated in inclusive classrooms?

The Liberals suggested starting a credit system for students in grade 4, and upon receiving full credits you will get your first year of college paid for. They promise a 40% reduction if students have good attendance and grades. They will improve funding for technical/vocational education. However, the PCs stated that further resources are needed to fill the gaps to ensure young people don't fall through the cracks. They want to ensure stable and predictable funding is delivered. Educators can't plan specialized programs because their funding is always limited. Jennifer Howard (NDP) related with a personal story of when she went to University and had help through programs like Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) that paid for education. This is very important. The Greens want to support people on EIA disability, not just adults, but extend supports like EIA disability to children. Poverty is a core issue related to education.

Paula Keirstead, part of the three person feedback panel from MLPD summarized, "Affordable and accessible has become the standard that all new housing should have in all communities." She raised the concerns about the

vacancy rates and also the increase in rent rates.

In terms of employment, she explained, “Everyone should have the opportunity to work and to be paid for their work fairly. All three parties advised that they support this. Having a guaranteed annual income is a great way to meet a person’s basic needs. EIA improvements are needed.”

Regarding education, she explained that everyone must have equal opportunities for a basic education, know their rights, and there should be increases of support for transitions. She concluded, “There are clear understanding about issues related to persons with disabilities” They get it.

- What is your party’s position on the future of the Manitoba Development Centre in Portage?

Kevin Johnson from People 1st Winnipeg brought up the ongoing struggle that has institutions for persons with intellectual disabilities who could be part of the community; what are the candidates going to do to ensure people don’t have to live in institutions if they want to live independently?

After candidates’ explanations, Janet Forbes from Community Living Winnipeg, also a member of the feedback panel reflected, that none of the candidates said what

the plan would be for closing down MDC. She said, institutions should no longer be considered an option. Legislation is a good step forward, but is just a start. More needs to happen.

Keirstead further commented on the lack of choice, “When do we decide when an option is not an option. If someone doesn’t have the opportunity to choose, if they might not know their options, how are they supposed to choose?” She continued, “MDC needs to be removed as an institution for persons with intellectual disabilities. Access legislation needs to be following other jurisdictions. This makes sense, but it’s a process. Parties committed to disability legislation need to consider issues such as affordable housing. It is good the community is recognized that they matter, their voice has been heard.”

- What does your party plan to do to support Bill 47: Provincial Accessibility Legislation?

The NDP reflected on how they brought forward the legislation and that the next step is creating the full Disability legislation to create standards. This must include people with all types of disabilities. Accessibility refers to making a barrier-free environment. There is a lot of work left to do, and things are happening such as bringing in

barrier free housing. Accessibility is a journey. The legislation will help the whole province to make Manitoba the most accessible province in Canada for everyone now and in the future. In another view, Liberals stated, “we are only as strong as our weakest link.” They plan to move Manitobans out of the cycle of dependence. First healthcare will be made universal, accessible, comprehensive, and publicly provided. They will commit to multi-year funding for staff. The PCs had a different perspective: they further explained Bill 47 - Accessibility Legislation should have been called, “Barrier Free.” The NDP Government has brought forward more consultations, but doesn’t actually do anything. Bill 47 could have been barrier free or accessibility legislation that set standards, instead of just discussing it. A reflection by the Greens is that social inclusion should follow the European model. “It doesn’t just remove barriers to access, it goes deeper. This is by looking at what prevents persons from not participating in daily life, such as mobility, economics, access to a phone, and communication devices. Cost be damned- just do it.”

- How do we continue the dialogue?

The PCs commented, “Have forums like this involving the community stakeholders.” The NDP commented on their progress on employment issues, and income assistance. They are proud to be the government responsible for creating the Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and the Disabilities Issues Office to ensure that government is more accessible.

The Liberals agreed that political parties should have an open door policy and party leaders and MLAs should be accessible. Finally, the Greens agreed an advisory council is good, but anything that goes through government should be reviewed with a disability lens. The Disability and Poverty Communities need to be consulted and have a lens on all legislation that goes through, including the private sector.

In the end, people should have access to the political representatives. Politicians need to act on their talk. Housing, employment, education, MDC, and Bill 47 are not the only issues; there are so many more.

