



Opening to Say Dyslexia at the BC Legislature

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Thank you all for being here today at the BC Legislature for this significant event: "Say Dyslexia at the BC Legislature." It's a privilege for me to stand before you and share my perspective as the founding member of Dyslexia BC, a grassroots parent group dedicated to advocating for change in our province.

I have walked this path for two decades as a parent, raising two dyslexic adult children. I understand the struggles, the challenges, and the hopes that come with being a parent of children with dyslexia. And I've also witnessed the incredible potential and resilience that dyslexic individuals possess.

Our gathering today reminds me of a powerful quote by Mark Twain, who once said, "Action speaks louder than words but not nearly as often." As parents, we know this truth all too well. We've seen how actions, real change, can make a world of difference in the lives of our children.

But we also recognize that sometimes, inaction speaks louder than both words and actions. It's when our children's needs go unaddressed, when they face barriers to their education, that we hear the deafening silence of inaction. And it's this silence we are determined to break.

In 2019, an arbitration decision in BC left us questioning where dyslexia and other learning disabilities stood in our education system. The absence of a dyslexia expert during those proceedings raised alarm bells.

It emphasized the urgent need for an unbiased source of information and expertise in matters related to dyslexia. We cannot allow the silence to continue.

Dyslexia is not an isolated issue; it's a significant part of the learning disabilities spectrum, accounting for 80% of all learning disabilities. However, it's disheartening that many people in BC, including those in education, are not aware of this fact. We need to change this.

We need a learning disabilities expert in each school district in BC to ensure that every student, including those with a learning disability like dyslexia, receives the support they need to succeed.

Furthermore, we demand access to free and unbiased diagnosis for dyslexia, separate from a school district's budget. I am pretty sure we are the only disability assessment that isn't covered within our medical system. Our children's access to a fair and equitable education should not be hindered by budget constraints.

We also want to make it clear that "Universal Design for Learning" is not a remedy for dyslexia. Our children deserve targeted support and strategies tailored to their unique needs.

Our mission is straightforward: We want to ensure that students with dyslexia receive equitable access to education in their own public schools. Our ultimate goal is to see policy and legislation in place that guarantees:

- Screening for dyslexia starting in kindergarten, to identify and support students right from the beginning of their educational journey.
- Access to structured literacy in all classrooms, special education classrooms, and mainstream classrooms. Every child deserves the opportunity to learn effectively.
- Teacher training on dyslexia and structured literacy, empowering educators with the knowledge and tools to support dyslexic students.

- Access to early diagnosis, to provide timely interventions and support. Within the Arbitration Decision I found information that the government doesn't really support diagnosis until grade 4 (which is too late to provide effective remediation)
- Access to remediation during school hours in their own school district, so our students can receive the help they need without disruptions to their education.
- Access to assessments and resources for dyslexic adults, ensuring they have the support they need throughout their lives.

Our vision is united: we want our children to have equitable access to education, community, and employment. By taking action today, we can create a brighter future for individuals with dyslexia in British Columbia.

Thank you for standing with us in this important cause. Together, we can make a difference, and together, we can ensure that every child with dyslexia has the opportunity to thrive.