



# NEADS

*Celebrating 17 years of advocacy for full access to post-secondary education and employment opportunities, which is our right!*



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Newsletter 54 - Spring 2002

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## Announcing NEADS' Conference 2002

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) is pleased to announce our upcoming conference: "Opening Doors to Success." The conference will take place at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites, in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, from November 8th to 10th, 2002. The Delta (361 Queen Street) is located in the heart of downtown, and close to everything that makes the capital one of the country's most popular tourist and convention destinations. Hotel rooms are also available at the Travelodge.

Hosted by the NEADS national office and a conference planning committee of the Board of Directors, chaired this year by Sanjeet Singh, this event will be an exciting opportunity for: students, consumers, advocates, service providers, employers and all others interested in exploring key issues of concern to our members.

The meeting will serve as a dynamic and vital forum of information exchange - one that will emphasize Canadian strategies and successes and reinforce the importance of Canada as a leader in the international disability community. The focus will be on accessible post-secondary education and the transition from school to work.

We will open with a reception on Friday evening, November 8th, which provides an excellent opportunity for conference participants to get to know each other. Workshops and plenary sessions will run all day Saturday, November 9th, concluding Sunday, November 10th at 4:30 p.m. Our Annual General Meeting and the Board elections will be held on Sunday morning.

The conference will function on a single track format, with delegates exploring all three subject areas: Student Leadership and Transition to Employment, High School Outreach and Technology As It Relates to Education and Networking. Workshops will begin with panel presentations, and continue with roundtable discussions. The conference will start and end with plenary sessions. The opening plenary will introduce the conference themes and format, the closing plenary will bring everyone together to draw the conference to a close.

There will also be an area in the hotel devoted to exhibits, with employers, vendors, postsecondary institutions, governments, and nongovernmental organizations invited to set up displays. Please contact the national office for more details on the exhibit space, or consult the Web site.

Within the context of the conference, delegates will address NEADS' project work, policy development, and ongoing advocacy on behalf of the membership. It will also provide members with an opportunity to elect a Board of Directors to govern the Association for the next two years.

The cost of registration is set at \$95.00 CDN for student delegates and \$150.00 CDN for all others. An early registration fee of \$75.00 CDN for students and \$130.00 CDN for all others will be offered to those who register and pay on or by October 8th. This payment includes access to all conference proceedings, the opening reception on Friday evening, the conference banquet on Saturday night and a two-year NEADS membership.

The Delta Hotel is offering a conference rate for delegates of \$109.00 per night, single and double occupancy (not including tax). Those interested in attending can book, and pay for, their own accommodation under the conference room block by calling the hotel directly at (613) 238-6000 or toll free (800) 268-1133. Alternately, you can e-mail [kwiersma@deltahotels.com](mailto:kwiersma@deltahotels.com). When booking, mention the name of the Association, the conference title and the reservation file name GBNEA0. Wheelchair accessible rooms are available upon request at the same rate.

Delegates can also book rooms at the Travelodge, which is located just across the street from the Delta. A limited number of rooms are available at the Travelodge (402 Queen Street), for \$89.00 per night, single and double occupancy (not including tax). Those interested can book (and pay for) their own accommodation under the conference room block by calling the hotel directly at (613) 236-1133 or toll free (800) 578-7878. When booking, mention the name of the association, and the event. Wheelchair accessible rooms are available upon request.

Conference registration forms, along with information and nomination forms for those interested in running for a position on the NEADS Board of Directors, will be available online at [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca). Materials can also be obtained by contacting our national office. Golden Planners, the event management company, is handling conference registration.

If you would like more information about the conference you can contact us at: NEADS, Rm. 426 Unicentre, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6, Canada. We can also be contacted: by telephone (613) 526-8008 (Voice and TTY), by fax (613) 520-3704 (Attention Frank Smith, National Coordinator), and by e-mail [conference2002@neads.ca](mailto:conference2002@neads.ca).

We are encouraging schools to sponsor student delegates to attend the conference. Hope to see you in our nation's capital in November!

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## Conference 2002 Call for Speakers

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students invites interested individuals to serve on one of three workshop panels at our next conference entitled: "Opening Doors to Success" which will take place at the Delta Hotel and Suites, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, from November 8th to 10th, 2002. Speakers can include students, consumers, advocates, professionals and anyone else interested in the conference themes.

## 1. INFORMATION FOR SPEAKERS

To ensure that delegates are able to explore all three themes, we use a single-track workshop format. All delegates who register will be randomly assigned to one of two groups. These groups will also be given their own workshop room for the entire conference, but assigned to work with at one table on Saturday and another on Sunday.

On Saturday morning, the Student Leadership and Transition to Employment panel will make its presentation to one group of delegates, while the High School Outreach Panel will make its presentation to the other group. In the afternoon, the panels switch rooms and make the same presentation. On Sunday, because we only have the Technology As it Relates to Education and Advocacy workshop, there will be two different panels, one per group.

As part of a panel, each speaker will be expected to make a 15 minute presentation, and will then participate in small group discussions with workshop delegates.

Sign language and English/ French interpretation will be provided during all workshops.

## 2. WORKSHOP THEMES

The following are the three workshops and possible topics we are looking to have addressed by our panels.

### THEME I. Student Leadership and Transition to Employment

In 2001/2002 NEADS embarked on a Student Leadership and Employment Forums project with support from the Youth Initiatives Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada. This project has enabled us to hold forums in Winnipeg, Toronto, Victoria and Montreal. The aims of the forums are to address issues of leadership, advocacy and self-empowerment while persons with disabilities are in school and to focus on making a successful transition to the world of work. Participants have included students and representatives from campus groups, community organizations, private sector employers, Career Edge/Ability Edge youth internship program and the federal government.

As students with disabilities, we need to educate ourselves on all the opportunities available to us in school and employment situations. At the same time, we need to continually educate society about our ability to contribute as full citizens.