## Ethics Committee Update by Colleen Watters



Mel Graham (left), Rhonda Wiebe, Jennifer Howard, Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities

On August 12, 2011, the MLPD Ethics Committee organized a very successful vigil on the grounds of the Legislative Building to remember the life of Harvey Sanderson and to express their grief and solidarity with Harvey and others with disabilities who are victims of violence. 60 people attended the event. Harvey Sanderson, a 27-year old man with a disability, was beaten in his apartment and subsequently died from his injuries. The vigil was moderated by Rhonda Wiebe (MLPD Ethics Committee member) with music provided by Mel Graham, another MLPD member.

The Honourable Jennifer Howard, Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities, commended the MLPD for holding the vigil, introduced representatives from Manitoba Housing and Community Development and noted the steps being taken by the Province to increase safety for people with disabilities in Manitoba Housing facilities. Representatives from Qu'Appelle Housing remembered Harvey as a fun-loving person who laughed a lot and gave the shirt off his back for others. Jim Derksen reflected on people with disabilities who lose their lives as a result of violence and the need to minimize this type of abuse in our society.

Bonnie Bieganski, MLPD member, read her letter to the editor which urged that the charges against Mr. Sanderson's alleged abusers be upgraded from aggravated assault to manslaughter or attempted murder and that the situation of Mr. Sanderson be treated no differently than a person without a disability. Following the vigil, the MLPD wrote to the Honourable Andrew Swan, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, echoing this sentiment. Those present at the vigil who wished to do so reflected on Harvey's life,, the need to minimize acts of violence

against people with disabilities and increase the safety on our streets and in our housing facilities.

Thank you to Paul Graham, a media professional, for capturing the event on video. The video can be viewed at:

<http://www.mlpd.mb.ca>

In June 2011, MLPD sent a letter to the Hon. Theresa Oswald, Minister of Health, urging her department to reconsider the establishment of an end-of-life review panel to deal with issues of withholding and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. We recommended that her Ministry continue to work with the (CPSM) to alter its Statement to remove the alleged absolute power for end-of-life decisions that it now places with physicians and asked her to legally mandate physicians to consult with patients and their proxies in all matters of life and death decisions. Dean Richert and Jim Derksen (MLPD Ethics Committee members) met with the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health in mid-September and agreed to continue the dialog with the Department about the review panel and the CPSM. The Ethics Committee is continueing its work to plan a follow-up forum on end-of-life issues for the spring of 2012.

## **Letter to the Editor by Bonnie Bieganski**

(letter to the Editor of the Free Press, printed here unedited).

The recent death of Harvey Sanderson following a brutal assault is a tragedy. It is a tragedy for his family, friends but for the disabled community, as well.

There are many speculations as to what kind of person could commit this violent act against a person with a disability and why it happened. There is debate that the disabled suffer a higher rate of crime than the general public. Until statistics are gathered, we need not look at people with disabilities as any more a victim than the able-bodied population when targeted.

Fingers point to lack of accessible and affordable housing in good neighbourhoods. While this may be a contributing factor, it is not the only one. There are high crime rates in the poorer areas of the city but criminal activity is on the rise in areas that are deemed as "good" areas. No matter where the location is, it is the responsibility of Manitoba Housing, rental agencies, and the tenants to ensure safety. There is no use in finger-pointing. We must be a community that strives

for support, responsibility and accountability for all. But how can we do that when the crown is failing to do so?

Const. Rob Carver, spokesman for the Winnipeg Police Service, stated "Given the nature of the condition of the victim in this case, it's something that has to be looked at very carefully in consultation with the Crown's office." He was a healthy male with a disability. Yes, he had brittle bone disease but that disease does not require emergency brain surgery, the use of life support to sustain him nor induce a comatose state. Sanderson would be alive today if he had not been brutally beaten. The fact that the crown will only upgrade the charges if it can be proven that it was the assault that killed Sanderson is an outrage.

An outrage but not a surprise to see ignorance of disability once again rears its ugly head. People that do not have full use of their limbs, lungs, vision, and/or intellect, do not drop dead without prior symptoms, causes, or warnings. People with disabilities are not "sick." I am deeply saddened and frightened for Manitoban's disability community that this attitude affects the ability of the justice system to ensure support, responsibility and accountability.

I would like to add that I wrote this letter to address the ignorance that the disabled community still face today. I hope for increased understanding and awareness of disability issues and fair and equal treatment within all systems including that of the justice system.

