

# State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field



## Acknowledgements

The purpose of the State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field report is to provide an overview of Literacy and Essential Skills across Canada from the unique perspective of CLLN and its national network partners, the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions.

This is the first national environmental scan to be conducted by CLLN and as such it will inform the direction of future scans and will be the basis of further work to show how the Literacy and Essential Skills field is responding to trends.

We especially appreciate the work of Chris Harwood who synthesized reports from many of the provincial and territorial coalitions, collected information to support findings and asked pertinent questions to gather information that wasn't already documented. Her commitment to the task has allowed us to paint a picture of the state of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field in Canada.

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The background of the slide is a white surface covered with numerous organic, bubble-like shapes. These shapes are primarily a vibrant yellow, but many are surrounded by or have smaller, lighter grey shapes nearby, creating a sense of depth and movement, as if liquid droplets or cells are interacting. The shapes vary in size and are scattered across the entire frame.

# **State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field**

**Chris Harwood, October 2012**



## Executive Summary

Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN) is the national hub for research, information and knowledge exchange, and increasing literacies and Essential Skills across Canada. CLLN is a non-profit charitable organization, representing literacy coalitions, organizations and individuals in every province and territory in Canada.

The purpose of the *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report is to provide an environmental scan showing the state of Literacy and Essential Skills (L/ES) across the country, from the perspective of CLLN and its national network of partners, both within and outside the Literacy and Essential Skills field.

Literacy and Essential Skills are part of the ‘right to learn’ required for people to function effectively at work, at home and in the community. This report shows how Literacy and Essential Skills have a powerful effect on the economic and social lives of Canadians.

Adult Literacy and Essential Skills development and training are relevant to a range of policy areas across federal, provincial and territorial boundaries. The State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field report (this report) can be used by the field to educate and inform government, labour, business, social service agencies, partners and stakeholders about the impact of Literacy and Essential Skills on the Canadian economy and the well-being of Canadians.

Literacy and Essential Skills are necessary for an individual’s success and a country’s economic development. Literacy is a social determinant of health; low health literacy reduces the success of treatment and increases the risk of medical error. Literacy and Essential Skills impact family well-being, uptake of learning opportunities, entry to the workforce and the application of changing

demands by the workforce. Employees need to have strong Literacy and Essential Skills to be able to deal with difficult economic climates and adapt to opportunities in growth sectors and new occupations. Employers need employees with good Literacy and Essential Skills, especially now, in a time of labour and skills shortages. Businesses need to be able to adapt to changing markets and new technologies. A skilled workforce is critical if these changes are to be made in a timely manner. This is the impetus we need to increase the number of workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs and find ways to promote upskilling.

Literacy and Essential Skills initiatives need to be sustainable. Programs must be piloted, but serious consideration needs to be given to ways to make successful pilots sustainable. A culture of learning and learning communities helps pave the way for learning to be lifelong.

Some groups remain under-represented in the labour market, namely First Nations, Métis, Inuit, new immigrants and persons with disabilities. However, population growth across Canada will largely be driven by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigration. This issue has been raised by all the provinces and territories. Literacy challenges and language issues unique to First Nations, Métis and Inuit will need to be addressed. Also, a growing, highly educated, immigrant population will place stress on the labour market because they lack the English language skills, Essential Skills, Canadian work experience and/or knowledge of workplace culture necessary to participate fully.

The Literacy and Essential Skills of youth is still an area of concern, even though fewer youth are dropping out of school than in previous years. The majority of jobs in Canada require at least IALS Level 3 literacy skill, yet 43% of all students leaving Canada’s high schools still do so with

Level 1 and 2 skills<sup>1</sup>. Some students obtain their grade 12 diploma but don't have the skills that the level of education implies. About 10% of high school students don't graduate.

Often young people gain skills through formal education, particularly high school. But, some youth just don't do well in formal education for a variety of reasons. Youth who do not succeed in school or who "fall through the cracks" are less likely to set and achieve healthy goals. They are more likely to engage in behaviours that are antisocial, unhealthy, or illegal. The literacy skills of young people are important, because this group has the most time to contribute their knowledge and skills to their families, their communities and the labour market.

An aging Canadian population will reduce the size of the labour force and affect economic growth and productivity. Even though people are staying in the workforce longer, there will not be enough population growth to compensate for skilled employees who are retiring. The first baby boomers reached the retirement age of 65 in 2012. In 2015, the Canadian government believes that 48% of persons earning a living will be between the ages of 45 and 64. It is projected that by 2020 Canada's pool of human resources will be short about one million people<sup>2</sup>.

Recent research indicates that an increase in literacy and essential skills could provide significant reductions in Canadian's reliance on income support from the Employment Insurance, Workers Compensation and Social Assistance systems, freeing up significant fiscal resources for governments. Under reasonable assumptions it is expected that the proposed instructional investment would precipitate a rapid increase in labour productivity, with a corresponding reduction in payments for

Employment Insurance, Social Assistance and Workers Compensation. Annual earnings increases and program savings could total \$86.8 billion, with further gains coming from increases in tax revenue flowing from higher incomes. Investing in human capital is far less costly, in the long run, than paying for health care and the societal costs of unemployment and social exclusion –which are closely tied to lower skills.

The *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report highlights the need for governments, organized labour, industry, community organizations and educational institutions to look at issues through a Literacy and Essential Skills lens; to collaborate, partner and to pool resources in order to recognize the importance of lifelong learning.

The findings in this report will help the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), federal and provincial policy makers, and the Literacy and Essential Skills field gain a better understanding of the broader economic, social and political environment relevant to labour market attachment and reducing skills shortages for economic well-being and an inclusive, prosperous Canada<sup>3</sup>.

Literacy is a key lever of change and a practical tool of empowerment on each of the three main pillars of sustainable development: economic development, social development and environmental protection

Kofi Anan, Secretary General of the United Nations, September 9, 2005

<sup>1</sup> *Towards a better understanding of the link between oral fluency, literacy and Essential Skills*, DataAngel Policy Research Inc., 2011

<sup>2</sup> *Advanced Skills Shortages in Canada – Getting to the Root of the Problem*, The Canadian Business Journal, March 2009

<sup>3</sup> Labour market attachment is a person's link to the labour market, including finding, keeping or changing a job.

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# Introduction

The purpose of the *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report is to provide an environmental scan showing the state of Literacy and Essential Skills (L/ES) across the country, from the perspective of Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN) and its national network of partners, both within and outside the Literacy and Essential Skills field. Targeted scans, such as this one, are crucial to identifying current trends and future directions. CLLN believes that this is the first report of its kind that presents a detailed picture of our sector and its role in assuring Canada's economic success through a skilled workforce. The report provides baseline information from which future scans can be developed. It is anticipated that future scans will be conducted when new census information becomes available and that targeted environmental scans that are crucial to current trends will take place to provide a detailed picture of specific sectors, such as new Canadians, youth and seniors.

The main body of the report deals with Literacy and Essential Skills in a national context. Summaries provided by the provincial and territorial organizations listed in the acknowledgements highlight what is happening provincially and territorially. This information is key to gaining an understanding of Literacy and Essential skills nationwide.

The report reviews and analyzes demographic, economic, and governmental trends and emerging issues related to Literacy and Essential Skills. It outlines the ability and capacity of the national network as a whole, and individually, to fulfill the mandate of providing leadership, knowledge and expertise about Literacy and Essential Skills.

The State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field report examines issues and trends in the labour market that impact policy and the

capacity of Literacy and Essential Skills organizations to share knowledge, practices, and strategies. The findings in this report will help the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) and the Literacy and Essential Skills field gain a better understanding of the broader economic, social and political environment relevant to labour market attachment and reducing skills shortages for economic well-being and an inclusive, prosperous Canada. It will inform strategic planning at CLLN and among the network partners. It will provide information that can be used to guide strategic planning by other Literacy and Essential Skills organizations, service deliverers, administrators, adult educators and organizations whose clients experience literacy issues. It can also be used as an information resource for other government departments, researchers and the general public.

There are three parts to the *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report. The first part provides information that relates to the work of Literacy and Essential Skills organizations. The second part reviews labour market trends and demographics. It focuses on areas of the population where Essential Skills issues are of particular importance. The third part looks at the economic benefits of upskilling and what is needed to be effective in increasing the Essential Skills of Canadians.

## Methodology

The national *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report (this document) while not exhaustive or definitive, includes a fair representation of knowledge as of the beginning of October 2012. This information was obtained by consultations with experts and a wide variety of resources that can be found online. Links to these resources are embedded in the report to make it easy for readers to access more detailed source information.



Provincial and territorial literacy coalitions contributed their own summaries for the State of the Field. They shared information under the following headings:

**Provincial Government**

- ▶ Responsibilities
- ▶ Policies
- ▶ Strategies

**Federal Government**

- ▶ OLES

**Literacy and Essential Skills Lens**

- ▶ Information about Provincial Literacy Coalition
- ▶ Other Literacy Initiatives
- ▶ Other Literacy Organizations

**Labour Market**

- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ Immigrants
- ▶ Aboriginal Peoples
- ▶ Youth
- ▶ Labour Market Trends

**Strengths**

**Challenges**

**What's Needed**

Some provinces and territories used different headings to reflect provincial and territorial information<sup>4</sup>. The amount of detail in each summary varies according to the issues facing the province or territory and the capacity of the coalition to generate information during the summer and early fall of 2012. For information

about the work of the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions, please read the individual summaries. Links to the full summaries can be found in *Provincial and Territorial Literacy Coalitions* on page 23.

Highlights from the provincial and territorial summaries are included in the national report and, when taken together, create a picture of current trends in provinces and territories, regions and nationwide.

## Setting the Stage

### Essential Skills

Essential Skills is the term developed by the federal government to identify skills embedded in tasks in the workplace. However, Essential Skills apply to all aspects of a person's life. They provide a common language that educators, employers and service providers can use to discuss the foundational skills required to learn all other skills. Essential Skills help people to be more productive and to learn new tasks. Essential Skills at different levels of complexity are used in almost every work-related task.



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<sup>4</sup> Essential Skills Ontario provided information about provincial government responsibilities and the role and scope of Essential Skills Ontario. They link to a number of their recent documents, including their 2012 environmental scan.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC, 2009) promotes nine Essential Skills:

- ▶ reading text
- ▶ use of documents
- ▶ writing
- ▶ numeracy
- ▶ oral communication
- ▶ thinking skills (i.e., problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory, and finding information)
- ▶ working with others
- ▶ digital skills / computer use
- ▶ continuous learning<sup>5</sup>

The literacy community refers to Essential Skills as “velcro skills” which enable other knowledge and learning to “stick”. It is widely accepted that for individuals to function effectively in society and the economy they need to have good Essential Skills and high literacy levels. Individuals also need to have confidence in their own abilities; this is often an outcome of improving Literacy and Essential Skills. Increased self-confidence and skills can be instrumental in enabling people to get involved in their communities and perform better at work.

The L/ES field needs to continue to promote a common understanding of Essential Skills among employers. The *Essential Skills in Canadian Workplaces* final report states that awareness of the term “Essential Skills” seems high with nearly four in ten employers stating they are very familiar with the term<sup>6</sup>. On the

other hand, a large majority of employers who think they are familiar with the term believe that it is most accurately defined as the minimum skill set needed for a specific position. In fact, only one in six understand the term as it has been defined by the Government of Canada.



## Literacy

Many people misinterpret low literacy as illiteracy. In fact, few Canadians are truly illiterate (unable to read or write). The International Survey of Reading Skills indicates that 3.8% percent of Canadian adults cannot read<sup>7</sup>.

## International Adult Literacy Survey

International literacy surveys changed the conception of literacy from the literate/illiterate dichotomy to the new understanding of literacy as a continuum. The most important international literacy survey is the International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS). The survey conceptualizes literacy along a continuum of proficiency from Level 1 (low literacy skills) to Level 5 (strong literacy skills), with Level 3 being the skill level needed for most literacy tasks in our society. Appendix 1: *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey* provides more information.

Literacy is more than decoding words or recognizing symbols. It is the ability to use written and numerical information in order to do everyday tasks at home, at work and in the community. How people are able to use their

<sup>5</sup> *Readers' Guide to Essential Skills Profiles*, HRSDC

<sup>6</sup> POR-318-06, *Essential Skills in Canadian Workplaces*, EKOS Research Associates for HRSDC, 2007

<sup>7</sup> *International Survey of Reading Skills*, Statistics Canada, 2008

literacy skills varies from context to context. The understanding of 'literacy' continues to expand and evolve to include a wide variety of skills. In fact, it is becoming common to hear the term "literacies" rather than literacy<sup>8</sup>. This includes skills such as financial literacy, health literacy, media literacy and digital technology literacy. The competence to do this is reflected through Literacy and Essential Skills as the practical application of what a person can do.

It is about the joy of learning and the pleasure and productivity in using one's learning in all facets of work and life pursuits.

M.Fullan, P. Hill and C. Cr  vola,  
*Breakthrough*, Corwin Press, 2006

Research shows that there is a strong relationship between educational attainment and literacy levels<sup>9</sup>. However, literacy is not measured by education alone but by a commitment to lifelong learning, both formal and informal. Literacy is the key to developing knowledge, increasing potential and achieving goals. Literacy involves "reading the word and the world"<sup>10</sup>. Literacy skills improve with practice and deteriorate if not used.

Nine million adult Canadians have skills at IALSS Levels 1 and 2. The number rises to twelve million if seniors are included. Over seven million adult Canadians functioning at Levels 1 and 2 do not identify literacy as an issue. This

can impact their motivation to improve their skills. The number of people with literacy below Level 3 is likely to rise to fifteen million over the next twenty years unless measures are taken to effect change<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, it is important to look at ways in which Canada can make changes to raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and encourage people to upskill.

Literacy is an issue for people who were born in Canada as well as for immigrants. People who are working at IALSS Levels 1 and 2 and who are employed may find aspects of their work very challenging. They could find themselves facing problems if the requirements of the job change. If they lose their jobs it takes them longer to find new jobs. Low literacy skills also have a negative impact on safety in the workplace, which in turn leads to increased health care costs.

### **Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)**

IALSS has been superseded by the PIACC survey<sup>12</sup>. The range of skills being measured by this survey will expand on those covered by IALSS (prose, document and quantitative literacy). It will help governments to better understand how education and training influence society and the economy. A broad range of information from the adults participating in the PIAAC survey has been collected, including how their skills are used at work and in other contexts such as the home and the community. PIACC is concerned with the management and measurement of 'human capital' and four key competencies – problem solving in technology-

<sup>8</sup> B. A. Quigley, S. Folinsbee, W. Kraglund-Gauthier, *State of the Field Report: Adult Literacy*, Canadian Council on Learning 2006: Literacy recognizes literacies as an emerging trend.

<sup>9</sup> Myers, K. & de Broucker, P. *Too many left behind: Canada's adult education and training system*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2006

<sup>10</sup> P. Friere, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, 1972

<sup>11</sup> *Reading the Future*, Canadian Council on Learning, 2008

<sup>12</sup> *OECD programme for the international assessment of adult competencies (PIAAC)*, OECD, 2010



rich environments, literacy, numeracy and workplace skills<sup>13</sup>. Five thousand adults aged 16-65 years were interviewed in each participating country. A larger sample of 26,000 people were surveyed in Canada in order to provide general population estimates at the national level in English and French, as well as for each of the 13 provinces and territories.