We are looking for three speakers who would be willing to share their personal or professional experience in these areas. Possible topics we would like to explore include:

- What would you consider the main issues facing students with disabilities on your campus?
- What does it mean to be a student leader and how can students with disabilities get involved with organizations that will improve services and accommodations in post-secondary education – on-campus and in the community?
- How – and with whom – should a campus group work to address issues of peer support, advocacy and social integration of students with disabilities and will this contribute to academic success?
- What would you consider to be the main barriers to employment when attempting to enter the world of work from post-secondary education?
- What is the role of the employer in ensuring the hiring and retention of graduates with disabilities? What is the role of the person with a disability in ensuring that they are

accommodated in the workplace and can succeed in their career path?

- Career resource centres are excellent places on campus for students to explore different employment options. What are these centres doing to ensure that their programs and services are accessible to students with disabilities?
- What are some examples of outstanding student leadership in our community? What are some examples of employment initiatives that have benefited students and graduates with disabilities?
- How can taking the role of a "leader" in school help you when you are looking for work?

## THEME II. High School Outreach

NEADS embarked on a High School Outreach project this year. The initiative was started based on recommendations from the general membership at the 2000 national conference and in meetings with students at NEADS' Student Leadership Forums. The project was initiated in recognition of the real challenges faced by disabled students moving from secondary into postsecondary education. The result has been the development of a Resource Guide for high school students with disabilities in transition and other online products especially for this community.

We are looking for three speakers who would be willing to share their personal or professional experience in these areas. Possible topics we would like to explore include:

- What types of issues need to be addressed initially when high school students with disabilities are looking at post-secondary education? How big a role does the type of disability that a person has play in the decision-making process?
- Who should be contacted at the college or university of choice and how can each person or office be of assistance?
- Are high school students with disabilities getting all the information they need to make informed decisions about what and where to study at the postsecondary level? What is the role of guidance counsellors in the schools to assist in the transition? What is the role of community or non-governmental organizations?
- Many students with disabilities learn by accident about support services available to them at their college or university. What methods are schools using to inform/orient students with disabilities to any specialized services available to them?
- Accessing the funding to go to school and for the supports that you need because of your disability are keys to participation in post-secondary education. How can we learn about the availability of sources of funding for students with disabilities (government funding, scholarships, awards and bursaries)?
- Are there examples of student-led grassroots movements/projects at the high school level?

## THEME III. Technology as it Relates to Education and Networking

At the heart of empowering persons with disabilities to be successful in education, is making sure that we have a "level playing field." Technology and adaptive equipment ensure equitable learning as students with a variety of disabilities have the tools to learn and share their knowledge. The benefits of technology in post-secondary education are particularly important for those students with print-based disabilities.

At the same time, NEADS can use technology to reach out to its community and the network of organizations of students with disabilities and access committees in Canada. With support from the Office of Learning Technologies, Human Resources Development Canada, NEADS has launched CampusNet. This is a uniquely Canadian online community housed on our Web site. Its objective is to provide an interactive community of learning where information on projects, approaches, techniques, successes and challenges can be shared and exchanged across geographies. This workshop will discuss both aspects of the use of technology, the benefits to individual students in their academic pursuits and to NEADS and its network of campus-based student leaders.

For this workshop, we are looking for six speakers who would be willing to share their personal or professional experience in this area. Possible topics we would like to explore include:

- What are some examples of new technologies or adaptive equipment improving the learning environment for disabled students?
- On our campuses who are the key players (eg. service providers, librarians, students' associations) ensuring that we take full advantage of what is available to "level the playing field" in education?
- Who pays for and supports the computers, software and other tools of technology?
- What are some examples of successful student led grassroots advocacy projects/ movements?
- How can the Association ensure that these groups contribute to accessible education at their schools and that they are able to survive and thrive?
- What do we need to do to ensure the effectiveness of CampusNet as a means of communicating between groups and the national organization?

### 3. INSTRUCTIONS AND DEADLINE

Expressions of interest should be no more than 500 words and must clearly state which workshop theme you are interested in, and the specific issue that you will address in your presentation. Additionally, each speaker is asked to include a resume.

Submissions and presentations are encouraged in either English or French, and we invite international submissions. We are able to accept material in print, on disk or by e-mail. In case a speaker drops out, we will choose an alternate from the submissions received.

Due to limited funding, only student members of panels can be considered for financial support.

Deadline for receipt of all material is Friday, August 11th. Submissions will be reviewed by the Conference Planning Committee, and those selected will be notified over the summer. If possible, please include any additional contact information for the summer period.

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## An Introduction to the Association

The National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) is a consumer organization with a mandate to encourage the self-empowerment of post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities. NEADS advocates for increased accessibility at all levels so that students with disabilities may gain equal access to a college or university education, which is the right of everyone. The Association provides extensive information on services for students with a disability nationwide, publishes a newsletter, and conducts research on issues of importance to its membership. NEADS works with both official language groups in Canada.

What follows is an overview of our accomplishments and activities:

- Established in 1986 to represent post-secondary students and graduates with disabilities across Canada.
- Governed by a twelve member Board of Directors, which is cross-disability, student run and represents each of the provinces and territories.
- Includes a network of about 60 campus-based groups and accessibility committees of students with disabilities across Canada. Has a mailing list of over 1,200 individuals, organizations, colleges and universities.
- Provides its constituents with the most authoritative information on programs and services at Canadian post-secondary institutions, available funding to go to school, and government supported initiatives in the area of school to work transition.
- Member of the Council of Canadians with Disabilities (CCD) and represented on CCD's national council at the board level. Works with the Canadian Federation of Students and its member unions on matters affecting students with disabilities.
- Member of the National Library of Canada's, Council on Access to Multiple Formats

(2001-2002).