**Don Ament, Friend,  
Colleague, and One  
Conscientious Disability  
Activist  
by Mel Graham  
Co-chair, MLPD Housing  
Committee**

"Well you may be right, but the folks we're talking about here tend to see things from quite a different angle than we do." Don Ament always said. That's the kind of observation—oddly enough I guess, given that for all its placatory sound, it's in reference to a particularly strong disability advocate—that I'll always associate with our latest departed League booster, Winnipeg's undisputed housing guru, Don Ament. Our stalwart friend Don, in case you hadn't heard, died suddenly at age 63 on Easter Monday at Riverview Hospital.

And as to my approximation of a typical Don quote, the League Housing Committee may have been discussing developers,

inspectors, architects, contractors, bureaucrats big and small, politicians of any or all jurisdictions, home buyers, the general public, newspaper columnists and editors, ...

Speaking of journalists, they all know that if you make the mistake of going too far into a story, you'll learn too many conflicting details and your reportage will lose its punch. Interestingly, in the dozen years I worked closely with Don, I came to understand that losing some advantageous "edge" that might come in handy in battling some supposed opponent, was the least matter of concern for Don Ament. Mixing it up was never Don's way to rock and roll. His hallmarks, being fairness, balance and a totally unobscured perspective in assessing issues, were beyond the controversial or the disputatious, so that simple truths and bottom lines were the rarest of features in his intellectual world. For Don, the "truth" was complex and comprehensive, seldom if ever quintessential. Not surprisingly, you never spent any time around Don Ament without not just learning things, but actually gaining new insights.

As for this people with disabilities/housing guru business, I wonder if that old adage about

how none of us are irreplaceable might not be in for a bit of a testing for a long spell, and I'll bet I'm not the only one either. The fact is that so many Winnipeggers have routinely relied on Don as the first (and, very often, the only necessary) resort for getting their questions answered and problems solved, without fuss or fanfare. A city-wide disability housing registry might be the only effective way to meet a challenge that even Don's recent retirement from TenTen Sinclair wouldn't have made necessary. It would be dear to his heart if an outcome like that were to occur, that's certain, and the sooner the better.

Don's unique expertise in the disability housing area was highly sought and, given his generous nature, usually forthcoming. Appropriately, his last concentrated effort involved Fokus Housing's acquisition of a new executive director which, given the number of hours that exercise entailed, will hopefully serve as a legacy for many years to come. Yet I don't mean to give the impression that Don was a monolithic character with a one-tracked interest. Housing may have been his *métier* but his interests in everything political that related to the best interests of society's most vulnerable was always acute and wide-ranging.

But now what's to become of our committee, seeing that Don Ament was its heart, soul and the repository of most of its relevant knowledge--and for so many years at that?

But I mustn't forget that we're talking here about a League committee, an entity whose fate lies entirely with members--that's you! So please do seriously consider that A) housing is a bedrock issue for virtually all people with disabilities; B) our committee is in a particularly tight corner with Don's passing, and C) we need League members who can bring enthusiasm and, hopefully, a bit of expertise with them to the table.

## **Transportation Committee Report**

### **by Nick Ternette**

The Transportation Committee had a transportation forum at our Annual General Meeting in June this year, and brought up concerns about Handi-Transit. At this meeting, members brought forward 26 questions and concerns to Handi-Transit. Nick Ternette sent a letter with these questions to Catherine Caldwell, Manager of Client Services from the City of Winnipeg Transit Department. She sent a reply with

the following answers below. The bolded text is our questions and the blue text is her responses. The yellow highlighted answers are those Catherine Caldwell and Handi-Transit want to discuss further for our input.

### **1.2 grace cancelations should apply to subscriptions as well**

a. The recommendations include two trips per month (one return trip) for work cancellations in addition to the allowed cancellation of two trips (one return trip) every 10 trips. This is once a week for someone working full-time for their work trips alone. They likely have other trips as well, permitting even more cancellations that do not have a sanction attached. The other common subscription trips we have are for medical treatments, usually dialysis, and those folks do not typically cancel. If their condition post treatment is of concern and they are unable to travel, we make appropriate adjustments when contacted by dialysis staff.

**2. When Handi was designed, based on equivalent service (i.e. can catch another bus in 5 minutes), but the proposed changes undermine equivalent service.**

- a. The actual policy is "reasonably equivalent" to the regular transit service. In other words, the Handi-Transit trip should be comparable to a regular transit trip from start to finish (including the time required to walk to/from the bus stop and wait at transfer points). I have not come across situations where we exceed this. In fact, several registrants have told me Handi-Transit travel times are usually better than regular transit service. There are many occasions throughout the day, depending on the time of day and location, where the "next bus" on the regular system is 30 to 60 minutes.