In addition, targeted populations in Canada include:

- ▶ recent immigrants
- ▶ First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations
- ▶ official-language populations living in minority settings
- ▶ youth (aged 16 to 24)

Currently the information collected is being processed. It will be released by the OECD in October 2013, followed by reports from participating countries when the information has been analyzed.

More PIAAC studies will follow over the next seventeen years.



## Literacy is a Cross-Cutting Issue

Strong Literacy and Essential Skills have positive benefits for the individual, for communities and for the economy. Strong literacy skills are associated with improved Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Essential Skills are inherently transferrable, and improvements in these skills also benefit people accessing systems such as justice and health. Improving Essential Skills also often benefits people who are incarcerated and people who want to be active in their local communities. Adults at Levels 3 and above participate more in community activities, volunteer more and are more likely to vote.

### HEALTH

In 2008, the Conference Board of Canada and the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) identified literacy as one of the socio-economic determinants of health that should be addressed to ensure the long-term sustainability of Canada's health care delivery system<sup>14, 15</sup>. The CPHA study identified that, in Canada, 11.7 million working age people are estimated to have inadequate health literacy skills. People with higher literacy skills are more likely to live and work in safe and healthy environments. Literacy skills allow people to engage better with health professionals. Higher incomes correspond to greater ratings of health. Canadians with the lowest health literacy skills have been found to be two-and-a-half times more likely to be in receipt of income support<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Human capital competencies are the skills, knowledge and attitudes that individuals can put into productive use.

<sup>14</sup> *Healthy People, Healthy Performance, Healthy Profits. The case for business action on the socio-economic determinants of health*, Conference Board of Canada, 2008

<sup>15</sup> Rootman, I., Gordon-El-Bihbety, D. *A vision for a health literate Canada: Report of the expert panel on health literacy*, Canadian Public Health Association, 2008

<sup>16</sup> *Health literacy in Canada: A healthy understanding*, Canadian Council on Learning, 2008

## Seniors

Seniors are at greater risk for low literacy because the skills bar is continually being raised and because skill loss is a natural consequence of aging. Also, Canadians are staying in the workforce longer and so the importance of maintaining and improving their literacy skills at work is an issue that needs addressing. Typically, older workers have not participated in training to the same extent as younger colleagues.

## Poverty

Poverty and literacy are interconnected. Poverty and low literacy affect nutrition, mental health, stress levels and the ability to prevent illness. Anti-poverty efforts need to be combined with improving literacy. However, improving literacy is only part of the solution; rate of pay is key to reducing the number of people considered to be “working poor”. Sixty-five percent of people who are living in poverty and accessing food banks are the working poor and their families. Adults functioning at Levels 1 and 2 on the numeracy scale are more likely to be in receipt of social assistance payments<sup>17</sup>. Adults with strong literacy skills maintain salaries of up to 33% higher than those with low literacy and are twice as likely to be employed in more secure jobs<sup>18</sup>.

## People with disabilities

There are 3.6 million adults in Canada with at least one disability (physical or mental), of whom about half experience literacy challenges. For all provinces, the rate at which people with disabilities have less than a grade 9 education is at least double, and in many cases over triple, the rate for people without disabilities<sup>19</sup>.

## New Canadians

Newcomers to Canada face many challenges; not only must they increase their literacy and essential skills, they also have to access services such as social agencies, healthcare, employment and childcare in English or French. This means there is a need for settlement organizations and literacy organizations to work together to address the demands of life in a new country.

## Literacy in 2006

In 2006, *The State of the Field Report: Adult Literacy* was published under the auspices of Canadian Council on Learning. Collaborating with literacy experts from across Canada, the authors provided a picture of themes in adult literacy in Canada. The study, through a wide-ranging literature review, captured and referenced major works in the contexts and groups that were the focus of the study:

- ▶ aboriginal literacy
- ▶ ESL and first language literacy
- ▶ Francophone literacy
- ▶ women and literacy
- ▶ health literacy
- ▶ family literacy
- ▶ corrections literacy
- ▶ literacy and work
- ▶ earning disabilities and literacy
- ▶ technologies and literacy

The 2006 study highlighted two gaps in research. The first related to lack of research into the lived experience of the people with literacy challenges.

<sup>17</sup> Desjardins, R., Murray, S., Clermont, S., & Werquin, P., *Learning a living: First results of the adult literacy and life skills survey*, Statistics Canada, 2005

<sup>18</sup> Poverty, CLLN Factsheet, 2012

<sup>19</sup> E. Zubrow et al, *Landscape of Literacy and Disability In Canada*, Canadian Abilities Foundation, 2008

The second gap identified the lack of research about/by literacy educators. However, it did identify an emerging trend of research-in-practice as an effective method for involving literacy educators in research.

The 2006 report identified literacy issues that are still relevant today and need further research. However, in the light of the current economic climate and labour market realities, literacy needs to be considered together with Essential Skills. Our report illustrates the current situation and outlines key areas of focus for the future.



## Upskilling and Lifelong Learning

IALS Level 3 is the level needed to support independent learning. People at this level can compete in terms of knowledge and accessing and using information. Forty-two percent of Canadians are below this level. This is not an issue we can ignore and yet many Canadians are not aware of this.

People with low literacy skills may be good at performing their current tasks and may have developed good coping strategies. Often they have learned by experience but may be slow to adapt to change. They may have difficulty with training materials, problem solving and using charts and diagrams. Unfortunately, many adults with low literacy skills believe they have good or

average literacy skills and have no way to judge the adequacy of their skills, a fact that can cause them to under-invest in training. Often, it is only when there is a change in personal circumstances, such as the loss of a job or a promotion, that a person discovers his or her skills are not at the necessary level.

The adult education system, including Literacy and Essential Skills programs, is a key factor in providing opportunities to upskill. It is crucial that we enhance the skills and knowledge of people working below Level 3 through training and education in order for them to have better opportunities at home, at work and in their communities and to improve Canada's economic viability<sup>20</sup>. At the moment only a small percentage of adults needing to improve their literacy skills enter L/ES programs. For example, in Ontario, about 50,000 learners are enrolled each year; however there are 900,000 working-age Ontarians without a high school diploma.

Learning needs to be lifelong, no matter a person's educational level and achievement, in order to cope with today's society and to prevent skills being lost from lack of use. Many adults rely on information from TV or the internet, rather than reading newspapers and books; this does not reinforce their reading skills. Statistics Canada reports that the average Canadian loses one school grade level in literacy skills over a lifetime. For most people, the gradual decline in their reading ability begins around age 25, drops the most around 40 and tapers off until about age 55. Adults from lower socio-economic backgrounds experience this the most. Deterioration in skills is often delayed when people have a higher level of educational achievement but it still happens.

<sup>20</sup> Bloom et al., *The Economic Benefits of improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace*, Conference Board of Canada, 1997



Workers in jobs that under-utilize their Essential Skills face the risk of losing skills<sup>21</sup>. They may know their current job needs but if they don't need to read or calculate much, then they may lose their ability to do literacy tasks they were once capable of performing.

Research indicates a strong link between levels of education and rates of participation in lifelong learning. The rapid pace and complexity of change in today's global economy requires people to adapt to new situations throughout their lives. Education in one's youth is no longer sufficient. Lifelong learning is important for individuals and for the productivity, competitiveness and prosperity of Canada<sup>22</sup>.

Opportunities for learning can be formal, non-formal or informal. Learning outside educational institutions is usually considered to be non-formal. Informal learning is self-directed and often incidental or unintentional, such as information learned from friends, colleagues or internet searches. Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs form an important component of lifelong learning and can be effective in engaging people who had negative experiences at school. Workplace education has positive implications for Canada's economy.

From an economic and employment perspective, this human potential for lifelong learning is assuming ever greater importance. Old jobs are migrating to places where labour is cheaper. Meanwhile, fast-changing technologies are creating new jobs unheard of only recently or radically altering what workers need to know to perform their existing jobs. Consequently, people now need to continue developing their skills and abilities throughout their working lives.

*Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Policy Brief, July 2007*

There is a need for all Canadians to invest in lifelong learning. Improving skills is of great importance for adults with low Literacy and Essential Skills, not only for those who are not yet in the workforce but also those who are currently employed. This becomes more crucial in view of the increasing demands of the knowledge economy and the ongoing development of information technology.



<sup>21</sup> H. Krahn and G. Lowe, *Literacy Underutilization in Canadian Workplaces*, Statistics Canada, HRSDC, 1998

<sup>22</sup> *Changes in Participation in Adult Education and Training 2003 and 2008*, Statistics Canada

## Linking Literacy and Essential Skills to the Economy

Literacy and Essential Skills are required for people to function effectively at work, at home and in the community. As the State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field report shows, Literacy and Essential Skills have a powerful effect on the economic and social lives of Canadians. Employers need employees with good Literacy and Essential Skills, especially in times of labour and skills shortages. To compete in the global labour market Canada needs workers who are independent thinkers and have the ability to work in teams and solve problems.

Literacy is economically important to macro-economic performance, with differences in the average level of literacy explaining 55% of differences in long term growth rates of GDP per capita and labour productivity in OECD economies. The distribution of literacy skill has also been shown to have an impact, with higher levels of low skilled adults inhibiting GDP growth.

*Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: A Cost / Benefit Analysis, DataAngel, 2009*

Governments and employers recognize that low literacy and a lack of Essential Skills has a negative impact on individuals, business and the Canadian economy. Productivity, innovation and competitiveness are adversely affected when employees have low literacy skills.

The TD Bank Financial Group projected that raising the literacy of Canadians with inadequate reading skills (Levels 1 and 2) to an adequate skill level (Level 3) would have an economic payoff close to \$80 billion<sup>23</sup>. Even a one percent improvement in literacy rates nationally would boost Canada's economy by \$32 billion. According to the C. D. Howe Institute, these effects are three times as great as for investment in physical capital<sup>24</sup>. As well, raising literacy and numeracy for people with weak and poor skills may have a greater impact on long-term economic growth than investing in more highly skilled graduates.

Policy makers have underestimated the contribution of literacy and other essential skills to economic growth, choosing to focus their attention and investment on other determinants of productivity growth, including the elite end of the skill distribution.

*Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: A Cost / Benefit Analysis, DataAngel, 2009*

Raising literacy levels is the key to success for Canada and Canadians in today's global markets. Provincial and Territorial Literacy and Essential Skills organizations understand the importance of employer investment in training and skills development and are well positioned to promote workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs.

<sup>23</sup> TD Bank Financial Group, *Literacy Matters: A Call for Action*, 2007

<sup>24</sup> S. Coulombe and J.F. Tremblay, *Public Investment in Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?* C.D. Howe Institute, October 2005.

Provincial government dollars spent strategically have a proven capacity to lever significant employer investment in workplace learning.

Factsheets: *Literacy is a Right*, CUPE-SCFP Literacy Program

It is important for Literacy and Essential Skills providers to explain the economic benefits of Literacy and Essential Skills training to employers and to show how a needs assessment can highlight areas where training is needed.

Workplace Education pays big dividends to the employer. Initially we thought that business wouldn't have time for workforce training because it was an add-on to an already busy day. What we actually found is that workforce training leverages many times the money and time than is originally invested in it. We often find that businesses don't know how to do Workplace Education, so we can teach them how to do needs' assessments in order to learn what training is necessary. We can show them how to run training programs without losing time and productivity. Our experience so far has been overwhelmingly positive.

Sandra McKenzie, Deputy Minister, Labour and Advanced Education, Nova Scotia, speaking at a panel discussion hosted by Literacy Nova Scotia in February 2012

The impact of literacy skills on labour market outcomes is particularly pronounced. Adults at IALS Levels 1 and 2 are at a skill-based disadvantage<sup>25</sup>. Lower skilled individuals are far less likely to have worked in the course of a year, work fewer weeks per year, are more likely to experience periods of unemployment, experience more and longer periods of unemployment, work more hours per week and have lower wage rates. These impacts translate into significant differences in average incomes by literacy skill level and marked differences in the probability of an individual drawing Employment Insurance, Workers Compensation and/ or Social Assistance benefits<sup>26</sup>.



More interestingly, the proportion of adults with Level 1 and 2 skills also influences economic growth over the long term. A higher proportion of better-skilled adults translates into increased overall rates of productivity growth. This finding implies that raising average skill levels of lower skilled Canadians will drive rapid improvement in economic performance. The conventional economic interpretation of these findings is that literacy is an economic asset, one that greatly enhances worker productivity and, by extension, income per capita. Recent research by McCracken and Murray shows that investments designed to reduce the size of, or eliminate occupational literacy skill shortages through instruction would yield impressive rates of return<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> M. McCracken and T. Scott Murray, *Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: A Cost/Benefit Analysis*, 2009

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*



## Literacy and Earnings

Over the past eighteen months CLLN has been engaged in a series of research projects exploring the links between literacy and income. The resulting Literacy and Earnings project has generated a substantial body of work that provides new insights based on current data. The research demonstrates that literacy is a key factor in determining an individual's labour market outcomes and illustrates the opportunities for individuals, businesses and governments when investing in upskilling Canada's workforce.



### **From Poverty to Prosperity: Literacy's Impact on Canada's Economic Success<sup>28</sup>**

This report analyzed the most recent data to illustrate the impact of literacy skills on both the micro- and macro-economic levels. The report explores whether there is a case to be made for direct links between literacy skill and income level. Data relating to the ability to get a job, job retention and promotion, risk of job loss, length of time unemployed and rates of pay were examined. It provides a summary of how literacy skill and low income are related, and what these relationships imply for public policy.

### **Investing in Upskilling: Gains for Individuals, Employers and Government<sup>29</sup>**

Examining costs and savings associated with moving every Canadian with a Literacy Level 1 or 2 (on the international literacy scale) to Level 3, this analysis is based upon statistically matched data from the *2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)* and the *2005 – 2009 Surveys of Labour and Income Dynamics*. The methods provide a mechanism to explore the relationships between benefit receipt and literacy skill.

### **Learning to Earning: Linking Literacy and Poverty Using IALS Data on Earnings<sup>30</sup>**

This literature review explores the relationship between literacy and poverty using data from the *International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)*. The IALS data provides extensive information about literacy and related factors such as employment, earnings, education and demographics that can be applied in the discussions of literacy and poverty. The focus on earnings, as opposed to other indicators of well-being, was mainly dictated by the scarcity of data explicitly linking literacy skill levels to other social outcomes. A series of research questions was created to guide the literature review.