- Advisor to Human Resources Development Canada on a number of important initiatives, including the Canada Student Loans Program's Canada Study Grants and "Assistance For Students With Permanent Disabilities."
- Member of the National Advisory Group on Student Financial Assistance (NAGSFA) established by Human Resources Development Canada.
- Partner in the "Adaptech" project being operated out of Dawson College in Montreal, which is exploring the use of adaptive technologies by persons with disabilities in post-secondary education
- Member of the Minister's Task Force on Disability, Human Resources Development Canada (1996).
- Helped establish the criteria for the National Access Awareness Week Award Program and was a national partner in the scholarship, which became the Student Access Awards Program.
- Partner in a number of initiatives with organizations that are involved in activities which benefit our members: Canadian Hard of Hearing Association, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, Council of Canadians With Disabilities, Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education, Canadian Counselling Association, Centre for Learning Assistance and Research, Mount Allison University.
- Maintain a comprehensive list of scholarships, awards and bursaries nationwide.
- In July, 1999 the Association published Working Towards A Coordinated National Approach to Services, Accommodations and Policies For Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities: Ensuring Access to Higher Education and Career Training. This report, completed after over two years of research, offers recommendations for national standards of service provision, so that in the future students with disabilities will have equal access to higher education and career training options throughout Canada. 419 respondents participated in the study from across the country, including 349 students and 70 service providers. The Association continues to promote the report's recommendations which are a blue print for our work as an organization.
- Partnering with our member group in Quebec, Association québécoise des étudiants ayant des incapacités au post-secondaire (AQEIPS) on the National Approach project and Official Languages initiatives.
- Completed a transition from school to work study entitled: Employment Opportunities For Post-Secondary Students and Graduates With Disabilities: A National Study (July, 1996), which presents information from 424 students and graduates across Canada.
- Developed a package for youth on employment opportunities: Transition From School to Work: Career Choices For Youth With Disabilities (July, 1997).
- Completed a major national study of student financial aid issues in 1993: Study of Financial Assistance Available to Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities: Accommodating Individual Needs For the Future. This study involved 384 students in all parts of the country.
- Published a National Directory of Financial Assistance Programs for Students With Disabilities in February, 2000. This directory is the most comprehensive resource available for students seeking funding for college or university study.
- Have held ten student leadership forums for youth with disabilities over three and half years (1998-2002), two in Montreal, and others in Ottawa, Calgary, St. John's, Antigonish, Yellowknife, Winnipeg and Toronto hosted by NEADS' board members.
- Hosted a major forum on accessible post-secondary education, student leadership and the transition from school to work in November 2000: "Networking, Educating, Advocating: Delivering Success in the New Millennium."
- Holds a national conference every second year to consult with our constituents. Conference registrants receive a two-year membership with their registration fee.
- Published a Faculty Awareness and Training Bibliography in March 2001.
- Commenced three important projects in 2001/2002: High School Outreach Project, CampusNet Project and the Student Leadership and Employment Forums Initiative.
- In 2001/2002, NEADS supported an initiative by GE Canada to start a national scholarship for students with disabilities studying in Business/ Commerce and Engineering. We also supported the efforts of eight federal science-based departments/agencies to develop a recruitment and retention initiative for persons with disabilities in science and technology fields.
- Recipient of the grant portion of the 1997 Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award and the 1990 Commonwealth Youth Service Award.

The Association's national office is located at: Rm. 426 Unicentre, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, K1S 5B6, tel. (613) 526-8008 (Voice and TTY), fax. (613) 520-3704, e-mail –

[info@neads.ca](mailto:info@neads.ca), Web site: [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca). The Association was federally incorporated in 1986: #0961383-21. The Association's charitable business number is: 10776 1975 RR0001.

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## **An Overview of 2001/2002 Project Work and Activities of the Board**

During the 2001/2002 fiscal year, we've been working on three projects: the High School Outreach Project which began in July, the CampusNet project which commenced at the beginning of October and the Student Leadership Forums Initiative which started in mid-October. We've secured funding for these projects, through Contribution Agreements with Human Resources Development Canada from the Social Development Partnerships Program, Office of Learning Technologies and Youth Initiatives Directorate respectively.

The organization is definitely moving in the right direction. The project work that we are undertaking this fiscal year is in direct response to recommendations that came from delegates at the 2000 national conference and the Plan of Action submitted to the Social Development Partnerships Program for fiscal year 2001/2002. Especially important is the grassroots focus of all three projects. The Student Leadership Forums provide us with an excellent opportunity to speak directly with students on their issues in different parts of the country. The inclusion of a school to work/labour market participation focus in our current leadership meetings ensures that we are addressing an area that is very important for our members, who are looking for good jobs once they graduate. The reports that we are producing from the meetings in Winnipeg, Toronto, Victoria and Montreal, have been very useful as we developed the agenda for the 2002 national conference.

The High School Outreach Project is also very student-centered and the focus groups that we are organizing with students at the secondary level will ensure we develop the most useful resources for youth with disabilities in transition. Of course CampusNet, as an online initiative for campus groups and accessibility committees, is also responding to an expressed need from our members. These groups want a way to communicate with one another more frequently and effectively. The Web site is an excellent vehicle for the ongoing sharing of information.

The Association published one issue of its newsletter in the late spring of 2001. This, our second newsletter, of the past year features reports on 2001/2002 projects and initiatives for 2002/2003. Major development of our Web site took place in 2001/2002 and site visits were up considerably. The NEADS listserv — NEADS-L — continues to grow and is a pipeline of information and interaction for students in our network. NEADS-L is a free service. We continue to work to address the alternative format requirements of our members. Much of our efforts in this direction have been in ensuring that our reports are readily accessible on our Web site and in electronic formats.

Throughout the year we have fielded numerous enquiries from students looking for information on funding options and accessible post-secondary programs. Other non-governmental organizations, service providers, employers and bureaucrats have also made use of our services and information. Board members and staff have been very active in the last several months representing the Association nationally and in their provinces/ territories. What follows are some highlights:

- Joby Fleming and Catherine McGowan attended the Council of Canadians With Disabilities (CCD) meeting in Winnipeg in June.
- Joby has also participated in meetings of the National Library Council on Access to Information for Print Disabled Canadians in Ottawa.
- Susan Vida and Sanjeet Singh represented NEADS at the conference of the Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS) in Montreal in June. They attended workshops and met with representatives from the Canadian Association of Disability Services in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE). Jennison Asuncion was on a workshop panel at the forum.
- Rachael Ross represented NEADS at the general meeting of the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres in Victoria in October.