**3. Complexity of priority booking hierarchy also undermines equality**

- a. Priority booking was developed in consultation with the community. In fact, our current Policy Advisory Committee considered asking me to review the policy; however, feedback to PAC members from the folks they represent, was that the community still wants a priority system. It is important to keep in mind that trip priority is determined at the time the trip request is made; however, the priority is applied only when demand exceeds resources and only to the extent necessary.

**4. Equivalent services should be the basis of all policy/structure**

- a. All policy development is developed in the context of the "reasonably equivalent" premise, with our most recent policy change offering a good example, full equalization of fare recommendations adopted by Council in July 2011 (post-secondary monthly pass now and seniors once new

fare collection technology in place).

**5. Having to disclose booking for medical appointment against FIPPA?**

a. We have had this investigated by the Manitoba Ombudsman (several years ago) and their review concluded that as long as a priority system exists, it is appropriate to ask reasonable questions to determine the priority of the trip. It is our practice to ask only what is required to assign an appropriate priority to the trip request.

**6. Unclear as to what policy is regarding additional passengers**

a. All passengers have the option of requesting a seat for one attendant to assist them on their trip at the time the trip request is made (before the 11:00 A.M. deadline the day prior to travel). Additional passengers (companions) can be booked post schedule if there is room on the vehicle. All passengers are required to

pay a fare (except children under six years of age travelling with an adult).

**7. Weather should not be only basis for cancellation of trips, passenger health can change from day to day**

a. It's not. The proposed policy allows two cancellations (one return trip) per 10 trips - that's one or more cancels post schedule each week for frequent travelers.

**8. When medical appointments are cancelled by health professionals, passengers should not be penalized**

a. There is no penalty for this specifically as long as cancellations post schedule have not been extensive previously (last 10 trips).

**9. If meetings are cancelled or end early, passengers should be able to cancel 1 hour prior**

a. Handi-Transit is a pre-book service and there is little opportunity for changes once the schedule is produced. This is the case for most, if not all paratransit services in Canada. The proposed policy includes one additional

cancellation for two trips (one return trip) per month if made 3 hours in advance, increasing our opportunity to utilize those resources.

**10. Handi would benefit more from better scheduling (done by person, not program)**

a. This is simply not the case - computerized scheduling has greatly enhanced the efficient use of our resources and enabled the reduction of time required to pre-book trip requests. Registrants can now book up to 11:00 A.M. the day prior to travel and have their priority #1 trip guaranteed. It was two days when we scheduled manually.

**11. Suggestion: call dispatch to explain reason for cancelling late to avoid being penalized (favouritism?)**

a. I don't understand what this means out of context of the discussion.

**12. Passengers whose profession is similar to a consultant get challenged when making bookings for a**

**meeting at a coffee shop as opposed to office**

a. This questioning is aimed at giving the trip the right priority, which is explained above, ensuring that this passenger and other passengers will actually get their priority #1 trips when some trips are "unable". I suggest the owner of this comment contact me so I can put a note on their file that informs Service Representatives taking bookings that the nature of their work is such that meetings may be at coffee shops or restaurants.

**13. Change to the structure of Handi's committee would be most beneficial**

a. I don't know what this means out of context of the discussion.

**14. Handi needs to develop policy manual and communicate changes better**

a. Policy, procedures, and trip-booking tips are posted on our website and updated as changes occur. Phone

messages for callers waiting to speak to a Service Representative are specific to the service and updated every 4-6 weeks. In addition, we plan to develop a Rider Guide booklet as part of the implementation (communication) plan of this policy.

**15. New cancellation policy does not allow for passengers to cancel bookings day of if it is nice enough to take public transit**

a. This is correct. Registrants should decide if they are going to take the trip before 11:00 A.M. the day prior or leave their booking until the day of and take their chances on getting their ride. Weather forecasts are available to all of us and individuals need to make choices while considering the limitations of the service.