<sup>28</sup> *From Poverty to Prosperity: Literacy's Impact on Canada's Economic Success*, CLLN, 2012

<sup>29</sup> *Investing in Upskilling: Gains for Individuals, Employers and Government*, CLLN, 2012

<sup>30</sup> *Learning to Earning: Linking Literacy and Poverty Using IALS Data on Earnings*, CLLN, 2012

## Key Findings from Literacy and Earnings

### Projects:

- ▶ The research found that national and international literature confirms the common belief within the field that there is a correlation between literacy proficiency and individual earnings, and that the impact of literacy on earnings varies from country to country.
- ▶ Canadians who do not complete high school are more than three-and-a-half times more likely to be on social assistance.
- ▶ If Canadians' literacy level was increased to the OECD recommended standards for internationally competitive productivity (IALSS Level 3), Social Assistance rolls across Canada would be reduced by 84,000 people.
- ▶ Direct annual savings resulting from an assumed one-time \$29 billion investment in upskilling Canadian adults 16 and over would be \$2.92 billion: \$330 million on Employment Insurance, \$2.1 billion on Social Assistance, and \$490 million on Workers Compensation Investment in upskilling Canadians would increase earnings by \$85.25 billion or an average of \$3,244/worker annually.
- ▶ Tax revenue and program savings would increase annual fiscal return for governments in Canada by 425%.

CLLN, in partnership with Canada's Public Policy Forum, will conduct a series of roundtables with policymakers and employer and labour stakeholders in late fall 2012 and early winter 2013, to further discuss the findings and their implications.

Investing in human capital is the single most effective way of not just promoting growth but also of distributing its benefits more fairly. And investing in skills is far less costly, in the long run, than paying the price of poorer health, lower incomes, unemployment and social exclusion – all of which are closely tied to lower skills.

*Better Skills, Better Jobs, Better Lives: A Strategic Approach to Skills Policies,*  
OECD, 2012

## Adult Literacy Policies

Adult Literacy and Essential Skills development and training is relevant to a range of policy areas across federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions. Literacy benefits people accessing the justice system, people who are incarcerated, people who want to be active in their local communities, people wanting to get into the workforce and people who are already in the workforce but are faced with changing demands.

Federal funding for Literacy and Essential Skills is provided by the *Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP)*. ALLESP targets First Nations, Métis, Inuit, immigrants, lower-skilled workers, and official language minority communities. ALLESP plays an indirect role rather than a direct role in improving Canadians' skills. ALLESP provides funding to eligible organizations to conduct the following activities:

- ▶ knowledge generation, transfer and application
- ▶ promotion of innovation: provision of targeted investments using innovative approaches

- ▶ capacity-building: strengthening the capacity of adult learning and literacy sector and those involved in essential skills
- ▶ increasing awareness: adult learning, literacy and essential skills promotion

The federal government has Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) and a Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) with every province and territory. These transfers provide funds for each province and territory to use to enhance the skills of their labour force.

### **Office of Literacy and Essential Skills**

Housed in Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), OLES is the federal body that is the centre of expertise to improve Literacy and Essential Skills. OLES is committed to raising the Literacy and Essential Skills of adult Canadians through project funding, research and the provision of learning tools. OLES helps Canadians to get the skills they need to support their families, get a job, and stay in the job market. OLES supports and provides funding to Anglophone and Francophone national literacy organizations and a pan-Canadian network of provincial and territorial literacy coalitions.

### **Policies and Strategies in the Provinces and Territories**

Provincial governments also fund Literacy and Essential Skills. Other sources of funding include private foundations, organized labour organizations, employer-sponsored programs and not-for-profit organizations.

Details of Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements can be found in CLLN's *Labour Market Transfers and the Implications for Literacy and Essential Skills Labour Market Transfers* report<sup>31</sup>.

### **Policies and Strategies in Nunavut**

Nunavut developed a draft Adult Learning Strategy in 2005. It outlines proposed actions to support the development of workplace and workforce literacy, including basic education programs and programming supports for employers, including financial incentives. In the winter of 2012 consultations on the draft literacy strategy were completed, however the strategy has not yet been released.

Funding from the Department of Education in Nunavut allows programs to be delivered in communities across Nunavut but L/ES programs are not core funded. Nunavut Arctic College does not deliver any programs in the workplace but it has implemented workforce training and literacy programs through an expansion of their pre-employment course and the addition of better Essential Skills curricular resources and programs.

### **Policies and Strategies in Yukon**

The Yukon Government developed the Yukon Literacy Strategy in 2001<sup>32</sup>. The strategy's purpose is to ensure Yukoners have access to the basic education and training opportunities they need to succeed in Yukon. A community-based approach was emphasized in the strategy.

A review of the Strategy took place in 2006, but no updated strategy has been released. Although there was value in the 2001 Literacy Strategy, members of the Yukon literacy and learning community would like to see a new literacy strategy developed that reflects the needs, challenges and opportunities of Literacy and Essential Skills in the Yukon today.

The Government of Yukon recently announced that they will be holding a community forum in early December 2012 to consult about the Yukon Literacy Strategy and next steps.

<sup>31</sup> Brigid Hayes, *Labour Market Transfers and the Implications for Literacy and Essential Skills Labour Market Transfers*, CLLN, December 2011

<sup>32</sup> *Yukon Literacy Strategy*, Yukon Ministry of Education, 2001

The Yukon College Act of 1988 gave formal recognition to the College's role in offering higher education and adult basic education<sup>33</sup>. The college receives its core operational and capital funding from the Yukon Government. It receives federal support for different programs it offers as well.

Workplace literacy programs are supported by the Yukon Government's Advanced Education Branch. There is no direct workplace literacy funding or policy stream flowing from the branch, however, numerous supports are in place to support literacy initiatives. The branch supports adult education, training, employment programs and services in Yukon by:

- ▶ supporting workplace L/ES programming at the Yukon College such as the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers
- ▶ undertaking labour market research, including essential skills training needs
- ▶ promoting apprenticeship, skills training, and inter-provincial trades standards like the Red Seal program
- ▶ promoting literacy initiatives through organizations that offer workplace and community-based programs

Advanced Education Branch provides core funding to Yukon Learn, a grass-roots non-profit organization dedicated to providing a variety of flexible adult literacy programs and services.

The Labour Market Agreement (LMA) between the federal government and Yukon includes L/ES among eligible programs. The Labour Market Programs Unit of the Advanced Education Branch works with community groups to promote literacy and deliver relevant skills training, ranging from basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, to advanced skills<sup>34</sup>. The explicit mention of literacy makes the LMA an obvious

funding source for a community based workplace literacy program.

The Yukon Government's Economic Development Department oversees the Community Development Fund (CDF) which supports projects dedicated to creating social benefits, such as: strengthening social and community networks, building partnerships, managing social, networking and recreational events, conducting historical research, fostering traditions, sharing knowledge, and developing useable skills.

The Yukon Literacy Coalition has received support to deliver community and family literacy programs.

### **Policies and Strategies in Northwest Territories**

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment in the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) published the first NWT Literacy Strategy in 2001, after the NWT Literacy Council had raised literacy as an important issue that needed to be addressed. Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework has now been updated with a new plan lasting until 2018. A pillar of the strategy is the commitment to literacy in all eleven NWT official languages. The strategy also commits to early literacy, family literacy, school age literacy, youth literacy, working age adult literacy, and seniors and elders literacy, although not all areas receive funding at this time.

The NWT Literacy Council plays a significant role in policy and program development in the NWT as a member of: the working and advisory groups for the NWT Literacy Strategy; the review of adult literacy and basic education programs, and many other committees, initiatives and working groups.

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<sup>33</sup> *Yukon College Act, Revised Statutes of the Yukon, 2002*

<sup>34</sup> *Canada-Yukon Labour Market Agreement, 2009*



## **Policies and Strategies in Newfoundland and Labrador**

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Advanced Education and Skills (AES) has responsibility for adult education and training. It is responsible for literacy, workplace Essential Skills, Adult Basic Education (ABE), and post-secondary activities in the province, as well as the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and Labour Market Agreement (LMA) signed with the federal government.

In 2008 the Department of Education began the development of an adult literacy strategy. Responsibility for this strategy was transferred to the Department of Advanced Education and Skills in October 2011. The province has yet to release this literacy strategy.

## **Policies and Strategies in New Brunswick**

New Brunswick's Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy, 2009, offers free adult upgrading, a delivery system based on the college and community groups, and the active participation of the province's library system. During 2010-11, the province finalized the Quality Framework for Adult Literacy and Essential Skills Service Delivery. The framework is intended to apply to all adult literacy and essential skills service delivery undertaken by, on behalf of, or funded through the Community Adult Learning Services Branch. The progress it has made can be seen in Community Adult Learning Services Branch, *Training and Labour, Action Plan, Progress to date 2010-2013*, March 2012<sup>35</sup>.

New Brunswick has also created a province-wide Workplace Essential Skills (WES) service to provide customized workplace training. The Department of Post-Secondary Education,

Training and Labour funds between 150-175 community adult learning programs, in both English and French. The same department carries out the majority of Workplace Essential Skills programming taking place in New Brunswick. In addition, they have funded the Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick, la Fédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick and Laubach Literacy New Brunswick to carry-out some of their Literacy and Essential Skills initiatives.

## **Policies and Strategies in Nova Scotia**

In Nova Scotia, Literacy and Essential Skills initiatives are funded by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. The Adult Education Division provides support through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL). In 2010, Nova Scotia began consultations on the development of the Adult Learning Act, which outlines the purpose of NSSAL and commits the Minister to regular consultations with the adult learning community, including adult learners, practitioners, and organizations in order to continue the strategic development, implementation, and evaluation of adult learning in the province.

The Workplace Initiatives Division of the Department of Labour and Advanced Education partners with employers and industry to ensure Nova Scotia workers have the skills needed to succeed in the workplace. The division supports workplace education, workforce programs, and programs for laid off workers. It also provides employers with online human resource/training tools and supports a job posting service. The Division administers the Workplace Education Initiative (WEI) which has been in existence since 1989 and is the dominant player in workplace literacy and essential skills<sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> *Training and Labour, Action Plan, Progress to date 2010-2013*, New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education March 2012

<sup>36</sup> *What is the Workplace Education Initiative?* Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education Workplace Initiatives

## Policies and Strategies in Prince Edward Island

PEI recognizes the need to invest in learning at all levels. In 1996, PEI issued a literacy strategy entitled, *Tough Challenges, Great Rewards: A Literacy and Adult Education Strategy* with a mission statement that “Equal access to adult education is a basic right of all adult learners”<sup>37</sup>. The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning took the lead in formalizing the partnerships. The strategy focuses on bioscience, information technology, aerospace, and renewable energy. These high-knowledge industries have significant potential for further growth in revenues and exports, and offer skilled, well-paid, year-round opportunities for Islanders. The major goals of the plan over the next five years include:

- ▶ a nationally recognized centre of biotechnology excellence with 2,000 employees
- ▶ an information technology sector that will be recognized for its innovative capacity
- ▶ continued cultivation of PEI’s thriving aerospace industry
- ▶ increased emphasis on environmentally-friendly energy sources

Skills PEI is a division of the Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning. It was established to manage the delivery of skills and training development programming funded by the Canada-Prince Edward Island Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and Labour Market Agreement (LMA).

PEI’s longstanding Workplace Learning PEI Inc. has benefited from LMA funds with additional financial support. It helps individuals, employers and organizations build strong foundational skills to meet the demands of the changing workplace.

## Policies and Strategies in Quebec

Le Ministère de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale (MESS) receives LMDA and LMA funds from the federal government which in turn are transferred to *Emploi Quebec*. These funds combine with other provincial funding to form the Fonds de développement du marché du travail (FDMT). A portion of the FDMT (\$60 million in 2011-2012) was transferred to Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) to support its training fund. The majority of this fund is used to finance other employment programs, including youth and mature worker programs.

French is the language of instruction for the majority of Quebecers with the exclusion of those who have received (or have a sibling who has received) the major part of their elementary or secondary school instruction in English in Canada, or who have at least one parent who completed the major part of his or her elementary studies in English in Canada. When it comes to adult education, the current Charter of the French Language allows adults to choose their language of instruction.

English literacy training for adults is offered by two different entities. Formal training is funded by the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS). Informal training is offered by literacy/reading councils that provide one-on-one tutoring and/or small classroom instruction using volunteer tutors.

French literacy is also available through the French school boards, as well as through community literacy organizations grouped under the *Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec* (RGPAQ) banner.

WorkForce and WorkPlace Essential Skills training is also supported by MELS through the

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<sup>37</sup> *Tough Challenges, Great Rewards: A Literacy and Adult Education Strategy*, Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning, PEI, 1996

*Services aux entreprises* at the school board level, as well as through *Emploi-Québec* training programs through accredited *Emploi-Québec* training facilities.

The Plan Nord initiative is an economic development strategy launched by the government of Quebec in May 2011 to develop the province's natural resources extraction sector north of the 49th parallel<sup>38</sup>.

The economic and social benefits for the community includes the enhancement of Aboriginal living conditions and quality of life in Aboriginal communities through education and training, culture and health.

MELS has identified its key objectives for the Plan Nord 2011-2016, which include school success, persistence in school and acquisition of initial qualification by as many individuals as possible .

The Plan Nord will respect the First Nations, the Inuit and local communities who will be present at every phase of its implementation. Raising the basic education level of Plan Nord area inhabitants is a priority for the Quebec government. The government hopes that a good job outlook will provide incentive to local inhabitants to improve their employability skills.

Every economic development project must incorporate a specific list of skills required from the concept phase onward so that the greatest number of young people from Aboriginal and local communities can be quickly trained.

A profile of the area's labour force will be drawn up so that appropriate training programs can be planned. Investments in vocational, technical, and university teaching facilities will be required

to ensure they are appropriately equipped, among other things.

### **Policies and Strategies in Ontario**

The Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU) is responsible for Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario. The Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program is part of the overall Employment Ontario (EO) network. In 2007, Employment Ontario brought together employment and training services from the federal and provincial governments into one coherent and comprehensive service delivery system. The goal of Employment Ontario is for the province to "have the most educated people and highly skilled workforce in North America in order to build the province's competitive advantage<sup>39</sup>."

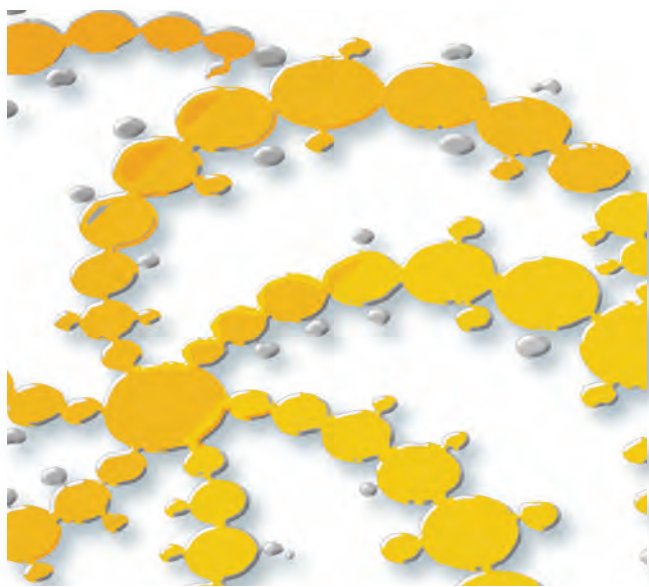
Other provincial ministries play a role in literacy and essential skills, including the Ministry of Education (EDU) which is responsible for child and youth education. Targets for literacy and essential skills as well as numeracy levels have been set and a regime of testing instituted. In some parts of the province, tutoring has been provided to enhance literacy and essential skills outcomes. School boards play a key role in both child and youth literacy and essential skills as well as adult literacy and essential skills.