- Jennifer Finlay and Joby attended the national conference of the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) in October.
- MaryAnne Duchesne gave two presentations in Yellowknife on disability issues for career counselors and worked closely with the NWT Council for Disabled Persons on recommendations for improvements to the territorial student financial assistance program.
- Joby, Susan and Jennison attended a workshop on resource sharing hosted by the National Library's Council on Access to Information for Print Disabled Canadians in November.
- Catherine McGowan organized and hosted our Student Leadership Forum in Winnipeg. Karl Tower drove all the way from Saskatchewan to take part in that meeting.
- Alison Beattie was selected as the NEADS representative to attend the CCD youth advocacy forum, which took place in February. Jason Mitchele, who is a NEADS student member was selected as the other person to attend this forum. Susan, Chair of the Youth Committee and Joby, member of the committee, also represented the Association at the forum.
- Frank Smith, National Coordinator, attended the fall meeting of the National Advisory Group on Student Financial Assistance (NAGSFA) in Hull.
- Jennison has been active in managing our Web site and the CampusNet project and continuing liaison work between NEADS and Adaptech.
- Susan attended the meeting of the CCD in Winnipeg in January and is the Chair of its newly formed Youth Committee.
- Catherine MacKinnon and Jennison hosted a Student Leadership and Employment Forum at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel in Toronto in January.
- Catherine MacKinnon was identified as the NEADS representative to serve on the new EDULINK Service Advisory Council on Student Loans in January and attended the first meeting on February 8th in Toronto.
- Susan Vida attended board meetings of the Quebec Association for Postsecondary Disabled Students (AQEIPS) during 2001/2002.

The Association has continued to consult with the Canada Student Loans Program of Human Resources Development Canada regarding support for students with disabilities through the National Advisory Group on Student Financial Assistance and with direct communication with program staff. Of particular interest to NEADS, is the effectiveness of the Canada Study Grants component of the program. We were pleased that the most recent federal budget included an enhancement of the program. There were a couple of measures announced in Martin's budget that will be of particular interest to students. As part of its Skills and Learning Initiative the government has indicated that the maximum funding available under Canada Study Grants for Persons With Disabilities (Canada Student Loans Program) will increase from \$5,000 to \$8,000. There was also mention made of a "supplementary grant of \$2,000 a year" for "students with disabilities (who) may find the maximum student loans available are not sufficient to meet assessed needs." On the tax side, the Education Tax Credit will now be available to people with disabilities who receive assistance for postsecondary education under Human Resources Development Canada's training programs, including Employability Assistance for People With Disabilities and the Opportunities Fund.

We have met all objectives as set-out in our 2001/ 2002 Plan of Action and worked within our budget for operations and projects. In order to ensure that we continued to be on track with our Plan of Action and project commitments, the Board of Directors met twice in 2001/2002: June and November. Board meetings were held at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites. Decisions taken by the organization with respect to project work, initiatives and meetings are determined by its Board of Directors in consultation with postsecondary students and graduates with disabilities. The Association's National Coordinator and project consultants report, on a regular basis, to the board. Advisory Groups/Committees are developed for each major initiative of NEADS to monitor progress and ensure accountability. A list of board members is included at the end of this newsletter. We are pleased that our Board now includes a full complement of members. Board members are elected once every two years by the Association's membership at the national conference.

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## High School Outreach Project Activity Report

## Project Overview

Over the last year, NEADS developed a project that would respond to the consistent interest of our members to reach out to students with disabilities in the high school sector. With funding support from the Social Development Partnerships Program of Human Resources Development Canada, the NEADS High School Outreach Project was initiated to have three main components:

1. The development of a Resource Guide for high school students with disabilities in transition.
2. The capacity to help connect high schools to NEADS on the Internet.
3. Focus groups with youth with disabilities to advise the development of the Resource Guide and the Internet resources.

This initiative was started in 2001/2002 in response to recommendations from the general membership during the 2000 national conference and subsequent meetings with the NEADS board of directors.

The High School Outreach Project, has been progressing extremely well since we commenced the initiative in July, 2001. The work that was started in the summer, was continued in the fall and winter with highlights including two high school focus groups; a consultation with board members, project staff and partner organizations; and the continued developed of the information products for the transition guide and the Web site.

A project Advisory Committee was established early on and it includes the following members of the NEADS board: Jennison Asuncion (Advisor to the Board), Alison Beattie (Alberta Rep.), Jennifer Finlay (Nova Scotia Rep.), Joby Fleming (President, Newfoundland Rep.), Catherine McGowan (Manitoba Rep.) and Rachael Ross (British Columbia Rep.) Chris Gaulin (Website Architect) is also a member of the committee, and he has been charged with all aspects of the project that relate to Web site content and development. During a project meeting with the NEADS board of directors in Ottawa in November, Roger Burse, our new Prince Island Rep. was added to the Advisory Committee. Two organizations have also joined the committee: the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) and the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE). Doris Lavoie, Executive Director of the CCA and Lynne Owen, representative of CADSPPE attended the November consultation. Collinda Joseph, Project Officer, Social Development Partnerships Program, Human Resources Development Canada represented the department at this meeting.

Brenda Whaley and Neil Faba are working together on the project as consultants. Frank Smith, NEADS' National Coordinator, is involved in project management, coordination of the consultants' work; scheduling and organizing meetings and reviewing content of project materials as it is developed by the consultants.

## Activities and Research

In July, a description of the project, in the form of a letter to students and service providers, was prepared in both English and French. It was posted on the NEADS Web site and distributed through two listservs: NEADS-L and the Canadian Special Needs Network (CSNNET). The letter identifies Neil Faba and Brenda Whaley as the contacts. Full credit is provided to the Social Development Partnerships and Human Resources Development Canada for funding support of the project. The project Advisory Committee held a meeting by conference call in July to discuss the work plan; the committee held a second tele-conference during the third week of September. These early meetings of the Advisory Committee were critical to development of our workplan and the organization of our focus groups and board/partner consultation.

Much of the initial research for the High School Outreach Project involved brainstorming ideas on content and presentation of the guidebook component. The guide that we are developing will be a comprehensive handbook created for high students with disabilities who are in transition from the secondary level to post-secondary education. We now have a solid idea of what we want in the guide and how we want to go about organizing it. The different components of the guide are described in detail in the project proposal. Key components include descriptions of non-governmental organizations and federal government programs

that can assist these students; development of current program information on financial aid for college and university study; advice to students with disabilities who are in post-secondary programs on how to become an effective advocate; and profiles of postsecondary students as role models. The consultants and the Advisory Committee have decided to divide the guidebook content into distinct sections for each province and territory. A separate chapter will provide details of key national programs.

