

Alberta Securities Commission  
Autorité des marchés financiers  
British Columbia Securities Commission  
Financial and Consumer Affairs Authority of Saskatchewan  
Financial and Consumer Services Commission, New Brunswick  
Manitoba Securities Commission  
Nova Scotia Securities Commission  
Office of the Superintendent of Securities, Newfoundland and Labrador  
Office of the Superintendent of Securities, Northwest Territories  
Office of the Superintendent of Securities Nunavut  
Office of the Yukon Superintendent of Securities  
Ontario Securities Commission  
Superintendent of Securities, Department of Justice and Public Safety, Prince Edward Island

August 11, 2023

### **Proposed Amendments to Form 58-101F1 Corporate Governance Disclosure**

In response to your request for comments, the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) appreciates the opportunity to contribute our expertise and insight on the proposed amendments.

LDAC is a national, non-profit organization, dedicated to supporting individuals with learning disabilities, promoting inclusive practices in Canada, and advocating for equitable opportunities. Most Canadian provinces and territories have an operating Learning Disabilities Association, giving rise to a network of chapters exceeding 55 communities.<sup>1</sup>

The CSA's initiative seeks to address the underrepresentation of diverse groups on boards and in executive officer positions. At LDAC, we firmly believe that diversity is the cornerstone of progress and prosperity in any organization. However, diversity encompasses more than visible minorities alone. While the CSA's proposed amendments are crucial steps towards fostering a more inclusive corporate environment, it is essential to ensure that all needs are adequately addressed regardless of their visible or invisible minority status. Our objective is to shed further light on learning disabilities, as individuals with invisible disabilities, and examine the potential benefits of increased representation for this group on corporate boards.

The 2017 Statistics Canada Census stated that every fifth Canadian individual of 15 years or over lives with some form of disability or associated disabilities. It was found that approximately 1.1 million Canadians (3.9% of the Canadian population 15 years or over) had a learning disability.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, research done by *Putting a Canadian Face on Learning Disabilities* (PACFOLD) estimates as high as 10% of Canadians living with learning disabilities. It acknowledges official surveys in the low single digits. This discrepancy is explained by parents not identifying their children as having learning disabilities, adults reluctant to self-identify with learning disabilities because of the stigma, and lack of official testing done by professionals.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Learning Disabilities Association of Canada: History](#)

<sup>2</sup> [A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017](#)

<sup>3</sup> [PACFOLD and the Prevalence of Learning Disabilities](#)

These numbers suggest that there is a large prevalence of disabilities that may not be apparent, and it is therefore vital to be mindful of these groups when amending Form 58-101F1.

Learning Disabilities are neurodevelopmental conditions that impact how one perceives and processes information. This includes reading difficulties (dyslexia), math difficulties (dyscalculia) and problems with written expression (dysgraphia). These learning differences are sometimes accompanied by other developmental and motor conditions, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia or developmental coordination disorder or perceptual disorders that affect vision (visual processing disorder) or audition (auditory processing disorder).

There is a negative stigma that people with learning disabilities are inept, have an inability to learn, and need extraordinary accommodations, often resulting in discrimination and employment barriers. This stereotype is false: these individuals have average or above-average intelligence because they possess cognitive strengths that go beyond conventional markers of intelligence.<sup>4</sup> Within the corporate sphere, their ability to think outside of the box can deliver fresh perspectives to problem-solving and decision-making processes. Companies can therefore capitalize on a vast pool of untapped potential and gain a competitive edge by embracing the talents and views of persons with learning disabilities.

In addition, these individuals learned to face adversity from a young age, ultimately developing very strong resilience. Operating companies frequently encounter uncertainties and complex situations, which are amplified in today's inflationary environment. Thus, board members with exceptional perseverance can provide an advantage in these conditions and simultaneously add depth. Their lived experiences give them insight to potential roadblocks that may have been overlooked or underestimated within an organization.

In order to enable individuals with learning disabilities to thrive in the workplace, reasonable accommodations are vital. These include, but are not limited to, flexible work environments, assistive technologies, and supportive cultures, which can be seamlessly integrated into companies without significant financial burden. Indeed, most people with learning disabilities can be effectively supported through improved utilization of existing systems. Accommodations can also create positive ripple effects within the whole organisation, leading to enhanced job satisfaction and productivity, in addition to equal opportunities.

### **The Prevalence of Dyslexia**

Worldwide prevalence of dyslexia, the most common type of learning disability, is estimated at 20%. The Yale Center for Dyslexia & Creativity conducted a study where they asked Yale students about their experience throughout their degree, as well as their workplace outcomes at least five years post-graduation. Their sample included both dyslexic and non-dyslexic students with 43 participants in each. Their educational experience did not considerably differ with respect to "motivation, confidence, and intelligence".<sup>5</sup> However, the time required to carry out assignments and examinations neared statistical significance ( $p = 0.078$ ).

The annual household income was further assessed across the two samples and indicated a bracket of approximately \$75,000 to \$99,999 for the dyslexic readers group versus \$100,000 to \$150,000 for the non-dyslexic readers group. Full-time employed respondents showed similar levels of confidence, overall

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<sup>4</sup> [LDAC - For Professionals](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Yale Outcome Study: Outcomes for Graduates with and without Dyslexia](#)

satisfaction, and visions for the future. Dyslexic respondents did, however, exhibit superior ratings in the Work Perseverance scale ( $p = 0.003$ ). Participants with dyslexia were also found to develop effective strategies and build on their strengths, compensating for the extended time required to accomplish reading tasks. These findings demonstrate that with appropriate accommodations, dyslexic individuals' ability to perform successfully is comparable to typical readers.

Malcom Gladwell says: "We see so many entrepreneurs who have dyslexia. When you talk to them, they will tell you that they succeeded not in spite of their disability, but because of it. For them, they view their disability as desirable, ultimately."<sup>6</sup>

## **Conclusion**

A large percentage of people that live with a hidden disability are highly successful. Richard Branson, whose educational achievement was impacted by dyslexia, founded Virgin Group and became one of the most influential people in 2007. Steven Paul Jobs dealt with dyslexia from a young age, yet became one of the greatest technology innovators with a net worth of \$10.2 billion. Jennifer Aniston, one of the most renowned actresses in the world, candidly opened up about her battle with dyslexia: "I thought I wasn't smart. I just couldn't retain anything. Now I had this great discovery. I felt like all of my childhood traumas, tragedies, dramas were explained."<sup>7</sup> Despite her hardships, she demonstrated remarkable willpower and ambition, which ultimately led to her success. These examples illustrate that learning disabilities do not hinder one's performance, potential, nor intelligence.

If the intent of these amendments is to ensure board of directors and senior staff reflect the full range in demographics, then a corporation's decisions should be made by individuals who truly represent the complexities of our society. If we are to exclude invisible minorities from boards, this becomes an inherent bias against certain marginalized populations. LDAC favors an encompassing approach, which will enhance accuracy, value and quality to decision making for all stakeholders.

We do not express a preference for Form A or Form B. We simply wish to highlight that, regardless of the version of Form 58-101F1 you appoint, disability should be defined as visible and invisible.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we hope that you will consider these additional amendments to the Corporate Governance Disclosure.

Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any questions.

Respectfully,  
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada

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<sup>6</sup> [Malcolm Gladwell On The Advantages Of Disadvantages](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Jennifer Aniston Reveals Struggles With Dyslexia](#)