The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration (MCI) and the federal government both have a role to play in English as an Additional language (EAL). Even though EAL and literacy and essential skills are separate policy jurisdictions, adults with low literacy and essential skills and education in their first language often attend either EAL or literacy programs in Canada<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> *Plan Nord: Building Northern Québec Together - The Project of a Generation*, Gouvernement du Québec Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune, 2011

<sup>39</sup> *Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario*, Essential Skills Ontario, 2012

<sup>40</sup> *ibid*



The Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) is responsible for social assistance or welfare through the Ontario Works (OW) program. OW benefits are for people who need money because they are unable to find work or are temporarily unable to work. OW has two main parts: Financial Assistance and Employment Assistance. Financial Assistance provides money for food, shelter, clothing and other household items for people who have no other means of support. Employment Assistance provides help for people to find work or become job-ready. This includes getting work, taking training courses, completing high school, learning parenting skills, improving English skills, volunteering and finding housing<sup>41</sup>.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) runs the Early Years Centres (EYC). A key function of these centres is the promotion of literacy skills among children and youth and their parents. Family literacy programs are often found in these centres and LBS agencies work closely with the EYCs to ensure that children get the best start at reading and practicing literacy and essential skills<sup>42</sup>.

## Policies and Strategies in Manitoba

Manitoba is one of two jurisdictions where there are separate structures to support workplace essential skills and literacy more broadly. Workplace essential skills are supported by Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM).

The provincial department of Advanced Education and Literacy oversees post-secondary and adult-focused programs and services. Within this department, the Adult Learning and Literacy (ALL) branch administers and supports the development and delivery of adult-focused programming through adult learning centres and adult literacy programs. Manitoba has identified a Minister responsible for literacy, the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy. Manitoba has also passed The Adult Literacy Act, effective January 1, 2009—the first act of its kind in Canada.

The Adult Literacy Strategy is being implemented across the Province. The stated components of the strategy are the Manitoba Adult Literacy Program, Adult Learning Centres, Workforce Development / Employment, English as an Additional Language and a Métis, First Nations and Inuit focus, supported by an interdepartmental Adult Literacy Table to enhance coordination of services and programs related to adult literacy and numeracy skills.

In the fall of 2010, Literacy Partners of Manitoba's Environmental Scan identified a series of gaps and overlaps. Discussions began with Adult Learning and Literacy and Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) to identify common denominators and gap areas that were not being served by the three organizations.



<sup>41</sup> *Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario, Essential Skills Ontario, 2012*

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*



## Policies and Strategies in Saskatchewan

In 2010-11 the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration in Saskatchewan began to develop a literacy strategy. The province has yet to release this strategy.

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration (AEEI) are the key players in adult education and training in Saskatchewan<sup>43</sup>. The Ministry of Education, through the Literacy Office, supports non-credit adult literacy, family literacy hubs and community-based literacy planning, while AEEI supports Adult Basic Education (ABE) primarily within recognised institutions for those with low literacy and essential skills levels.

## Policies and Strategies in Alberta

The ministries of Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education (EAE) and Alberta Human Services (HS) share the responsibilities for publicly supported foundational learning for adults (equivalent to high school completion or International Adult Literacy Survey levels 1 and 2). AEAE supports the following programs:

- ▶ Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education (EAE)
- ▶ Community Adult Learning Councils
- ▶ Family Literacy Programs
- ▶ Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs
- ▶ Comprehensive Community Institutions (community colleges)
- ▶ English Language Learning Classes
- ▶ Alberta Human Services (formerly Employment and Immigration)

The Community Learning Network supports over 80 Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs) across Alberta. CALCs offer programming in four areas including literacy and essential skills.

In 2009, the Government of Alberta released Living Literacy Framework in Alberta. It coordinates the efforts of the Government of Alberta and its many partners to improve literacy levels for Albertans, including an articulated adult literacy system and increased and accessible programming. In the fall of 2006 Literacy Alberta submitted to the government their document, Literacy for a Life of Learning. This document formed the basis of the Living Literacy Framework. Further research and consultation with adult literacy learners, parents, and representatives from early learning, Kindergarten to Grade 12 learning system, public post-secondary institutions, community organizations, libraries, employers and industry associations and Alberta government ministries were undertaken to finalize the framework.

The Framework takes into account the cultures and realities of communities and circumstances of populations such as First Nations, Métis and Inuit, new immigrants, persons with disabilities and seniors. It recognizes that coordination of activities that go beyond education and training systems is key to developing and maintaining literacy competencies. Priorities include, increasing the literacy levels of Albertans to at least level 3 on the IALS scale; building awareness of literacy and its lifelong benefit for all; enhancing opportunities to access programs and services to develop and maintain their skills; and facilitating collaborative partnerships to support a continuum of literacy development for

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<sup>43</sup> On May 25, 2012, Premier Wall announced a re-organization that saw Advanced Education become its own ministry and the other elements of AEEI, including Adult Basic Education, Workplace Essential Skills Saskatchewan, Essential Skills in the Workplace Program, Immigration responsibilities move to a new Ministry of the Economy. As the change occurred as this publication was going to print and before full details were known, this publication continues refers to AEEI.



Albertans. Increased literacy levels will be measured by success indicators that have been built into the framework. The Living Literacy Framework will be implemented over the next few years. Action plans are being developed and Literacy Alberta is well placed to assist in the implementation.

There needs to be a more well developed process for learner assessment and a more coordinated system so learners can move between programs and advance into further education. The Government of Alberta has released funds for two projects. The first is to develop an understanding of learner measurement tools and how/when they should be used. The second is to develop an Effective Practices Guide and Models for programs. Literacy Alberta will take the lead on the second project.

The Government of Alberta has a 10-year, sector-based, labour force strategy, *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*)<sup>44</sup>. The February 2012 Speech from the Throne made a commitment to update Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce, pledging to ensure jobs for Albertans before looking abroad.

In 2009, Alberta created the Workplace Essential Skills Training (WEST) program which supports workplace essential skills training through the development of partnerships. These partnerships assist employed Albertans gain the essential skills necessary to fully participate at work and contribute to a highly productive workplace.

The program targets those with less than high school or with levels 1 or 2 on the IALS scale. Projects may be initiated by an employer, industry association, community organization, labour group, or a training provider and must have at least one employer involved.

Since 2009, 13 WEST pilot projects have been funded and an evaluation conducted. Some changes in the program include encouraging employers to permit a portion of the training to take place during normal work hours and permitting ESL to be an eligible activity.

Federal funding transferred to Alberta through a Labour Market Agreement has been used to expand existing adult education and literacy services and to pilot innovative approaches. It also established and expanded WEST.

In August 2012, Literacy Alberta gathered together leaders in literacy, learning, and essential skills to determine how literacy issues that exacerbate issues in areas such as childcare, employment, housing, and poverty could be incorporated into the Social Policy Framework (SPF). The recommendations were compiled and sent to Human Services for their consideration.



<sup>44</sup> *Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce*, Government of Alberta, 2006

## Policies and Strategies in British Columbia

In 2007, the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD) now called the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology (AVED) created an adult literacy strategy. The goals are to:

- ▶ reduce barriers and increase participation in adult literacy programs and courses
- ▶ improve literacy rates for key populations, including First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigrants
- ▶ coordinate quality programs that produce results

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development was reorganized in March 2011 into two ministries: the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology and Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training.

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology funds the Community Adult Literacy Program through a series of grants. A key component of BC's adult literacy strategy is support for community-based programs.

Detailed information about the impact of the LMA programs and services, can be found in the report, *Canada/British Columbia LMA Three Month Outcomes Survey 2011/12*<sup>45</sup>.

The LMDA supports employment services. The Ministry of Social Development has integrated employment services into one program called the Employment Program of BC. The Employment Program of BC replaces four provincially funded employment programs and six programs funded under the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement with an



integrated approach for British Columbians needing services. The new program proposes to make it easier for people to find work and provide stability for their families through a wide range of integrated employment services and supports. This program is managed by WorkBC.

Skills for Growth is BC's labour market strategy. It focuses on increasing the skill level and success of people in BC, attracting and retaining top talent from Canada and the rest of the world, and improving productivity in the workplace. Next steps include the development and implementation of regional labour market strategies through collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, local governments, regional economic development agencies, and other stakeholders.

In addition to providing labour market information, a clear vision and strategy that will ensure the funding required to support programs to build workforce skills is needed. This would make sure that a coordinated approach to literacy and essential skills continues and communities are supported to find solutions related to their economic well-being.

<sup>45</sup>*Canada/British Columbia LMA Three Month Outcomes Survey 2011/12 Report, Governments of Canada and British Columbia, 2012*

# National Literacy Organizations

## CLLN

Canadian Literacy and Learning Network is the national hub for research, information and knowledge exchange, and increasing literacies and Essential Skills across Canada. CLLN is a non-profit charitable organization, representing literacy coalitions, organizations and individuals in every province and territory in Canada. CLLN shares knowledge, engages partners and stakeholders and builds awareness to advance literacy and learning across Canada. CLLN believes that literacy and learning should be valued, at home, in the workplace and in the community. Funded by—and working in consultation with the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada—CLLN provides leadership, knowledge and expertise about Literacy and Essential Skills while developing partnerships with stakeholders across Canada.

## NALD

National Adult Literacy Database researches and organizes Literacy and Essential Skills material found online in both of Canada's official languages. NALD also provides an annotated bibliography of resources, connects partners with experts in the field and publicizes literacy-related activities and events.

## Centre for Literacy

The Centre for Literacy is a centre of expertise that supports best practices and informed policy development in Literacy and Essential Skills by creating bridges between research, policy and practice. This is done through learning events (including institutes and workshops), action research projects and publications, and also through its library services and website.

Recent Institutes have focused on *Essential Skills in the Workplace* and the Fall Institute 2012 will

focus on *Social Finance and Innovation for Adult Basic Learning*<sup>46</sup>.

## RESDAC

Le Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC) works to promote literacy as a right and also to improve the Literacy and Essential Skills of adult Francophone Canadians. RESDAC works with organizations, institutions, and community groups to share knowledge and research, develop services and promote Literacy and Essential Skills together with lifelong learning.

## ABC Life Literacy Canada

ABC Life Literacy Canada connects and mobilizes business, unions, government, communities and individuals to support lifelong learning and achieve goals through leadership in programs, communications and partnerships.

## Frontier College

Frontier College operates a variety of literacy programs, such as homework clubs and reading circles, in locations across Canada<sup>47</sup>. It recruits and trains volunteers to work with children, youth and adults in a variety of settings, including jails. It also helps other community-based organizations set up and run literacy programs for their own participants.

## Umbrella Organizations and Associations

In many provinces and territories there are networks that link organizations together, for example in Ontario there are four streams: Anglophone, Francophone, Deaf and Native. Regional Networks support programs in all sectors at a regional level. School boards, colleges and community based programs have their own provincial sectoral support<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> *Fall Institute 2012: Social Finance and Innovation for Adult Basic Learning: Opportunities and Challenges*, October 14-16, 2012, Centre for Literacy, Saint John, NB

<sup>47</sup> *Literacy Organization, Frontier College*

<sup>48</sup> *Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario*, Essential Skills Ontario, 2012



## Provincial and Territorial Literacy Coalitions

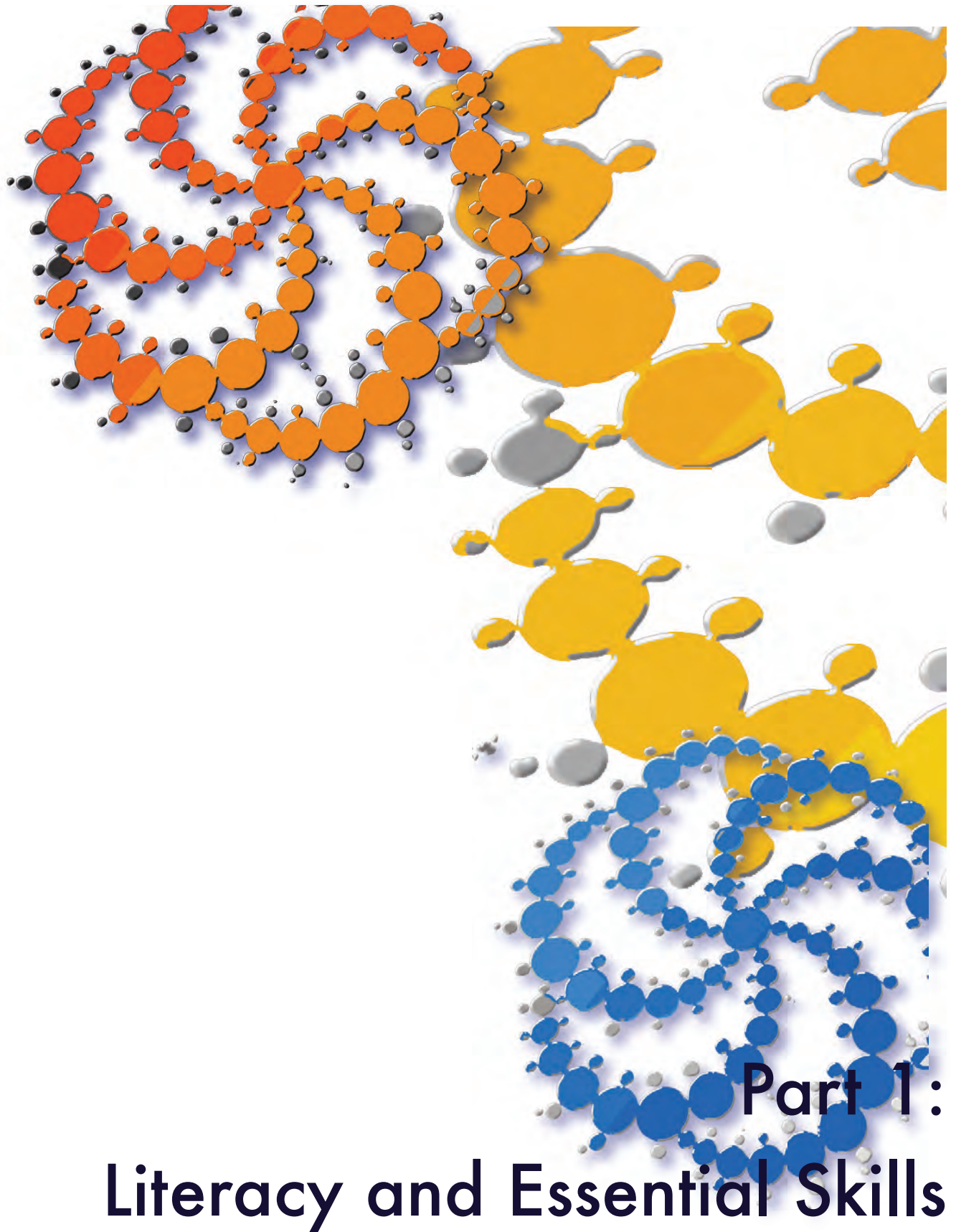
While there are differences between provincial and territorial coalitions, much of the work they do falls into these categories. Literacy coalitions:

- ▶ raise the awareness of the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills with stakeholders and partners, sharing information about the state of literacy in their provinces and territories
- ▶ promote accessible literacy and essential skills programs for all who need them and collaborate with others in order to support learning, find solutions
- ▶ make connections to maximize resources and minimize duplication
- ▶ prepare environmental scans and develop action plans to address issues
- ▶ support learners and practitioners in their efforts to improve Literacy and Essential Skills
- ▶ provide leadership
- ▶ connect to service providers in order to facilitate collaboration, research, and professional development sessions for employers and adult educators

**For more detailed information on each provincial or territorial literacy coalition click on the map below.**







# Part 1: Literacy and Essential Skills





## Literacy and Essential Skills Programming

In the context of our work at CLLN we know that Literacy and Essential Skills are not the content of everyday conversations across Canada and yet Literacy and Essential Skills provide the key to economic development. Adult Literacy and Essential Skills development is relevant to a range of policy areas across federal, provincial and territorial boundaries. Programming benefits people wanting to get into the workforce and people who are already in the workforce but are faced with changing demands. Literacy and Essential Skills programs are crucial for labour market attachment.