Another aspect of the project has been to identify organizations that can provide critical support to and promotion of our High School Outreach initiative. Neil met with Doris Lavoie, Executive Director the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA), in August. Clearly, reaching out to high school guidance counsellors is important to the success of our project, as these counsellors regularly offer advice to youth with disabilities who are making critical decisions about their post-secondary education.

At that August meeting Mr. Lavoie indicated that he would like to become a member of the Advisory Committee and said that he would participate in the November project consultation. Mr. Lavoie also committed to publish our notice about the initiative in the Association's fall newsletter. The article on the project was printed on page 10 of the October, 2001 issue of COGNICA and is available on the CCA Web site [www.ccacc.ca](http://www.ccacc.ca) During our fall consultation, Mr. Lavoie extended an invitation to the NEADS High School Outreach Project team to submit a workshop abstract to be considered by the CCA 2002 Conference planning committee. The conference will be held in May in Ottawa. The abstract was written by Jennison Asuncion and Neil Faba and submitted in November. The Association has received word that its abstract has been accepted by the conference organizers and we will be part of the agenda at the May meeting.

Over the course of the project, we have been in contact with Jane Drover (Mount Allison University's Meighen Centre), the President of the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers (CADSPPE). As mentioned earlier, the Executive Director of the CCA attended the project meeting that was held in early November at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites. CADSPPE sent Lynne Owen to represent the service provider community and participate in the consultation. Lynne works at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick providing support to students with learning disabilities on campus. During the November meeting Lynne emphasized CADSPPE's support for the project and pledged to help the project team in the months ahead.

During the second (October – December, 2001) and third phases (January – March, 2002) of the project, Neil has continued to develop profiles of organizations that are relevant to high school students making the transition to post secondary, and gather statistical and other information to include in the guidebook. He has also arranged interviews with students who will be profiled in the guide.

Neil and Brenda planned and organized highly successful focus groups with high school students in Toronto (October), Calgary (November) and Montreal (March). In organizing these meetings it was our intention to involve a good cross-section of students with different types of disabilities, males and females. Our Advisory Committee has been very helpful in the creation of our focus group questions and protocol.

Neil took on the task of arranging the first focus group meeting in Ontario. After initially contacting the Thames Valley Children's Centre in London, the Bloorview MacMillan Centre in Toronto was determined to be the best host organization for the meeting. The Toronto focus group was held on Saturday, October 20th at the Bloorview MacMillan Centre. Our contact at Bloorview was Kim Jones-Galley, who works for DiscoverAbility. Kim is involved with the Centre's Youth Group. This was a very productive forum with eight student participants. It provided invaluable feedback on the direction of the project and content of the transition guidebook that we are developing. For this first focus group, Brenda and Neil facilitated the meeting together to get a feel for the dynamics of a focus group and the effectiveness of the questions. Each participant in the Toronto focus group received a CD version of the NEADS Web site and a letter of thanks for participating. A detailed report was written on the meeting and prepared from an audio tape that was made of the focus group. Recommendations from the students are being followed closely, as we develop the information products for the project.

The second forum was held in Calgary at Foothills Academy high school on November 30th

and facilitated by Brenda Whaley. Our contact at Foothills Academy is an instructor who attended the 2000 NEADS national conference. This forum was also extremely well received by the students. This time, there were nine students who attended. Brenda has prepared the report from this meeting which includes a list of recommendations from the students. Letters of thanks were sent to the participants, along with a copy of the NEADS Web site CD.

Neil Faba organized the third forum in Quebec. The Montreal focus group for the High School Outreach Project was held at the Holiday Inn midtown Montreal on Saturday, March 16, 2002. Unlike our other focus groups, which were organized at particular organizations that dealt with young people with disabilities – and thus had groups of students with disabilities they could readily invite to participate – we decided to organize at a neutral meeting space in Montreal, and invite students from all over to come to us. This strategy was chosen in light of the fact Montreal's service provision is less centralized than it is in other parts of the country

This strategy proved difficult. After weeks of contacting schools and groups for people with disabilities in Montreal to help us get the word out, we entered into the weekend of the focus group not knowing what our turnout might be. We ended up with a small but interesting group for the morning English session – one high school student preparing to enter CEGEP, a parent, and two students presently in year 2 of CEGEP. The results of the discussion were informative, both for our research and for the participants themselves, who seemed to all learn something they didn't know about the experience in Quebec for students with disabilities. Neil has prepared a report on the Montreal focus group. Letters of thanks have also been sent to Montreal focus group participants, along with a copy of the NEADS Web site CD.

Brenda has continued to work on updating information financial aid information for the guide from October to the end of March. She has reviewed information that NEADS has developed in its online Financial Aid Guide on [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca). The content review has involved contact with EAPD coordinators and student aid offices in each province and territory across this country. The communication with financial aid authorities has been extremely useful. Updates to our online guide were made in November by Web site Architect, Chris Gaulin and again in February. At the same time, we are making decisions about the financial assistance information that should be included in the transition guide. Most likely, we will be presenting descriptions of the major national and provincial/territorial financial aid programs available to students with disabilities.

### **Web site Development**

The Association's Web Team has provided invaluable support to this project. Chris Gaulin has posted the online content promoting the project. He has made an FAQ that NEADS developed for the CanLearn Accessibility Guide more readily available from our Web site. It is now one of the featured items in the NEADS Online Resource Centre. This FAQ, which is divided into questions under five subject areas, is already an excellent reference source for youth with disabilities. We are now reviewing this FAQ, and intend to expand the number of questions based on feedback from the focus groups with high school students.

