

**January 17, 1997**



**Dear members of our DAWN Canada Network:**

On behalf of the Board of Directors of DAWN Canada I would like to wish you all a productive, accessible and happy 1997.

Unfortunately it will be a hard job for all of us to make that come true for 1997. This is a difficult time for people with disabilities and even more so for women with disabilities. Although it is difficult to talk about, we must acknowledge that these changes are political and require that we stand together to educate ourselves and to protest wherever we can. We urge you to support each other and your local DAWN or disability group. You are not alone with your troubles.

There has recently been a Task Force on Disability which has come out with some positive recommendations for people with disabilities. One recommendation is Pan Canadian Standards where our rights would be agreed upon at the federal level and each province would have to agree to honour them. Separate money set aside for training and education is another. We are now just waiting for the government's response to their own Commissions report. We hope we will see some concrete results as the current picture is very dim as things stand now.

Presently we are not included in provincial labour market agreements and there have been no federal funds set aside for training and employment of people with disabilities. We have seen cutbacks in every area of training and employment opportunities and our fear for our future is high.

The general population has become increasingly hardened to the situation of people with disabilities as they become more afraid that the pie is smaller for everyone. The Canada Pension Plan reforms talk about the growing number of disability claims and they are making the assumption that there is something fraudulent about many of the claimants. Cut rate private insurance companies are being engaged by large unions to keep down the cost of Long Term disability payments. Workers are being told that fellow workers are "malingering" at home being lazy at the expense of those still working. Insurance companies advertise that they want to decrease the number of people on disability and people are asked to report anybody they might suspect of "taking advantage" of the system. No one is asking why more people are becoming disabled.

"No Fault" car insurance schemes have gained popularity in a growing number of provinces because of the promise of lower premiums. People want to take the short term solution by gambling that they do not end up in becoming disabled in a car accident and left with no support. No longer will we be able to sue the parties responsible or the insurance company under the new provincial legislation.

Home care and attendant services have been cut back drastically with the rationalization that with less money only the most severely disabled will be helped. Even the services for those most in need have been cut drastically. Recently, in one eastern province people with disabilities have been picketing to prevent the province taking people out of independent living situations and putting them back into private nursing homes to save money. What is happening to our years of hard work?

Discrimination in transportation at nearly every municipal level is being justified on purely economic grounds. Nearly everyone of us is personally feeling the effects of these changes.

Dawn Canada is still working hard. We still have no operational funding but have been attending as many as possible policy development sessions to present our position. We have had some affect. As we work in coalition with other disability groups and other equality-seeking groups we are beginning to understand both the far reaching effects of discrimination in the name of "financial responsibility" and the common will among the people to fight against these growing inhumane policies.

Our most recent project has been a cross country look at the effects of block funding on women with disabilities. This research has been gathered in almost every province and territory. Women with disabilities are meeting to talk with each other and to describe how our lives are changing and how we are feeling about these changes. We hope when you receive the final report you will meet with your local and provincial representatives and let them know how you feel.

We have also just completed a self help booklet on how to quit smoking which will accompany this letter. Our Newfoundland DAWN group has produced an employment, self help manual for DAWN Canada. We hope that in the future we will have our DAWN literature on the Internet. Keep watching for us on our own web page!

We have had no funds to continue our newsletter so we will be in touch as soon as is possible. Please be patient. We will not go away. Please renew your membership by filling out the enclosed form.

We hope that all of us can continue to fight for the equality of women with disabilities and their allies. Take care of yourselves and each other!

Eileen O'Brien

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## Dear DAWN Women:

Just a quick note from me, Pauline - DAWN's Information Officer. It feels great to be communicating with all of you again. Sadly, the last newsletter never got out due to delays and then it was mistakenly destroyed at the mailing house. We look forward to getting funds so that we can produce a regular newsletter.

I often feel sad in these hard times, where people with disabilities are being killed by their families and our survival is threatened by tough economics. This is because I see people with disabilities as having such a strong and vital culture. I know this because I am mobile, and my invisible disabilities allow me to pass in the mainstream world. There I find myself lonesome for my disabled brothers and sisters. I miss the varied ways of owning a body one finds in the disability movement. It seems rather strange that I find the non-disabled world often to be obsessed with body image, health and fitness. I find the disability community, although we often must go to extraordinary measures to manage our health, there is not the constant talk about how we care for ourselves. We simply do what we must and move on.

Writing on disability is another way our culture expresses itself. I am aware of three wonderful new books written by and about women with disabilities. Two are DAWN members. One is by Bonnie Klein and is called Slow Dance: A Story of Stroke Love and Disability. This is an autobiographical book about Bonnie's own challenges with her disability. Another is called The Rejected Body by Susan Wendell which is a highly readable treatise on feminism and the social construction of disability. The third book is called Pushing the Limits: Disabled Dykes produce culture, an anthology of powerful prose, fiction and poetry. Such books help affirm for me my own identity as a disabled woman and a sense of pride about the culture we produce.

Ours is a culture of struggle, perseverance, patience, rage, love, innovation, and creativity. Whether we employ our creative skills by producing art, finding creative solutions to live our daily lives, or engaging in the necessary political action, we are a strong and vibrant part of the human family. I hope that all attempts to eliminate us, whether through New Reproductive Technologies, economic deprivation or lack of accessibility fail. We are all survivors. We are all fighters!

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Join DAWN Canada NOW! Send this form with cheque/money order to:  
DAWN CANADA, 776 East Georgia, Vancouver BC, Canada V6A 2A3

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ PROVINCE \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

TYPE OF DISABILITY \_\_\_\_\_ NON-DISABLED \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: HOME \_\_\_\_\_ WORK \_\_\_\_\_ FAX \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL \$10 / YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ ORGANIZATIONAL \$75 / YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

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