In December 2007, CLLN produced an *Environmental Scan of Literacy Work in Canada*. This environmental scan determined that knowledge gaps exist in a number of key areas. Interviews with key informants for the scan revealed that the “system” of delivery is extremely complex, fragmented and diverse across the country. Informants said that it is very difficult to know and keep track of who is delivering adult literacy because some of the programming is project-based and operates on short-term funding. Workplace literacy programs are offered by employers and unions across the country but the extent of these programs is unknown. The situation still exists today with a lack of comprehensive knowledge of workplace Literacy and Essential Skills program delivery.

This section views Literacy and Essential Skills programming from various perspectives, including the types of programs, shared characteristics of successful programs, the skills needed by educators, the profile and viewpoint of learners, and the assessment tools available to programs.

## Labour Market Study of Literacy and Essential Skills Workers

CLLN has been funded by OLES to undertake a Labour Market Study of Literacy and Essential Skills Workers. Overall, the study will provide a national picture of Literacy and Essential Skills educators who work in a variety of capacities in the field. Basic demographic indicators will give us a profile of the people working in the field. The survey will also look at the types and sizes of organizations as well as the settings (community, workplace, family, school-board etc.) in which they work. It will look at where Literacy and Essential Skills programs are located and what kind of instruction is provided. Finally, it will also give us a credible profile of the educators’ qualifications; types and availability of current professional development opportunities; career paths; current pool of skills, knowledge and experience; and their sense of job stability. The study will provide a projection of the educators’ human resources needs.

CLLN expects the report to be completed and disseminated during the summer of 2013.

## Building Solutions: Engaging Employers in LES Development

CLLN and ABC Life Literacy Canada have been granted joint project funding by OLES for *Building Solutions: Engaging Employers in L/ES Development for the Canadian Workforce* to develop increased awareness on the part of Canadian small, medium and large enterprises of the need for L/ES workplace training and its implementation as a business solution; to make links between the business sector and the adult Literacy and Essential Skills sector in order to address workplace training gaps; to identify a specific action plan for business, labour and the L/ES sector, and; to identify national champions who can engage other employers moving

forward. This work will address issues that come up in the State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field report as needing action.

## Types of Programming

Across Canada, many different types of programming are offered, including but not limited to:

- ▶ workplace Literacy and Essential Skills upgrading programs (unionized/non-unionized)
- ▶ work-readiness / pre-employment
- ▶ pre-apprenticeship training
- ▶ Literacy and Essential Skills programs
- ▶ General Education Development (GED) and Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) courses
- ▶ study skills and preparation for exams
- ▶ learning how to learn
- ▶ family literacy (parents and children)
- ▶ upgrading Literacy and Essential Skills in correctional facilities
- ▶ upgrading Literacy and Essential Skills for individuals at risk of offending/re-offending
- ▶ language training

Literacy and Essential Skills programming includes improving skills in the following areas:

- ▶ reading
- ▶ document use
- ▶ writing
- ▶ oral communication
- ▶ thinking skills
- ▶ digital skills
- ▶ numeracy
- ▶ working with others
- ▶ continuous learning

These are the key Essential Skills that adults need to meet employment, education, training and personal literacy-related goals.

Programs are often offered by:

- ▶ school boards
- ▶ colleges
- ▶ community-based organizations
- ▶ employers
- ▶ unions
- ▶ libraries
- ▶ correctional facilities
- ▶ organizations working with offenders

Learning takes place in workplaces, libraries, classrooms, learning centres and shop-fronts. Instructional approaches include one-to-one tutoring, small or large group work, distance education, online courses and blended learning. Programs aim to be sensitive to learners' needs and aspirations and value their experience and prior learning.

Programs in the community that have worked in the past are not always effective in today's results-driven, fast-paced society because they focus purely on reading and writing. While there is still a place for programs that deliver literacy there is more demand for Literacy and Essential Skills programs customized to meet specific needs of learners and employees. Literacy and Essential Skills programs in the community deal with specific areas of focus, as can be seen from the list above.



## School Board and College Programs

Programs offered vary provincially. School boards often provide programs in adult high schools or the community. They usually offer a mix of Literacy and Essential Skills programs, credit programs, GED and ACE courses, pre-apprenticeship courses, employment preparation programs. Usually these courses are taught by staff but occasionally volunteer tutors work with the learners.

Colleges offer upgrading programs, often as preparation for college programs and apprenticeship. They may also offer career development courses, essential skills for workplace success courses, English language programs and occupation-specific language courses.

## Learning Centres

Learners have the opportunity to participate in programs such as English as an Additional Language (EAL), basic computers, literacy and upgrading programs. They may earn high school credits, graduate with high school diplomas, prepare for a job or further education.

## Community-Based Programs

Learners have the opportunity to participate in programs such as EAL, basic computers, literacy and essential skills programs, prepare for a job or further education. These programs tend to be run by staff who coordinate and train volunteer tutors to work with learners.

## Family Literacy and Essential Skills Programs

In Canada, 25% of children entering school lack the foundation needed for successful acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Low levels of literacy undermine the health and psycho-social wellbeing of families in a cycle that repeats itself. Children of parents with low literacy often perform poorly in school, cannot get assistance with homework, are less likely to graduate and

more likely to be involved with the criminal justice system. Interventions in the form of family literacy can vastly improve outcomes for children from disadvantaged homes and break the cycle of intergenerational low literacy.

Family literacy is defined as programs or activities that include one or more of the following components:

- ▶ parental involvement in a child's literacy development is encouraged through joint caregiver-child sessions
- ▶ inter-generational – both caregivers and children receive direct literacy instruction
- ▶ focus on primary caregiver – the focus is on ways in which to develop children's literacy at home, either directly or indirectly

The programs can be stand-alone literacy programs or activities that are integrated into existing non-literacy programs, for example a prenatal nutrition program that includes showing participants how to read and understand nutrition labels, how to use critical thinking skills to make sensible decisions about food choices, and how to assist their children in developing literacy skills through everyday activities.

The Province of Manitoba has implemented the Early Development Instrument that tracks the readiness of children across the province to enter kindergarten. Results from the 2008/2009 provincial report indicate that Manitoba children enter kindergarten with language and thinking skills below the Canadian average, and communication and general knowledge skills at the Canadian average.

In Alberta, the Centre for Family Literacy supports the development of family literacy across the province through training, development of resources, promotion, awareness and research.

Aboriginal Family Literacy is important for strengthening families, culture and languages. In BC, the Aboriginal Family Literacy Initiative is a project that aims to contribute to increased literacy among First Nations, Métis and Inuit families<sup>49</sup>.

Justice Thomas Berger, through his work as conciliator in the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement implementation contract negotiations, reported the need to develop programs that improve the language and literacy skills of parents and their children<sup>50</sup>. Very few Inuit families in Nunavut have the education or financial resources available to provide their children with a literacy rich environment. Books, craft materials and other resources are not an option when there is barely enough to put food on the table. In most communities, few local co-op and northern stores carry books due to the high cost and low demand. For unilingual Inuktitut speakers the situation is compounded by the fact that there are very few Inuktitut books and materials published. Family literacy programs are a culturally appropriate and cost effective investment for Nunavut communities. Iltaqsinig, Nunavut Literacy Council believes that with sustained funding, family literacy programs will make a significant and long term contribution to poverty reduction in Nunavut.

Family literacy is a high priority within the Government of the Northwest Territories, and is a major pillar of the NWT Literacy Strategy. Families are a cornerstone of First Nations, Métis and Inuit culture, and family literacy is seen as a culturally appropriate and non-threatening way to (re-)engage parents in learning: many live with the legacy of residential schooling, and were “failures” within the formal education system. Family literacy is often the first step back into more formal education for many adults in the



NWT. A strong motivator for adults to participate in family literacy, and eventually in further education, is the desire to help their children succeed in school.

For more than ten years, the Government of the Northwest Territories has funded the NWT Literacy Council to provide support to family literacy through training, resource development, information sharing, outreach and support. Consistent with research from other places, evaluations of the Council’s family literacy work demonstrate the efficacy of the programs, and the benefits for both adults and children.

The Yukon Literacy Coalition opened its Family Literacy Centre in 2009. This Centre provides a space for practitioners, parents and caregivers to participate in programming and to develop the skills to integrate literacy activities at home. It is visited by 500 people a month. It sets the foundation for children to gain the literacy skills they will need to participate in the workplace of the future; and it provides tools for parents to support life-long learning for themselves and their children. Given the proven impact of family literacy, there is a need for increased provisions, supported by appropriate funding.

<sup>49</sup> *Aboriginal Family Literacy Centre, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres*

<sup>50</sup> Thomas R. Berger, *Conciliator’s Final Report: the Nunavut Project*, March 2006



In Newfoundland and Labrador there are currently no defined programs developed to support Family Literacy initiatives. The new early learning strategy (March 2011), *Learning from the Start*, will have a specific focus on supporting parents and the important role they play in nurturing their children's early development and learning.

Findings from CLLN's *Mapping the Field of Family Literacy*, 2008, show that the provision of family literacy programs and services that focus mainly on the literacy skills of the caregiver is uneven; the main reason cited for this is funding. Much of the focus of family literacy programming is on the child and on ensuring that the caregiver has strong parenting skills. This type of family literacy programming is often provided by early learning centres, school boards or by a consortium of community agencies that don't always make referrals to adult literacy programs because they assume that all the adults participating have the literacy skills to be the child's first and foremost teacher. Conversely, adult literacy programs, which have an increasing focus on employment/further education skills, may not link an adult's parenting needs to programs and services offered by early learning centres or other organizations that provide family and children services. When both providers liaise, gaps in family literacy provision within a community are few.

CLLN's research also found that there was little evidence of literacy coalitions networking with provincial/territorial service groups that focus on family and children services. For example, staff from a literacy coalition may not connect with staff from the provincial and territorial Early Childhood Education organization. Again the reasons for this are closely linked to funding: most, if not all literacy coalitions receive funding to focus on adult literacy. More research is needed to determine the extent of this gap and the potential benefit for establishing a relationship.

## Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills Programs

Literacy in the workplace is the ability to use the knowledge and skills needed to learn, understand, and communicate orally and in writing at work. Lack of literacy skills in the workplace can be a hidden problem.

A few years ago, we introduced new tools in a firm of 550 employees. The union thought 30 or so employees would need assistance. An inquiry revealed that 178 employees experienced difficulties, at different degrees.

Fédération des travailleurs et des travailleuses du Québec, 2008

Workplaces face many challenges as they compete in the global market. They are constantly looking for ways to increase productivity. And yet, they sometimes lack awareness of the fact that improved literacy skills can have a positive effect on the bottom line of a business.

Companies need to look ahead, not just at what is happening day-to-day. Budgets need to reflect growing a business. There will be new markets to exploit and new business opportunities. Innovation is important and so are the workers who deliver. People management is important.

Jason Myers, President Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, 2008



Some companies have embraced the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills. However, many workplaces tend to focus on specific work-related skills and training such as training related to using new machinery or work processes. These workplaces may be delivering the right topics for training but not including enough Essential Skills components.

In the NWT Literacy Council's research into barriers and success, the facilitators and learners indicated that they were more successful when learning was meaningful for them. Embedded literacy programs are a means of making learning more significant: they purposefully embed literacy into specific skills-based programs and are effective in engaging youth and adults by creating meaningful learning experiences. An exemplary embedded literacy program is the native artisan program offered through the Native Women's Training Centre in Inuvik. Learners not only learned the skills associated with their craft, but also used numeracy, literacy and other essential skills to develop business and marketing plans. Aurora College's strategic plan for the Northern Adult Basic Education Program funding includes the development and delivery of such courses.

Literacy and Essential Skills providers need to work with employers to create effective workplace programs that follow a model where

Literacy and Essential Skills are embedded in a collaborative approach that incorporates workplace knowledge and practice<sup>51</sup>.

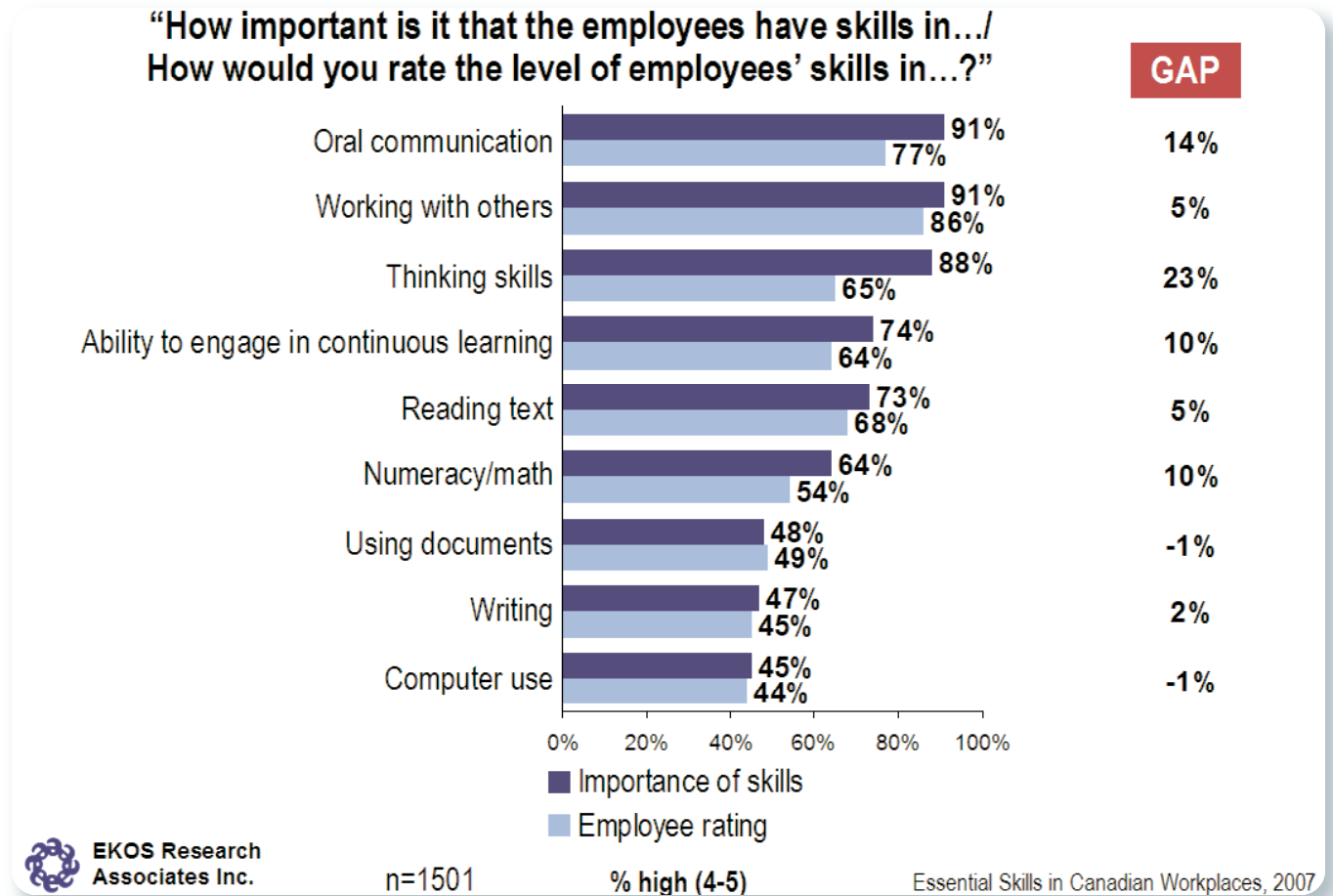
Certain skills benefit employers, employees, unions and communities. They ensure employees are productive participants, able to reach their goals both in the workplace and in society. Employers have been asked to rank the importance of each Essential Skill and to consider whether or not their employees had appropriate levels of competence in these areas. The results of the survey (Figure 1) show that there is often a gap between the skills employees have and the skills they need. Some areas where Literacy and Essential Skills are important in the workplace include:

- ▶ understanding and using workplace and union related information
- ▶ being able to complete the necessary paperwork and reports
- ▶ having the ability to work with numbers to complete tasks
- ▶ communicating orally and participating in all aspects of the workplace



<sup>51</sup>*Shaping a New Learning Culture: An Analytical Taxonomy of Embedded Workplace L/ES Programs*, Le centre d'alphabétisation, Prepared for Centre for Literacy Summer Institute, Montreal, 2012

Figure 1: Importance and Rating of Skills



## Literacy and Essential Skills Programs organized by labour groups

Labour promotes programs that are sensitive to workers’ needs and aspirations and value their experience and prior learning. They ensure that workplace skills are part, but not all, of program content. Unions prefer accountability using individual and collective assessment and evaluation rather than learner testing.

Literacy programs can help workers gain access to further workplace training. They can contribute to job security, opportunities for promotion and success in workplace changes. A partnership approach involving all levels of the workplace emphasizes shared responsibility. Participation in workplace programs improves

when paid time during working hours is provided for people to attend classes.

## Workplace and Essential Skills in the Provinces and Territories

### Workplace and Essential Skills in Nunavut

The international Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS) has shown that instead of enlarging the pool of highly skilled workers, the tendency is to increase the skills of the already skilled<sup>52</sup>. This is certainly the case in Nunavut where most of the literacy funding targets those who already have basic literacy skills<sup>53</sup>. Despite the urgent need for skilled workers for paid jobs, there are not enough L/ES programs available to support adult learners.

<sup>52</sup> *Literacy for the Knowledge Society: Highlights from the Second Report of the International Adult Literacy Survey*, Statistics Canada 2003

<sup>53</sup> *Report on the Review of Nunavut Arctic College*, Standing Committee on Health and Education, Nunavut Legislative Assembly, June 2006

## Workplace and Essential Skills in Northwest Territories

Every two years, the Government of Northwest Territories (GNWT) hosts a Labour Market Forum to help share information on the labour market and develop priorities to help meet labour market demands. The next forum is scheduled for late 2012 or early 2013. The NWT Literacy Council participates in the forum.

The NWT Literacy Council has partnered with the GNWT in a Labour Market Agreement (see Training by Industry Sector on page 97) project to develop an interactive, online essential skills tool and facilitator manual on specific occupations found in northern communities.

In 2012 the NWT Literacy Council completed research into the status of workplace learning in the NWT, and made recommendations to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment for moving workplace learning forward.

The Council is now partnering with the other territorial coalitions on a pan-northern study into the educational outcomes and employability of northern men.

## Workplace and Essential Skills in Yukon

The Advanced Education Branch administers community training funds for programs in three main streams: community-based, industry/sector-based or project specific. Project specific streams encompass projects that reduce barriers to employment or projects that ensure that Yukon has a skilled workforce. Any of these streams could be applicable to workplace literacy.

Yukon needs to find ways to encourage more employers to invest in the literacy and essential skills development of their employees. Yukon

Literacy Coalition believes that workplace readiness needs must be addressed more fully. Additionally, workplace training needs to address health and safety as a high priority.

## Workplace Training in Newfoundland and Labrador

The Department of Advanced Education and Skills (AES) supports several initiatives to enhance access to job skills<sup>54</sup>. Training under these programs is job-skill specific, and is not necessarily Literacy and Essential Skills training:

- ▶ Employment Development Supports and Services assists with expenses related to training, job search, and a wide range of additional supports.
- ▶ The Job Skills/Essential Workplace Skills initiative provides financial assistance to employers to develop and deliver recognized on-the-job training for existing and future employees. Training must be linked to employment opportunities with the employer.
- ▶ The Workplace Skills Enhancement Program is an employer driven program for job-specific training. Eligible participants include relatively low-skilled employees, in particular those who do not have the certification(s) or skills required to meet the operational needs of the employer.

Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador recognizes the need to develop additional measures to encourage employers to engage in workplace Essential Skills programs. Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills needs to have a comprehensive support system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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<sup>54</sup>*Province Gearing Up to Enhance Labour Market, Backgrounder, Labour Market Initiatives, Gov NL, 2009*



## Workplace and Essential Skills in New Brunswick

In New Brunswick, development of the Workplace Essential Skills (WES) program began in 2009 in response to the reported low levels of literacy in the existing New Brunswick workforce and indicators of a growing skills gap in the province as a result of changing labour demands<sup>55</sup>. The program aims to assist individuals who are employed and those who are actively seeking employment by providing a framework to acquire or enhance essential skills needed in today's labour market. The Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL) has implemented and manages program delivery through a network of regional WES teams. Private sector partners include employers, business and industry associations, sector councils, unions, and non-governmental literacy organizations.



## Workplace and Essential Skills in Nova Scotia

In spite of the need for workplace essential skills articulated by business, labour, and government in Nova Scotia, and the success of the Workplace Education Initiative (WEI), there is a growing need for more participation by employers. However, managers in small and medium-sized enterprises may not recognize the benefits of the investment. The Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) is working to meet the need for greater employer participation through increased funding available through 'jobsHere' to expand the program's reach and capacity.

## Workplace and Essential Skills in Prince Edward Island

Literacy levels are low in PEI and Essential Skills are not yet widely recognized. A few businesses have received essential skills upgrades through Workplace Learning but this is by no means common.

An example is the Cavendish Farms Learning Centre at the company's frozen potato production facilities in New Annan, P.E.I. The centre provides employees with individualized instruction in a wide range of programs, including essential literacy and numeracy skills, General Educational Development (GED), and university preparation and facilitation.

The Learning Centre was conceived by employees and designed with their needs as paramount. It offers flexible training schedules to coexist with shift work, and targeted courses to accommodate each learner's needs. In addition to developing skills, the Learning Centre develops positive employee attitudes and behaviours such as self-confidence and mutual respect.

## Workplace and Essential Skills in Quebec

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) funds English LES WorkForce/WorkPlace programs managed by the Quebec English Literacy Alliance. Project funds are available to support community literacy through the Official Minority Linguistic Community programs funded by Canadian Heritage.

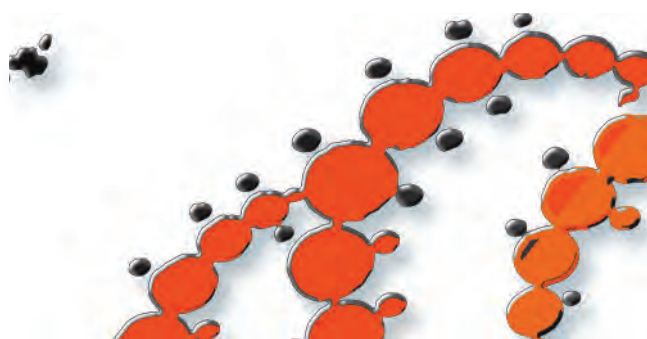
Quebec's 1% Manpower Training Fund was established by the Act to promote workforce skills development and recognition (*Loi favorisant le développement et la reconnaissance des compétences de la main-d'oeuvre*). The Act provides that every employer

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<sup>55</sup>*Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey*, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Statistics Canada, 2003

whose total payroll for any given calendar year exceeds \$1 million is required to participate in workforce skills development by allotting at least 1% of total payroll for that year to eligible training expenditures.

The Adult Education and Training Survey conducted in 2002 showed that employer-sponsored training increased more in Quebec than elsewhere in Canada. This increase in a province notoriously underfunded in the past, moved Quebec from last place in Canada to 8th place in the period between 1997 and 2002. The survey also showed that 33% of employers were investing more in training than before the Act came into effect, with only 2% reporting that they were investing less than before.



### **Workplace and Essential Skills in Manitoba**

Workplace Education Manitoba (WEM) has significant experience and success in developing gap training based on specific workplace needs. The majority of WEM's success comes from partnerships. WEM also hosts programs such as aWEST, Manitoba's only essential skills drop-in centre, which offers free training in the essential skills needed for specific trades.

### **Workplace and Essential Skills in Alberta**

In addition to provincial government ministries and agencies, workforce/place training is supported by:

*Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)* is a not-for-profit group, formed in 1989, that works to raise essential skills

awareness, knowledge and commitment with industry, labour, communities and post-secondary education and training providers.

Alberta's *Training for Work* program has several initiatives relating to essential skills and literacy training.

*Alberta Job Corps* is designed to give individuals with barriers to employment an alternative to include support.

*Workplace Essential Skills* is offered to assist with the transition to employment.

*Workplace Training* aims to enable unemployed and marginally employed individuals to acquire employability skills, essential skills and occupation-related skills required in the local labour market and to assist these individuals in obtaining viable employment that provides increased income and work related benefits.

*Integrated Training* is a competency-based, occupation-related training program intended to provide unemployed or marginally employed adult Albertans with: occupation-related skills, work experience placement(s), employability and/or essential skills, and applied academics and/or English as a Second Language (ESL).

*The Work Foundations Program* provides full-time and part-time basic skills training and academic upgrading to enable clients to pursue further job-related training and/or to find a job. The training includes ESL; Basic Literacy and Numeracy; Adult Basic Education; Life Skills/Personal Management; and Academic Upgrading.



## Workplace and Essential Skills in British Columbia

Next steps for LMDA funds include the development and implementation of regional labour market strategies through collaboration with employers, post-secondary institutions, local governments, regional economic development agencies, and other stakeholders.

In addition to provincial government ministries and agencies, several BC organizations have many years of involvement in workforce/place training:

*BC Federation of Labour* supports a Health and Safety Centre with a motto of Prevention through Education and for several years had an education sub-committee focused on Literacy and Basic Skills<sup>56</sup>.

*SkillPlan BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council* provides a workplace education consultation service and Essential Skills Improvement to improve workplace productivity and efficiency<sup>57</sup>.

*The Learning Factor Inc. (TLFI)* provides collaborative consulting in workplace learning with a special interest in communication, culture and all those underlying factors that make learning stick<sup>58</sup>.

*The Training Group* at Douglas College specializes in designing and delivering customized training and programs in Labour Market & Career Transition Services; Self Employment & Entrepreneurship; Short Term Industry and Vocational Programs; and Industry and Workforce Development<sup>59</sup>.

*The Resource Training Organization (RTO)* was established in 2007 to oversee the management and development of apprenticeship training for the resource sector in BC. RTO represents a cross sectoral group of employers in the mining and smelting, oil and gas, pulp and paper, solid wood and heavy shipbuilding and repair sectors<sup>60</sup>.

### Literacy and Correctional Facilities

Higher literacy skills correspond directly to lower offending rates. Offenders experience literacy problems at a rate three times higher than that of the general population and are four times as likely to have learning disabilities. Literacy challenges are one of the factors contributing to incarceration. Approximately 35% of offenders have learning disabilities compared to 5%-10% of the Canadian population and approximately 79% of federal offenders have not completed a high school diploma<sup>61</sup>. This constitutes a significant barrier for their reintegration into the job market and for their labour market attachment.

Literacy is crucial for ensuring equal access to justice. The legal process, from arrest to sentencing, can be complex and alienating for those with low literacy skills. Low literacy presents a severe disadvantage to those engaged with any level of legal process making it difficult to understand relevant materials or adequately represent themselves in official proceedings.

Low literacy is a risk factor for recidivism. Studies show that prisoners who participate in prison-based education are less likely to reoffend. This provides social and economic

<sup>56</sup> *Health and Safety Centre, BC Federation of Labour and Health and Safety BC*

<sup>57</sup> *SkillPlan, BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council*

<sup>58</sup> *The Learning Factor, The Learning Factor Inc. BC*

<sup>59</sup> *Training and Community Education, Douglas College*

<sup>60</sup> *Resource Training Organization, RTO, BC*

<sup>61</sup> Michael Bettman, Correctional Service of Canada, 2008

returns that far outweigh the original investment. Investing in literacy is an effective crime prevention strategy.

All federal institutions in Canada offer education programs, including Adult Basic Education (Grades 1 to 10), Secondary Education (Grades 11 and 12), Vocational, College and University level programs. Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) gives priority to Adult Basic Education. Education programs are a priority in the correctional plans of all offenders who have achieved less than a grade 10 education or require skills upgrading to participate in vocational or Correctional Services of Canada work experience programs.

Inmate students present significant challenges to educators. Poor self-concept, low achievement levels, learning disabilities and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) all present serious challenges to correctional education. However, research into correctional education has revealed some characteristics of effective correctional learning environments. Inmate students have often had prior negative education experiences that have resulted in low self-confidence and negative attitudes about learning which have often contributed to low literacy skills. Therefore, effective correctional education programs need to address offenders' attitudes about learning. Prison educators need to inspire confidence in inmates about their ability to learn. Inmates' negative experiences in mainstream education also suggest the need for unconventional teaching methods. In addition, students with FAS and learning disabilities also have difficulty retaining information. Repetition is critical. Computers and other electronic teaching aids can help these students retain information.

Brazil has adopted a "Redemption through Reading" program as part of a series of efforts to educate incarcerated people in order to reduce recidivism and give offenders a different view of the world "outside." Only certain inmates will be eligible for the program, but Brazil plans to try it out with some of the nation's toughest criminals at four high-security prisons. Those who participate will have four weeks to read each book and then must submit a report. Each completed report reduces the offender's sentence (up to a limit of 48 days per year)<sup>62</sup>.