The Web Team is also working on the "look and feel" of the Web site to make it more appealing to high school students. One of the areas that we are exploring is the creation of an online mentoring program for youth with post-secondary students acting as mentors. This aspect of the project will be developed based on advice that we receive from participants in the focus groups. Our Web Team also continues to be involved in the promotion and upgrading of current features of the Web site including: NEADS EdLink (links to over 120 Canadian college, and university Web pages that provide information on services for disabled students; and a contacts list of campus disability service providers); CampusNet (the location of links to and reports from student groups and access committees) and Worklink (the section of the site that provides information on career related initiatives and programs offered by the public and private sectors). Consultations Through Student

### **Leadership Forums**

On January 25th NEADS held a "Student Leadership and Employment Forum" at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel in Toronto. The forum included two panels, one on the development of campusbased organizations of students with disabilities and the second on employment opportunities after graduation. Student leaders from universities and colleges in Toronto

participated in this forum. High school students in the city also attended. Human resources and employment equity personnel from companies representing different sectors of the Canadian economy were well-represented and held a dialogue with students on transition from school to work issues. Participating organizations included: Toronto Centre for Independent Living, Able York, Carleton Disability Awareness Centre, GE Canada, Career Edge/Ability Edge youth internship program, City of Toronto, Human Resources Development Canada, Canadian National Institute for the Blind – National Employment Program. This consultation presented an excellent opportunity to share information on the High School Outreach Project with forum participants.

On Friday, March 15th a Student Leadership and Employment Forum was held at the Coast Harbourside Hotel in Victoria, British Columbia. Student leaders from universities and colleges in Victoria and Vancouver participated in this forum. High school students in the city were in attendance. Participating organizations included: University of Calgary, Action Committee of People with Disabilities, B.C. Coalition of People With Disabilities and the local independent living centre – the Disability Resource Centre. The employment panel featured: Youth Initiatives, HRDC; Career Edge/Ability Edge, Advice and Business Loans for People with Disabilities (ABLED) and the Public Service Commission. This consultation also presented an excellent opportunity to share information on the High School Outreach Project.

### **Next Steps: Completing the Project**

The Association will be completing the project work from April to the end of June, 2002. Currently, students and graduates with disabilities across Canada are being interviewed for profiles that are being developed for the guide. At the same time, the different components of the guide are now being finalized. The first draft will be ready during the third week of April. It's our intention to hold a project advisory group consultation in June to discuss a distribution and promotion plan for the High School Outreach project products and the involvement of our partners in this endeavour.

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## **CampusNet Project Summary: A New Online Community Developed**

In the 2001/2002 fiscal year the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) undertook a new and innovative project called CampusNet. This project responded directly to feedback obtained from the NEADS membership at its 2000 biannual conference "Networking, Educating, Advocating: Delivering Success in the New Millennium".

CampusNet strives to be a uniquely Canadian, online collaborative community, bringing together campus-based organizations, committees, and groups of students with disabilities. The objective is to provide an interactive community of learning where information on projects, approaches, techniques, successes, and challenges can be shared and exchanged across geographies. We utilized a network of some 80 organizations and accessibility committees to develop CampusNet.

The first step in the process of developing this community consisted of a bilingual needs analysis, involving direct communication with existing organizations and committees of students with disabilities at post-secondary institutions in all provinces and territories.

During the first phase of the project, we made direct contact with groups and utilized a questionnaire that could be administered over the telephone and distributed to the groups and committees to ensure that we received complete information. The initial contact with groups was used to inform them about the CampusNet Project. In the Fall 2001 and Winter 2002 semesters we conducted structured telephone interviews with 11 Anglophone and 3 Francophone college and university students with various disabilities.

The second phase of the project allowed for the development of the technological backbone. This phase was carried out by project consultants in consultation with the NEADS Web site Manager, National Coordinator, and subject matter experts as required.

In the third phase, we developed and implemented the content of CampusNet, fed directly from the work from phase two. This included collecting existing Web site addresses for student organizations/committees, activity reports, and other existing material. The NEADS Web site Team coded all documents to comply with preexisting accessible design specifications that fit within the structure of CampusNet. Additionally, we implemented all interactive components of the community, and, where necessary, hosted and provided guidance to those organizations/ committees seeking to develop their Web presence through CampusNet.

In our consultations it was clear that there was a need for information on what campus groups across the country were doing. Having access to activity reports, bulletins, announcements, and other public documents that student organizations produce can assist in the development of newer and growing organizations. To respond to this need, an online directory of campus-based student groups was developed. Through this system, each organization/committee/group has its own contact card containing: full contact information for the group; a brief description (profile) of the groups; a link to the group's website, if they have one; and a listing of public reports.

In addition to the information about each group, CampusNet comprises a section devoted entirely to student leadership development. This section contains information on disability rights in Canada, as well as helpful techniques for starting and maintaining student run disability organizations on campus.

Throughout the project, consultants took part in three of NEADS' Student Leadership and Employment Forums held in Toronto, Victoria, and Montreal. The forums included two panels, one on the development of campus-based organizations of students with disabilities and the second on employment opportunities after graduation. Student leaders from universities and colleges participated in these forums. Human resources and employment equity personnel from companies representing different sectors of the Canadian economy were well-represented and they held a dialogue with students on transition from school to work issues.

These consultations provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the CampusNet Project with forum participants. Members of the CampusNet Project team were in attendance to present material on the project work and answer any questions about the initiative. These meeting produced some excellent feedback on our work to date and was a worthwhile supplement to data and comments already gathered through CampusNet telephone and e-mail interviews.

In February 2002 the Quebec Association For Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities (AQEIPS) became part of the CampusNet community and has since developed its website through the project ([www.aqeips.qc.ca](http://www.aqeips.qc.ca)). The AQEIPS web site is available in both English and French and demonstrates the success of at least one of the project's objectives.

In order to promote the project work a brochure outlining the purpose and features of the online community was developed by the project team for distribution to all student groups and disability service providers (Included as an insert to this newsletter).

On April 1, 2002 student groups, committees, and organizations from across the country were invited to log onto [www.neads.ca/campusnet](http://www.neads.ca/campusnet) and take part in a uniquely Canadian online community. The CampusNet Project final report is now available free of charge from our office and on the NEADS Web site in a variety of formats (Adobe Acrobat, HTML and Microsoft Word).