**16. 10 minutes before and 20 minutes after pick-up time is unfair, especially with implementation of GPS system**

a. This is similar to other paratransit services - all the large systems we investigated had a 30 to 40 minute pick-up window. Utilizing a pick-up window allows for normal variation and reduces phone calls about "where is my ride" too soon, which sometimes causes someone to miss their ride because they left the pick-up location to make the call. In addition, we are constantly challenged with the fact that some registrants regularly arrive at the pick-up location about 5 minutes after the scheduled pick-up. Considering a vehicle will be scheduled for 20 to 25 trips in a 10 to 12 shift, this causes havoc with schedules and annoys other passengers. Regardless, at the last PAC meeting, I concurred with the recommendation to make it a 20-minute window - 10 minutes before the scheduled pick-up and 10 minutes after. This makes the message balanced and easy to communicate.

**17. Independent survey should be conducted as to why passengers cancel (past survey questions favoured Handi, answers were misinterpreted by Handi).**

- a. We have asked this question in a survey and have done ad hoc inquiries when calls come in - comments were varied and inconclusive. Most indicated "plans changed" and some addressed "unable" of one leg of a return trip request so we built that into the policy recommendations - no penalty for canceling if one leg of a return trip request is "unable to be provided".

**18. One user was asked to bring in MRI for functional assessment**

- a. Some applicants are asked to provide medical information if required to determine their eligibility.

**19. Passengers dealing with pain cannot wait extra hour to be picked up sometimes, and need to cancel trip, should not be penalized**

- a. I am not sure what this comment means out of

context of the discussion. I venture to guess most of our passengers experience pain and coping with it is a challenge they face on a daily basis.

**20. New policies are further complicating service**

- a. This improves service by reducing the vehicle resources wasted, which is caused by a few people, negatively affecting many.

**21. Handi should put together a list of pointers to distribute to passengers on how to avoid "no shows" and late cancellation charges.**

- a. This is on the website and every "No Show" letter we send and will be included in all letters in the future (including warning letters) as a way of communicating what is expected so registrants know what choices create a charge.

**22. Handi must devise appropriate measures for dealing with future demands on service**

a. We are - GPS, plans for enhanced scheduling and dispatch tools to utilize resources more efficiently, etc. This policy is just one of those strategies - reduce wasted resources by implementing measures for behavior change for those who frequently cancel after the schedule is produced. These recommendations also include financial incentives for using the service appropriately. When we tested some travel/cancel patterns of frequent riders over a 4 month period, most in the sample incurred no net cost increase and several were in a plus position.

**23. In past, passengers could cancel 30 minutes before pick-up. What has changed? (Now 3 hours?)  
Transportation Committee needs to find out why is it the result of changes to contracts with taxi companies?**

a. Resources are being wasted. Some registrants cancel over 90% of their trips after they

are scheduled. Paratransit services operate on a pre-book basis so resources can be scheduled effectively as possible. Unfortunately, we can only utilize about 10% of cancelled vehicle hours post schedule so it is an important aspect of service delivery.

**24. Handi should develop back-to-back trip to accommodate childcare drop-off, and allow children as passengers (charged children's fare, free under 5 years old)**

a. Children traveling with an adult who are under six years of age are not required to pay a fare. Most of our registrants do not have children, but I agree we should be able to accommodate a Day Care drop off so I would like to know if we have missed the boat on a situation - given it is rare, there is a greater potential for challenges but I am sure I could find a resolution. This individual should contact me.

**25. Designated drop-off and pick-up locations are still unclear**

- a. They are posted on the website so I am not sure what this means.

**26. Social trips and late night bookings, Hand should operate as late as public transit**

- a. We operate until midnight Monday to Saturday and to 2:00 AM on New Year's Day to accommodate New Years Eve celebrations. I have also added more service to accommodate a social event such as the ILRC Spring Social. Sometimes we have some leverage if given a "heads up" concerning an event. However, ridership in general is very low late at night. This could always be reviewed if necessary but I haven't been advised of any concerns about how late we operate.

**TRANSIT  
INCONSISTENCIES  
NETWORK (TIN) at MLPD**

We have launched a Transit Inconsistencies Network (TIN). We are asking riders to document problems and exceptional service in regards to Transit and Handi-Transit by noting time, date, number of the driver or taxi driver, and nature of the complaint or compliment, and submit it to the MLPD. We have forms for this purpose. You can email or call the office the information. We will be submitting your complaints and compliments to the Transit staff on a regular basis. We hope that action will be taken to address your concerns. In addition, we also encourage users of accessible taxis to make complaints directly to Gary Stillson, Acting Chief Taxicab Inspector at 945-0289. When you make a complaint about quality of service or lack of service, please let MLPD know as well.