Studies, notably in Britain, suggest an inability to read (or a lack of access to books) may result in long periods of isolation with little mental stimulus which contribute to poor mental health and lead to intense feelings of anger, frustration, and anxiety<sup>63</sup>. Although there are no programs in Canada that link reading to reduced prison sentences, tutoring and literacy programs in Canadian penitentiaries claim significant successes. Reduced recidivism through improvement in Literacy and Essential Skills is a worthwhile and achievable goal.

Some ways to deal with the issues related to offenders include:

- ▶ support and funding for prison-based education programs
- ▶ assessment and referral to Literacy and Essential Skills programs for all inmates upon release – especially for those with short prison sentences
- ▶ development of partnerships between Literacy and Essential Skills organizations and justice
- ▶ programming for families and youth 'at risk'
- ▶ consistent and accessible support to children and adults with learning disabilities

<sup>62</sup> P. Murphy, *Reading offers Brazilian prisoners quicker escape*, Reuters, 2012

<sup>63</sup> J. Nurse, P. Woodcock, J. Ormsby, *Influence of environmental factors on mental health within prisons: focus group study*, British Medical Journal, 2003



Literacy training also gives young people at risk of delinquency the skills they need to find and keep jobs and escape from poverty. At least 75% of adults in prison were persistent offenders in their youth. Improving the literacy skills of young people could have a significant impact on rates of adult crime<sup>64</sup>.

## Characteristics of Successful Programs

A well organized program has intake, ongoing and exit assessment together with an evaluation process. Educators play a critical role in successful programs. They identify gaps in the participants' learning and develop learning plans with input from participants. They prepare and deliver units of study that are well structured and scaffold learning. Educators locate, adapt or create interesting and relevant resources at different skill levels. A variety of teaching strategies and techniques are used to meet the participants learning styles and multiple intelligences. Successful programs are taught by educators with core competencies that include:

### Working with learners:

- ▶ intake procedures
- ▶ assessment cycle: initial, ongoing, final
- ▶ goal setting
- ▶ portfolios

### Working with groups:

- ▶ group facilitation skills
- ▶ art of asking questions (open-ended and broad, including probing questions)
- ▶ creating positive group dynamics
- ▶ giving and receiving feedback
- ▶ building relationships
- ▶ motivating participants
- ▶ intercultural communication and dynamics
- ▶ conflict resolution



### Teaching:

- ▶ using adult learning principles
- ▶ creating trust in the learning environment
- ▶ learner-centred approach
- ▶ learning theories
- ▶ teaching and learning styles
- ▶ learning disabilities
- ▶ factors that affect learning
- ▶ multi-level goal setting, creating resources for use by people working at different levels and delivery of programs to multi-level groups
- ▶ general teaching strategies – e.g. teaching reading, writing, math, digital technologies, problem solving, critical thinking
- ▶ specific content relevant to courses being taught – strategies, tips, techniques, methods
- ▶ developing lesson and/or training plans
- ▶ knowledge of provincial/territorial skills levels
- ▶ using the Essential Skills framework
- ▶ using authentic materials
- ▶ assessment and evaluation procedures
- ▶ critical self-reflection of practice

Educators also need to have humanity, self-awareness, empathy and tolerance<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>64</sup> *Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, 2009*

<sup>65</sup> *A Snapshot of Occupational Task Profiles: Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce CLLN, May 2012*

## Characteristics of Successful Workplace Programs

A learning culture in the workplace is one in which learning opportunities are valued, supported and included as an integral part of the working day. Essential Skills are as important as technical skills as they help employees to be more productive, to more easily learn new tasks, and respond to change quickly.

Trainers/educators need to be able to work with employees, supervisors, managers and unions to help develop and position programs. Literacy and Essential Skills providers in the workplace need the vision and the ability to create a process that will engage and motivate employees.

Providers need to be able to do workplace assessments, individual assessments, course development and delivery, and program evaluation. To do this they need additional skills to those needed outside the workplace. These include:

- ▶ an ability to research the issues, complete organizational needs assessments and job task analysis, identify what needs to be done and develop resources that are a good fit (training may or may not be provided by the person who develops it)
- ▶ knowledge of workplace cultures and functions
- ▶ interpersonal skills to connect with all levels of the workforce to understand what is needed
- ▶ an understanding of business processes

Certain factors can affect workplace delivery and these need to be taken into consideration when setting up programs. The following issues need to be addressed before training is offered:

- ▶ employees thinking they are too old  
denial of lack of skills
- ▶ cultural backgrounds that do not value lifelong learning

- ▶ lack of understanding of the importance of maintaining and upgrading skills
- ▶ fears and anxiety about starting something new

When employers hire employees with a grade 12 diploma they expect them to have skills at that level. Consequently, employers don't always think it is their responsibility to provide any training below the grade 12 level as they believe it should be part of the government's mandate.

Time and cost are significant barriers, especially for smaller businesses. Many employers lack the information they need to make wise decisions on their training investment. And many are not convinced of the return-on-investment of training compared to other more tangible investments<sup>66</sup>.

Literacy and Workplace Education is vital, but is a huge challenge for small business where there's pressure to keep the shop open and keep money in the till.

Valerie Payn, President and CEO, Halifax Chamber of Commerce, February 2012



<sup>66</sup> *Employer investment in workplace learning in Canada*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, September 2006

## Literacy and Essential Skills Educators

Literacy and Essential Skills are the key to growing our economy, consequently, it is vital to know the competencies needed by educators who deliver the wide range of Literacy and Essential Skills programming discussed above. Educators come to this work with a variety of experience and qualifications but there is no formal qualification, certification or accreditation and no defined career path.



In *Occupational Task Profiles: A Pan-Canadian Snapshot of the Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce* CLLN examined the competencies needed by educators working in this field so that they can be recognized for the skills they possess and the impact they have on Canada's workforce and on Canada's economic competitiveness and labour market attachment<sup>67</sup>. The *Snapshot* helps to enhance the perception and understanding of the important role of the Literacy and Essential Skills educator workforce. Educators increase Literacy and Essential Skills in those who are working below IALSS Level 3 so that they can learn new skills more easily and access and use information in all aspects of their lives.

CLLN has disseminated the *Snapshot* to the Literacy and Essential Skills workforce;

governments (federal and provincial/territorial); provincial and territorial organizations and other stakeholders. The *Snapshot* which was released at the beginning of May, 2012, provides information that can be used by administrators for the creation of job descriptions or for developing screening questions that could be used during interviews with people entering the Literacy and Essential Skills workforce. It could be used to guide the development of Occupational Standards for L/ES workforce or as background information for the development of National Occupational Classification (NOC) profiles for Literacy and Essential Skills workforce. It can be used to provide information when creating professional development opportunities. In fact, this was an area that was a priority for many of the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions. CLLN has undertaken to work with them to move forward in the area of professional development opportunities for Literacy and Essential Skills educators. Further responses to the *Snapshot* will be explored in due course.

As concluded by the *Snapshot*, and supported by the OECD study *Skills beyond School*, educators are the key to quality in adult education<sup>68</sup>. Educators need a career structure that aids development of the right mix of andragogical skills, academic knowledge and up-to-date industry experience.

CLLN prepared a Think Paper for the Centre for Literacy's 2012 Summer Institute<sup>69</sup>. This paper discusses some of the questions arising from the *Snapshot* that the Literacy and Essential Skills field needs to address. The questions are listed below.

<sup>67</sup> *A Snapshot of Occupational Task Profiles: Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce*, CLLN, May 2012

<sup>68</sup> *Skills beyond School*, OECD, May 2011

<sup>69</sup> C. Harwood, *IOccupational Task Profiles: A Pan-Canadian Snapshot of the Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce: A think paper*, CLLN, Prepared for Centre for Literacy Summer Institute, Workplace Literacy & Essential Skills: Shaping a New Learning Culture, Montreal, 2012

- ▶ How important do you think mindsets, attitudes and behaviours are when dealing with people who have had difficulties learning in the past?
- ▶ How can we ensure that mindsets, attitudes and behaviours don't get lost in a system that values qualifications?
- ▶ How can we work together to promote a hiring process that promotes recognition of mindsets and behaviours as well as qualifications and experience?
- ▶ How do we know if someone will be successful in making the transition from programs in the community to workplace delivery?
- ▶ Do we need to create a collective sense of professional self for workplace L/ES educators? If so, how?
- ▶ How can we work together to facilitate professional development?
- ▶ Is there a place for master teachers and mentors in professional development?
- ▶ Can we blend mentoring and professional development so that skills of experienced educators are not lost while maintaining a belief in the skills that new educators are acquiring and developing?
- ▶ What else should we look at in terms of competencies?
- ▶ Are we ready to begin the development of a NOC code for L/ES educators?
- ▶ collaborating with CLLN to bring key stakeholders to the table
- ▶ developing standards for L/ES programs
- ▶ creating National Occupational Classification (NOC) codes for the L/ES workforce
- ▶ providing more training opportunities for practitioners
- ▶ providing opportunities for practitioners to network and share
- ▶ building a collective sense of professional pride among practitioners

## Professional Development for Adult Educators

Professional development is a key area of interest for many provincial and literacy coalitions. For example, in the fall of 2010 the Literacy Partners of Manitoba's (LPM's) Environmental Scan identified a series of gaps and overlaps. Discussions began with Adult Learning and Literacy branch within the Province of Manitoba and with Workplace Education Manitoba to identify common denominators and gap areas that were not being served by the three organizations.

One of the first gaps identified was the area of professional development for practitioners and teachers. LPM sat as a member of the Adult Learning and Literacy Professional Development committee as well as worked in partnership with the Adult Secondary Education Council (ASEC). At the fall 2010 ASEC workshop and the spring 2011 ASEC workshop, LPM organized and hosted Office of Literacy and Essential Skills tools and practices workshops to provide practitioners and adult learning centre teachers with the various skills and employment tools that could be integrated into Adult Learning classes, thereby improving opportunities for adult learners to enter the workforce.

At the Spring 2012 meeting of CLLN and its national network partners there was discussion about follow-up activities from the CLLN *Snapshot of Occupational Task Profiles: Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce*. The following priorities emerged:

- ▶ enhancing perception and understanding about practitioners
- ▶ having a road map of how to proceed with strengthening the field



Other workshops will address the impact of learning and violence and integrating L/ES into the Career Development process. LPM has invited CLLN to share its findings from the *Snapshot* about the competencies required for L/ES educators in the fall of 2012. The expected outcomes of these learning opportunities is to aid in building knowledge and expertise, brokering tools, supports and best practices for educators and career or employment counsellors in the field.

Decoda Literacy Solutions hosts annual regional training events in BC. These are opportunities for literacy practitioners in all areas of literacy to gather, share, network and learn new strategies and approaches to literacy. Decoda has also recently added a webinar series to the roster of professional development opportunities.

Appendix 2: *National Network Partners Baseline Survey: Practitioners* provides information collected at the May 2012 meeting of provincial and territorial literacy coalitions. It gives a brief overview of the current work of coalitions as it relates to professional development for practitioners as well as information about their priorities for further work in this area.

## Literacy and Essential Skills Learners

Approaches designed for children in school are not effective when teaching adults who have greater life experiences and more immediate goals and needs. Adults do not form a captive audience. They participate and remain in programs only when they acquire real benefits.

It is often difficult for adults to admit they need to improve their Literacy and Essential Skills. People with skills below Level 3 often overestimate their proficiency and do not see the need to improve their skills. Information on profiles of learners can be found in Appendix 3: *Profile of a Learner*.



In April 2012, CLLN engaged a consultant to facilitate discussion among a group of adults who had participated in workplace/workforce L/ES education and training. The focus group participants were gathered from across Canada. The outcome of the session was to inform policy development at CLLN from the consumer or client perspective<sup>70</sup>.

The overwhelming message from focus group participants was that learners (individuals who were participants in L/ES programs) should have a voice in the development of L/ES programming in Canada. Further, students are interested in making programs more responsive, of a consistently high quality and more accessible. Students' experiences, insights and opinions are important and valuable for informing program design, teaching approaches and policy development for adult education and training. Students want to participate during the development of L/ES training, along with government, business, labour and educators. They believe that key stakeholders should actively participate in the creation of a Canadian L/ES system that meets adult education principles and supports workers to gain skills and knowledge for the ever-advancing demands of the economy and society.

<sup>70</sup> *Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills Learners Focus Group Report, CLLN, August 2012*



## Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is the national standard setting body for the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) and Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC). The CCLB supports and promotes the use of these national standards in educational, training, community and workplace settings. The CLB and NCLC are recognized as the official Canadian standards for describing, measuring and recognizing the language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants in both English and French. They provide a common language for the entire immigrant-serving community.

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has researched and developed two different resources for indicating how the Canadian Language Benchmarks levels intersect with the Essential Skills complexity levels. Bridging Canadian Language Benchmarks and Essential Skills makes Essential Skills resources relevant and accessible to newcomers and immigrants and supports the successful integration of newcomers and immigrants into the workforce. It facilitates the identification of language and other skills immigrants and newcomers need for workplace success and supports appropriate workplace preparation, training, placement and career planning. The two tools that have been developed are *An Essential Skills Primer CLB 1* and *Relating Canadian Language Benchmarks to Essential Skills: A Comparative Framework*.

## Assessment Tools

Assessment tools are used at program entry to assess ongoing progress, and at program exit. Some assessment tools can be used by learners for self-assessment. Different tools are needed depending on the goal path of each learner. Assessment tools can be either standardized or non-standardized and are often administered by trained assessors. Some examples of widely used assessment tools are shown below. However, CLLN believes that there has been no national research on assessment tools and their applicability to different levels of learners and their various goal paths since 2007<sup>71</sup>. This is an area that needs further investigation.

Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)<sup>72</sup> – is a measure of an individuals' preparation for specific tasks and/or occupations in the labour market. It assesses three Essential Skills – reading, document use and numeracy – using test questions based on authentic workplace materials and tasks. TOWES can be used as a diagnostic tool for clarifying training needs and for assessing the job readiness of job applicants.

PDQ<sup>73</sup> – is an online, standardized tool that takes about 90 minutes to complete after which a computer-generated score is given. It is an assessment that focuses on reading, writing, document use and numeracy skills. It determines if and where there is a need to improve literacy skills.

Essential Skills Indicator<sup>74</sup> – is a self-assessment tool that helps individuals to gain a better understanding of their Essential Skills levels. It contains a series of short quizzes that provide an indication of skill strengths and areas that may require improvement. It is also often used to prepare learners to take similar tests such as PDQ or TOWES.

<sup>71</sup> P. Campbell, *Measures of Success: Assessment and Accountability in Adult Basic Education*, Grass Roots Press, Edmonton, AB, 2007

<sup>72</sup> *Test of Workplace Essential Skills, TOWES*

<sup>73</sup> *PDQ Profile Series, ETS Literacy*

<sup>74</sup> *Essential Skills Indicator, HRSDC*

The Workplace Informal Learning Matrix<sup>75</sup> – is a self-assessment tool that is designed to help measure the complexity of informal learning in the workplace. It consists of a series of specific scales used to determine the levels of essential skills required for a range of job classifications in the workplace. It can also be used to assess the complexities of more than one employee or to explore strengths and weaknesses within work teams.

It is important to continue to build knowledge of assessment in the whole of Canada so that trainers are able to use the most effective and applicable tools. Analysis of tools and collaboration among stakeholders will enable recommendations to be made about the most effective tools for differing situations.