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## **Student Leadership Forums Initiative Project Summary**

Since 1998, members of the NEADS Board of Directors have worked with local community agencies and post-secondary institutions to host a series of six Disabled Student Leadership Forums throughout Canada. These forums have strengthened the links between the national Association and its extensive campus network. They have also led to a series of recommendations to assist NEADS in addressing members' issues and concerns. This project will continue these valuable forums, and move them forward to explore new areas. With funding support from the Youth Initiatives Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) we are able to hold four forums across Canada from October 2001 – April 2002. In addition to these valuable meetings, the project funding allows the Association to produce a series of reports and information products for youth with disabilities considering post-secondary education and employment opportunities.



The forums to date have made it clear that one of the most significant areas of concern for postsecondary students with disabilities, and indeed all people with disabilities, is employment. Much has been written about the under-representation of people with disabilities in the workplace. There is also an emerging recognition that education is one of the most effective ways to address this under-representation. For example, in a report entitled *In Unison 2000: Persons with Disabilities in Canada*, released by the federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for social services, the following statement is made:

"...overall, people with higher levels of education are more likely to participate in the paid labour market and educational attainment among persons with disabilities has been increasing. The 1996 Census clearly shows the strong correlation between educational attainment and labour force participation rates among persons with disabilities."

Mindful of these facts, HRDC Youth Initiatives Directorate (YID) has included youth with disabilities in their work with "youth at risk." For example, the Directorate ensured the participation of disabled youth in the series of Youth at Risk Discussion Groups conducted across Canada in 2000. The report from these discussion groups highlights issues and concerns of disabled youth. Specifically in discussions related to discrimination the report concludes that,



"This obstacle is magnified for youth with physical and learning disabilities, who have a difficult time even securing an interview if they disclose on their CV that they have a disability."

Evidence shows that disabled youth are often excluded from the labour force as the Youth Initiatives Directorate has recognized in recent activities and consultations. This, coupled with the knowledge that higher education is one significant way to address these inequities in the system, offers a unique opportunity for the Directorate to partner with NEADS in order to explore these issues more fully. Specifically, the objectives and activities of this project are as follows:

1. To hold Disabled Student Leadership and Employment Forums in four Canadian cities: Victoria, Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal from October 2001 – April 2002. These forums will be hosted by NEADS board members.
2. To address such topics as advocacy, leadership, and issues of concern to disabled students while in school and in making a successful transition to the world of work.
3. To include youth with disabilities interested in post-secondary education and employment opportunities as participants in the meetings. To invite panel representation from community organizations/campus groups, HRDC, and employers.
4. To provide a forum for HRDC to share information about federal government labour market information products and programming with disabled youth across Canada, along with programs relating to funding to pursue postsecondary study such as the Canada Student Loans Program (Canada Study Grants).

5. To provide more detailed information for NEADS on effective ways to respond to the concerns of youth with disabilities.
6. To provide HRDC with a rich information source on barriers and solutions to the problem of labour market under-representation of youth with disabilities.

A highly successful forum was hosted by board member Catherine McGowan at the University of Winnipeg in October. The proceedings report on that meeting has been published and is now available on the NEADS Web site. Board members Catherine MacKinnon and Jennison Asuncion hosted a forum in Toronto at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel on January 25, 2002. Rachael Ross, NEADS British Columbia Representative, hosted a forum in Victoria on March 15th. This meeting was held at the Coast Harbourside Hotel. All three meetings were excellent and featured a great mix of student and community leaders, employers and HRDC representatives. A final forum was held in Montreal on April 6th. The Montreal forum was a partnership between NEADS and its Quebec member group AQEIPS.



This project will be completed at the end of August, 2002 and is being run by project consultant Steven Estey. Proceedings reports are being published from all forums in both official languages and an FAQ style Educational Tool Kit will be developed for youth with disabilities.

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## Adaptech announces new report

The Adaptech Project is pleased to announce a new research report on computer technologies in postsecondary education. The report provides information about the findings of an investigation of the needs and concerns of campus-based professionals who provide disability-related supports and services to postsecondary students. It is a companion to our landmark 1999 study where we investigated the computer technology experiences of over 800 Canadian college and university students with disabilities.

Topics include: accessibility of online distance education; level of collaboration between these professionals and the instructional technology community on campus; degree to which issues of access to instructional technologies by persons with disabilities are addressed in faculty professional development; and accountability for providing computer-related supports to employees with disabilities on campus.

With an 80% participation rate among Canadian postsecondary institutions, this study provides a comprehensive picture of on-campus technology accessibility for persons with disabilities. An extensive set of recommendations and resources completes the work.

**AUTHORS:** Catherine S. Fichten, Jennison V. Asuncion, & Maria Barile, With The Collaboration Of: Chantal Robillard, Myrtis E. Fossey, Darlene Judd, Jean- Pierre Guimont, Raymond Tam, & Daniel Lamb, And Partner Representatives: Christian Généreux, Jean-Charles Juhel, Joanne Sénécal, & Joan Wolforth.

**DATE:** 2001

**TITLE:** Computer and Information Technologies: Resources for the Postsecondary Education of Students with Disabilities (143 pages). Final Report to the Office of Learning Technologies. ISBN 2-9803316-8-6. Hull, Quebec: Office of Learning Technologies.

**AVAILABILITY:**

Executive summary is available in [PDF](#) and in [HTML](#).

The entire report is available in [PDF](#), [HTML](#), and [Word](#).

Paper copies of the entire report in English are available for \$30.00 CDN (\$20.00 US). For

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## Our Plan of Action For 2002/2003

The following activities are a priority for 2002/ 2003 for the Association (not listed in order of importance). These activities will be implemented under the direction of the NEADS Board of Directors.