**Update on Thumbs Up Project  
by Daniel Halechko**

A lot has taken place since our last newsletter report. As of the end of September 2011 our assessment of accessibility in Windsor Park was completed. An

Executive Summary was written and several file folders of different subject areas was prepared. For example, the report contains folders with information on topic areas such as churches, medical centres, apartment blocks, etc.. As of September 30<sup>th</sup>, Derek Legge completed his six month commitment as joint coordinator of the Thumbs Up for Access Project and has moved on to other activities, but will remain involved in various M.L.P.D. activities.

Since the beginning of October, Daniel Halechko has continued as coordinator of the Thumbs Up for Access Project focusing on the Wolseley area. To-date he has covered about 60% of the Wolseley area and intends to have the raw data completed by November 3<sup>rd</sup>. This will leave him to the end of November to compile the data and complete a detailed report. It is worth noting that Daniel will suspend activities on the Thumbs Up project during the months of December 2001, January 2012 and February 2012 due to the extreme cold in these months; then he will resume the project again in Norwood in March 2012 when the weather will hopefully be more cooperative.

This early in the assessment process some things are obvious.

For one, Wolseley is an older residential neighbourhood with many older three story houses; some renovated family residences and many crowded rooming houses. The vast majority of the apartment blocks are older non-accessible buildings. Only three modern accessible high rise apartment buildings have been identified. Possibly due to high traffic volume, many of the businesses and services are accessible to the elderly and people with disabilities. Thus far, 31 businesses have demonstrated a commitment to being fully accessible and worthy of receiving one of our certificates. The report on Wolseley should be an interesting one.

## **Employment & Income Security for People with Disabilities**

**by Deanna Ng**

Often, people with disabilities face many barriers to meaningful lives due to low income. As a community we struggle with Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and attitudes of some employers.

### **EIA**

The income benefits from EIA are not enough to live off. Before getting EIA, the EIA counselor assesses everything

you have as assets, such as money given by friends or family. What if you don't have that type of support?

Expenses often are very costly such as housing, utilities, transportation, medical costs and groceries. The income for a single person with a disability is only \$771. This means there is a problem. The economic down turn is certainly is not helping.

### **Loop holes**

There is no incentive to try to go back to work. Once you start working, they take money back. You may keep the first \$200. Anything earned more than \$200, they will take 70% leaving you with only 30% of your earnings. For example, you make \$300 per month. You will only get \$230 for earnings. If you volunteer on top of this, you no longer qualify for the volunteer bonus. This is because you have an earned income. If they over pay you, you have to pay back all extra money. If you don't pay back the extra money, you will face penalties such as being cut off. What if you are unable to pay it off? This could be for so many reasons.

There are set amounts for costs like home repairs, furniture, utilities, and rent. What if you go over that amount? Where do you get the extra money from?

### **CPP**

To qualify for CPP, there are many barriers to face. You must have paid into CPP through your previous job. If you make over \$4600 per year, this will count towards CPP Disability. To qualify, the disability has to be severe and prolonged. Severe means that you are unable to work or learn a new job because of your condition. Prolonged means your condition must last for more than a year. Some people have certain conditions that disqualify them receiving any benefits. For instance, it could be something that comes and goes, something you have been dealing with all your life, or something they assess as not qualifying for CPP. This could be because the CPP Panel doesn't think it is severe enough or lasting long enough. They may also decide you are able to go back to work because of any skills that you have that you could use in a different job.

It is more often that you will be denied CPP benefits. How do you appeal the decision about not qualifying for CPP? The process is that you must make a request to Service Canada to review your claim. This involves resending an application. You must also explain why you think you qualify. You must also include any new medical information that you may

find helpful for your claim. It must be sent within 90 days. Again, there is a wait period. If that doesn't work, you must resend the application along with a letter to the **Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals. This must be done within 90 days** of receiving the letter saying "no" from Service Canada. If that doesn't work, then again, you must again resend the application along with a letter to the **Pension Appeals Board. This must be done within 90 days.**

If you qualify, there is a 4 month wait period for 70% of people who applied. If there is a part of your application missing, the process will take longer. Some information is harder to get such as medical information. It could also be slow during the summer because of counselors taking holidays.

During the transition from EIA to CPP, EIA will still pay you benefits. Once you get a "yes" from CPP, you actually don't see the first payments from when you first qualified for CPP. This is because the CPP department of government must pay the EIA department that money. You may get a percentage of this amount as credit on your income tax. That means you may get a small amount of money back from the government if you file your taxes.