- Publicizing and distributing the newly developed High School Outreach Project transition guide and maintaining the other products created as part of the activity. This project, begun in 2001/2002, has involved focus groups with high school students with disabilities, the development of a manual to address issues of transition, the creation of greater support and more specific online resources for these students through the NEADS Web site. Exploring the possibility of a second project in this area, based on the results of the current High School Outreach initiative.
- Hosting a national conference on access to post-secondary education for people with disabilities in November, 2002 in Ottawa. Those invited to participate will be students, disability service providers on the campuses, representatives from other non-governmental organizations and campus organizations of students with disabilities, employers, Government of Canada program officers. Issues addressed will include: student leadership, transition from high school to post-secondary education, transition from the school to work, and the capacity of technologies to support student groups and in-school learning.
- Launching Phase II of the NEADS CampusNet Project. CampusNet is an online community for campus groups and access committees which uses the NEADS Web site: [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca) as its platform. A "Developmental Phase" project has been undertaken in 2001/2002. An aspect of Phase II of this project will include a report on findings and engaging student groups in dialogue on this subject during the 2002 national conference.
- Continuing with the Student Leadership and Employment Initiative, with three forums to be held over a 12 month period. This will ensure that NEADS is communicating with students at a grassroots level. The forums — to be hosted by Board members in their communities — will shape our work as an association and will provide excellent input for the government on issues of post-secondary education access, transition from school to work and disability specific public policy. A tie-in to this project can be made re: the agenda of the 2002 national conference and a special workshop on the initiative.
- Publicizing the bibliography: Faculty Awareness and Training In The Post-Secondary Community: An Annotated Bibliography which identifies existing programs and recommends best practices in this area. Ensuring that this directory continues to be available in a variety of formats, in both official languages and on the Association's web site.
- Publication of a new online edition of Organization of Students With Disabilities Guidebook: Leadership in Our Community, with updates in the listing of campus groups and access committees. The result will be significant outreach to campus organizations of students with disabilities and the maintenance of an important resource.
- Continuing to support the recommendations of the proceedings report from our 2000 national conference: Networking, Educating, Advocating: Delivering Success in the New Millennium. A 40 page report on the meeting has been published. This meeting was held in Ottawa at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites, November 10-12, 2000. Participants included: students, service providers, educators, advocates, employers, and government representatives.
- Continuing to support the recommendations of the report Working Towards A Coordinated National Approach to Services, Accommodations and Policies For Post-Secondary Students With Disabilities: Ensuring Access to Higher Education and Career Training (NEADS 1999) in consultation with HRDC, colleges and universities, provinces and service providers (as represented by the Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers). NEADS will work together with our partners to build consensus with respect to "best practices" and a national approach to accessible post-secondary education. A key second stage of this activity has been the creation of an on-line Accessibility Guide on CanLearn Interactive and partnership work in

2000/2001 with CanLearn Information Products Group to expand the resources available in the Guide.

- Promoting the National Directory of Financial Assistance Programs for Students With Disabilities (NEADS 2000) and making sure that the publication continues to be available in a variety of formats – in both official languages — and online on the Association’s web site. We will update the information on programs in this directory in the Financial Aid Guide on [www.neads.ca](http://www.neads.ca) in 2002/2003.
- Continuing to develop and expand the information available on post-secondary education and students with disabilities available on CanLearn Interactive.
- Consultation with our Official Languages and Communications Committee, which will have a particularly important role to play in ensuring participation of francophone students and groups at the 2002 forum and ensuring that all meeting functions and sessions are accessible to both official language groups.
- Partnering with our member group in Quebec, AQEIPS, on issues facing students with disabilities in the province of Quebec.
- Publishing two issues of the Association’s newsletter.
- Continuing to respond to numerous requests for information from students and the general public. Ensuring that we have the capacity to make materials available in a variety of alternate formats.
- Ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance our Web site and expand and support the NEADS listserv that was established following our national conference in 1998.
- Continued partnership work with organizations in our network, including the Council of Canadians With Disabilities. Most particularly, we believe we can assist CCD in its focus of involving more youth with disabilities in its activities and initiatives.
- Continuing to improve the lines of communication between NEADS and the Canadian Federation of Students.
- Working with Human Resources Development Canada, through the Office For Disability Issues and Learning and Literacy, to improve communication with students concerning the Canada Student Loans Program, Employability Assistance For Persons With Disabilities and Opportunities Fund programs.
- Working with the Youth Initiatives Directorate of HRDC to promote dialogue with youth with disabilities and encourage the sharing of opportunities in education and employment.
- Holding two meetings of the Association’s Board of Directors to implement and coordinate all activities and projects.
- Continued representation of the Association to important advisory bodies including: National Advisory Group on Student Financial Assistance; National Council of the Council of Canadians With Disabilities; Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers in Post-Secondary Education (CADSPPE), Adaptech , National Library Council on Access to Information for Print Disabled Canadians.
- Exploring innovative ways to expand our membership base.
- Working to ensure that our documents are available in alternate formats.
- Working with Human Resources Development Canada and the Public Service Commission to promote employment opportunities for students and graduates with disabilities.
- Continuing to facilitate transition from school to work opportunities with national employers and through such innovative internship/ apprenticeship programs as Career Edge/Ability Edge.
- Developing an ongoing partnership with Career Edge to promote Ability Edge positions to our membership.
- Advising the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies in its new longitudinal project on transition from school to work.

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## Board of Directors’ Election Conference 2002

At November’s national conference in Ottawa, Opening Doors to Success, the Association’s regular members will elect a new Board of Directors to work with NEADS for the next two years. All persons interested in a position on the board must be regular members in good standing. Positions on the Board must be filled by “regular members” of NEADS (currently having student status or having graduated within two years of application).

The positions available for election are ten provincial representatives (i. e. British Columbia Rep., Ontario Rep., Nova Scotia Rep. etc.), one territorial representative and an 'Open' Representative. Candidates for the positions of provincial/territorial representatives must be regular members (students or recent graduates with disabilities), residing in the area and/or attending a post-secondary institution in the geographic location they seek to represent.

If you would like to become a member of the NEADS Board, please complete and sign the "Nomination Form" as specified and, if possible, submit it to the office by October 9th, 2002. This will enable us to prepare the forms in both official languages and alternative formats in time for the conference elections. We ask that you include a profile/platform of 250 words or less with the completed nomination form.

Voting for a new Board of Directors will take place at the Delta Ottawa Hotel and Suites (361 Queen Street) on Sunday, November 10th from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. in the Confederation Room. Nomination forms for board positions will be received in the Confederation Room until 5 p.m. on Saturday evening.

The election will be conducted by representatives from Elections Canada. All regular members are entitled to vote in the election. If you are unable to attend the election in person you can identify another member in good standing to act as a proxy and vote on your behalf.

Please contact the office with any questions regarding the Board of Directors election.

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**Edited and compiled by:** Frank Smith and Chris Gaulin

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