There is usually a month wait for your first actual payment, as it is paid out the last 3 week days of the month.

### **Employer Attitudes**

Employers, like us all with or without disabilities have different attitudes towards issues around disability. This could be around accommodation, quality of work, and age discrimination within the organization. People with disabilities are large untapped resources.

Rob McInnes wrote an article, "Most Jobs in Most U.S. Companies are Beyond the Capabilities of People with Disabilities - and the World is Flat," in Diversity World in 2009. He talks about the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, who did a study in November 2008. The department interviewed different employers. They found 72.6% of employers stated that the nature of the work done in their workplaces could not effectively be done by someone with a disability. Only 19.1% of companies employed people with disabilities. In total, only 13.6% of companies interviewed actively recruit people with disabilities.

The belief is that people with disabilities can't do the job. Employers have never seen the quality of work done by people with disabilities. As well, they are

very unsure just how to go about hiring us. Employers just don't know any better. McInnes said it well, "[It is] the limitations of opportunity, not ability, that are keeping people with disabilities from readily contributing to our workplaces." That is a hard reality that also happens in Canada. Rob McInnes is working on educating employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities through his website [www.diversityworld.com](http://www.diversityworld.com).

Jane Allen and Nicole Cohen did a study, "The road to inclusion is integrating people with disabilities into the workplace" as a Summary of Deloitte's Dialogue on diversity roundtables in July 2010. They found about one in eight Canadians or 13% of the population has a disability. Advancing the Inclusion of People with Disabilities 2009 found that for women 52.1% with disabilities are employed compared to 70.1% of women without disabilities. For men, 55.5% with disabilities are employed compared to 80.2% of men without disabilities.

Allen and Cohen found there to be a common idea that hiring someone with a disability will cause a lot more work. Employers think there is a lot involved. There is also the thinking that people with disabilities can only do entry-level, or the simple work. Some employers believe that people with

disabilities do not have the knowledge or experience to work. What is needed is education to show that people with disabilities are assets to the organization.

Allen and Cohen found another solution is for everyone in organizations to talk about their feelings about working with people with disabilities. They need to be open and honest so that beliefs can change. The authors also suggested the possibility of internships, where someone with a disability works for the company for a short time. This is to try it out. They can see how valuable we are to the organization.

### **Next Meeting**

Ken Bristow is chairing the Employment and Income Security Committee. We invite you to join the committee so that we can work together on facing different barriers to employment and income security. If you are interested, please call Deanna at MLPD at 943-6099.

### **Hidden Child by Daniel Halechko**

My father died when I was seven  
I was told he left us and went to heaven  
He was gone; had abandoned me  
I felt rejected and very lonely  
I clung to my mother; warm and gentle

She took care of me with love  
eternal  
With her I felt safe and secure  
My father's image proceeded to  
obscure  
I missed my dad oh so much  
I wanted him to hold me and feel  
his touch  
Why did he leave me? I loved him  
so  
Did he love me, or was the answer  
no?  
I know he did not die on purpose  
Then I saw my friends with their  
fathers  
It hurt me inside that I had none  
My only recourse was to cling to  
my mom  
Now at 50, I understand more of  
his death  
My father loved me until his final  
breath  
The pain I endured as a child  
Made me insecure, meek and mild  
I felt unworthy compared to others  
And was insecure with my lovers  
Now God is my father I need not  
worry  
He loves me and cares and is with  
me always



## Upcoming Events:

### **MLPD Handi-Transit Transportation Forum with Catherine Caldwell, Handi- Transit**

**When:** November 17, 2011,  
6:30 pm to 9:00 pm

**Where:** Union Centre, Second  
Floor, 275 Broadway.

### **Talent Showcase**

**Date:** December 2, 2011

**Presented by:** ILRC

Please contact ILRC at 947-0194  
for more information.

### **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.'





MLPD Update **MLPD** October 2011

Newsletter of the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

## 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), Daniel Halechko (Thumbs Up Project - Coordinator), Deanna Ng (Program Assistant)

### **The 2011/2012 MLPD Provincial Council:**

Paula Keirstead (Co-chair), Jesse Turner (Co-chair), Harry Wolbert ( Vice- Chair), Ken Bristow, April D'Aubin, Zephania Matanga, Colleen Watters, Carlos Sosa, Nick Ternette, Mindy Tucker

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

Produced by the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities  
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