A collective list of assessment tools used in Ontario can be accessed at:

<http://www.literacy.ca/content/uploads/2012/06/Assessment-Matrix-all-tools-individuallyJune2012.pdf>

OLES provides assessment tools at:

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools\\_resources/tools\\_audience/general/tools\\_apps.shtml#assessment](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools_resources/tools_audience/general/tools_apps.shtml#assessment)

Organizational Needs Assessment (WP-060-03-08E)

Workplace Survey (WP-028-01-09E)

Workplace Check-up (WP-029-01-09E)

Hiring Checklist (WP-031-01-09E)

Essential Skills Interview Assistant (Only available on the OLES Tools DVD)

Reading Indicator (WP-039-01-09E)

Document Use Indicator (WP-040-01-09E)

Numeracy Indicator (WP-038-01-09E)

Oral Communication Self-Assessment (WP-083-07-09E)

Computer Use Self-Assessment (WP-084-07-09E)

Writing Self-Assessment (WP-085-07-09E)

Reading Self-Assessment (WP-086-07-09E)

Document Use Self-Assessment (WP-087-11-09E)

Numeracy Self-Assessment (WP-088-07-09E)

Continuous Learning Self-Assessment (WP-089-07-09E)

Working with Others Self-Assessment (WP-090-07-09E)

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<sup>75</sup> *Workplace Informal Learning Matrix*, Available at NALD







## Part 2: The Labour Market

## Labour Market Trends

The labour market is affected by the people who work in it; human capital is the key to having an innovative and productive business. Labour market information needs to link demographics and job trends.

This section looks at demographics nationally and in the provinces and territories. It outlines the population size, and describes the groups who are under-represented in the workplace and their Literacy and Essential Skills levels. It focuses on the challenges that youth can face getting into the workforce and the fact that older workers are staying in the workforce longer. Information about job trends is also presented, both nationally and in the provinces and territories, together with the issues faced by small- and mid-sized enterprises.

### Demographics

Some groups in society remain under-represented in the labour market, namely First Nations, Métis and Inuit, new immigrants and persons with disabilities. A growing, highly educated, immigrant population will place stress on the labour market because they lack the English language skills, Literacy and Essential Skills, Canadian work experience and/or knowledge of workplace culture necessary to participate fully.

Currently, many businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit qualified workers. This is particularly true for primary industries such as oil, gas and mining in Western and Northern Canada<sup>76</sup>. Taking advantage of under-represented populations in the labour market would provide an internal source of workers for many industries and businesses.

Population growth across Canada will be driven by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigration. This issue has been raised by all the provinces and territories. Literacy challenges and language issues unique to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations will need to be addressed.

An aging Canadian population will reduce the size of the labour force and affect economic growth and productivity. Even though people are staying in the workforce longer, there is not enough population growth to compensate for skilled employees who are retiring. The first baby boomers reached the retirement age of 65 in 2012. In 2015, the Canadian government believes that 48% of persons earning a living will be between the ages of 45 and 64. It is projected that by 2020 Canada's pool of human resources will be short about one million people<sup>77</sup>.

### Demographics in the Provinces and Territories

#### Demographics in Nunavut

As of April 2012, the population of Nunavut was 33,588. Nunavut has the smallest working age population which, when combined with the high population of those under 15, gives Nunavut the highest dependency ratio in the country.

Over 70% of IALSS respondents in Nunavut scored at Levels 1 and 2<sup>78</sup>. Over 60% of employed people in Nunavut have scores below Level 3. Statistics for literacy in the Inuit language indicate that language issues need to be addressed. Currently, most Inuit do speak (and, to some extent, read and write) the Inuit language and English, but many have not had the opportunity to acquire advanced skills in both languages. Although the Inuit language and English are both widely used throughout Nunavut, some fear that

<sup>76</sup> Heidi Martin, *Building Labour Force Capacity in Canada's North*, Conference Board of Canada, November 2011

<sup>77</sup> *Advanced Skills Shortages in Canada – Getting to the Root of the Problem*, Canadian Business Journal, March 2009

<sup>78</sup> *Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey*, Statistics Canada, 2003

English is increasingly being favoured. The result is unstable bilingualism in most of Nunavut.

Ilitaqsiniq - Nunavut literacy Council, shares parts of the Government's mandate in its aspiration to support Nunavummiut in developing strong, advanced language skills in whichever language they choose. Many Inuit wish to develop skills in both, but particularly look to Ilitaqsiniq for support in developing Inuit language literacy<sup>79</sup>. Clearly, low literacy levels, unemployment, poverty and other social problems will continue to increase unless action is taken at all levels.

### **Demographics in Northwest Territories**

The NWT is as large as Alberta and Saskatchewan together. It has 33 communities and a population of 41,424. Just over 50% of the residents of NWT are First Nations, Métis and Inuit. It has eleven official languages. While most schools teach the language of that community as a subject, the language of instruction is mainly English, although this is changing in early grades in some regions.

Overall the rate of NWT residents with skills below level 3 is similar to the rest of Canada (approximately 42%). The picture changes, however, when analyzed by ethnicity. Sixty nine per cent of the non-Aboriginal population has skills at level 3 and above; sixty nine per cent of the Aboriginal population has skills below level 3.

### **Demographics in the Yukon**

The Yukon's population reached a record high of 35,944 in March 2012. The population has grown and the average age has increased since 2003<sup>80</sup>.

In most Yukon communities the majority of population are Aboriginal and Inuit.

### **Demographics in Newfoundland and Labrador**

In the 2006 Census the population of Newfoundland and Labrador decreased by 1.5% and stood at 505,469. However, by the 2011 census, the population had risen by 1.8%.

Literacy and Essential Skills is an issue for the province. Fifty-five percent of Newfoundland and Labrador's working age population are at IALS literacy Levels 1 and 2. The number of people at Levels 1 and 2 who are employed is increasing as the economy grows and attracts new workforce participation.

The demographics of Newfoundland and Labrador have changed significantly over the past four decades. It is estimated that by 2022, there will potentially be one new labour force entrant (15-24 years old) for every two retirees (55-64 years old). By 2022, a third of the population will be 60 years old or older<sup>81</sup>.

### **Demographics in New Brunswick**

A Statistics Canada report, released in February 2012, shows that New Brunswick's population grew by 2.9 per cent between 2006 and 2011, bucking a decades-long trend of a declining population<sup>82</sup>. The dominant theme in New Brunswick's population growth was in outlying communities outside of the three largest cities. New Brunswick received a higher number of immigrants and fewer people left the province for other regions of the country. In the New Brunswick population, 56% of Anglophone adults between the ages of 16-65 do not have the level of literacy and essential skills needed to function successfully in today's society<sup>83</sup>.

<sup>79</sup> Shelley Tulloch, *Building a Strong Foundation: Considerations to Support Thriving Bilingualism in Nunavut*, prepared for NLC, 2009

<sup>80</sup> *Population Report, March 2012*, Yukon Bureau of Statistics, 2012

<sup>81</sup> *Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Market Agreement, 2009-10 Annual Plan*, 2009

<sup>82</sup> *Population Change, 2006 to 2011 by 2011 Census Division*, Statistics Canada, February 2012

<sup>83</sup> S. Brink, *Literacy in New Brunswick: Implications of Findings from IALSS 2003*, Learning Policy Directorate, HRSDC



### Demographics in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia has a population of approximately 950,000<sup>84</sup>. Of this number, 37,000 people have French as their mother tongue. Nova Scotia's population is growing much more slowly than the Canadian average; due in part to a low birth rate, out-migration of youth, and low net immigration. Workforce shortages are projected in the not-too-distant future. Already there are shortages in the skilled trades, which are not attracting enough new entrants even to replace the baby boomers as they retire.

### Demographics in PEI

The current population of PEI is about 145,000. The Economic Progress Report of November 2010 indicates that Prince Edward Island's employment averaged at 71,500 people through to September 2010, an increase of 3.5 per cent from the same period in 2009. Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey shows the labour force at 72,400 in January 2012. Increased participation of women 55 years and over accounted for half of the overall increase in the Island labour force.

PEI faces major demographic challenges, particularly with respect to youth migration, and must take action to attract and hold population. Past investments in learning have fallen short of fully developing the potential of an innovation-based economy – the people.



### Demographics of English Speakers in Quebec

In the 2006 census, close to 1 million out of 8 million Quebecers declared English as either their mother tongue or the language they use most frequently at home when not speaking in their mother tongue. Statistics Canada, in capturing data that defines this broader linguistic group, coined the term First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) to allocate the Canadian population between the country's two main language groups. In the case of English speakers in Quebec, English as FOLS raises the percentage of the population that require English services from 8.2 to 13.4%, an increase of 63%.

Of these English FOLS, 81% lived in the Montreal area, with the second-greatest concentrations living within 200 km of Montreal to the west (Outaouais) and to the east (Estrie and Southern Quebec). In total, this represents approximately 91% of the Anglophone population. More than half of these Anglophones make up between 30% and 49.9% of the population of the municipality in which they live. Close to one third of this FOLS population were born outside Canada, with the largest proportions emigrating from Italy, China and the U.S.

The English FOLS community is aging, with an average age of 39. In general, they are better educated than their Francophone counterparts and 67% consider themselves bilingual.



<sup>84</sup> *Nova Scotia Community Counts*, Government of Nova Scotia, 2012



## Demographics in Ontario

The province has 21.3% of its population at level 1. Problem-solving skills appear to be the weakest essential skill with 72.5% scoring at IALS Levels 1 and 2. Over 50% of the population is at level 3 or higher in prose and document literacies, while only 44.1% are at that level on the numeracy scale<sup>85</sup>.

Younger learners are more likely to attend Academic Upgrading programs, while older learners tend to attend Literacy and Basic Skills programs. For both programs, the largest percentage of learners is in the 25 to 44 age group<sup>86</sup>.

In 1990, the employment rate for those without high school (900,000 working-age adults) was 56%, by 2011 that number had dropped to 37.2%. Statistics Canada's factsheet *Economic Downturn and Educational Attainment*, shows the relationship between educational attainment and employment rates<sup>87</sup>. The rates have been declining steadily by an average of 2% per year. This virtually parallels the exponential growth in technology<sup>88</sup>.

Many factors contribute to an individual's likelihood of being on income support but a key factor is the lack of a high school diploma. The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario recently conducted a study that shows the link between educational attainment levels and social assistance<sup>89</sup>. According to this study, nearly half of Ontario Works (OW) recipients and over half of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients did not complete

high school or its equivalent, as compared to just over 20% of Ontario's overall population. Data from Employment Insurance (EI) reflects similar demographics, with almost half of male repeat claimants (48.5%) having less than high school attainment<sup>90</sup>.

There are significant socio-economic consequences aside from the cost of government-sponsored income support. The majority of individuals living on OW or ODSP are either living in poverty or at risk of poverty—the total annual income for a single adult on OW is \$7,952 and \$13,600 if they are on ODSP. A recent study by the Wellesley Institute found that these individuals “carry an overwhelmingly high burden of ill health”<sup>91</sup>. The report showed that, compared to the non-poor, these adults had significantly higher rates of poor health and chronic conditions on 38 of 39 health measures—rates as much as 7.2 times higher than those in the non-poor group.



<sup>85</sup>Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario, Essential Skills Ontario, 2012

<sup>86</sup> *ibid*

<sup>87</sup> *Economic downturn and educational attainment*, Statistics Canada, June 2012

<sup>88</sup>Literacy and Essential Skills in Ontario, Essential Skills Ontario, 2012

<sup>89</sup> *Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario*, Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services

<sup>90</sup> Schwartz and Nicholson, *The Frequent Use of Unemployment Insurance in Canada*, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, 2001

<sup>91</sup> *Sick and Tired: The Compromised Health of Social Assistance Recipients and the Working Poor in Ontario*, Wellesley Institute, 2009

## Demographics in Manitoba

Manitoba's population is 1, 271,114<sup>92</sup>. However, the population is expected to increase to 1.4 million by 2022. Despite the growth in funding and infrastructure for the delivery of adult literacy services, there are growing gaps driven by population change. Population growth will be driven by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigration. There are literacy challenges and language issues unique to these populations.

Geography, transportation and access to resources continue to be an issue in service delivery response. There are also significant concerns with transiency, lack of housing and homelessness. Manitoba continues to experience a relatively tight labour market with skills shortages. Ageing workers can find it difficult to adapt to new demands in the workplace.

According to the 2006 Canada Census, the number of Manitoba adults of working age (20 to 64) with less than grade 12 is 138,130 or 20.5% of working age adults. The number of Manitobans (ages 15 – 64) with reading levels below Grade 9 is 285,000, according a Statistics Canada adult literacy survey<sup>93</sup>.

## Demographics in Saskatchewan

As of July 2012, the population of Saskatchewan was 1,079, 958<sup>94</sup>. In Saskatchewan, a relatively small population is widely dispersed over a large geographical region. According to the 2011 Census Saskatchewan has one of the lowest proportions of a working-age population; only 66% of the population is between 15 to 64 years of age. This relatively small population is supporting those at the younger and older levels. Maintaining strong literacy and essential skills is critical to maintaining employment.

Forty percent of Saskatchewan's working age population are at IALSS literacy Levels 1 and 2. They are more likely to be speakers of English as a mother tongue and to have only a high school education or less. Contributing to the percentage at these two levels are immigrants, First Nations, Métis and Inuit. This will have an effect on the match between people and jobs. The number of people at Levels 1 and 2 who are employed is increasing as the economy grows.

## Demographics in Alberta

As of April 1, 2012, Alberta's population was an estimated 3,847,119, up 2.37% from the year before, with an increase of almost 89,000 people. Alberta continues to lead the country with a population growth driven primarily by very large net influx of interprovincial migrants, most of whom come from Ontario. (4,369), followed by British Columbia (2,651), Newfoundland and Labrador (2,257) and Nova Scotia (1,199).

Information from the 2006 Census shows that Alberta's population was younger than the national average. Alberta's population age structure shows that individuals aged 65 and over accounted for 10.7% of the total provincial population while they accounted for 13.7% of the Canada's population. The national average for the population aged 65 years and over in the same year was at 13.7%. Albertans aged 0 to 14 years represented 19.2% of the provincial population compared to 17.7% of the national average for Canadians aged 0 to 14 years in 2006<sup>95</sup>.

The unemployment rate in August 2012 tied at 4.4% with Saskatchewan as the lowest in the country<sup>96</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> *Manitoba's Population Clock*, Statistics Canada

<sup>93</sup> Satya Brink, *ALL 2003 Key Research Findings and HRSD Implications*, HRSDC, 2005. Accessed July 25, 2012

<sup>94</sup> *Quick Facts*, Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics

<sup>95</sup> *2006 Census Analysis, Alberta Profile*, Employment and Immigration Alberta, 2006

<sup>96</sup> *Labour Force Survey*, Statistics Canada, August 2012

## Demographics in British Columbia

Currently, there are 2.4 million people in British Columbia's labour force. As a result of economic growth, employment in British Columbia is expected to grow by an average of 1.8 percent each year through to 2019, creating a total of 450,000 new jobs. Approximately 676,000 additional jobs will become vacant due to retirements. In total, there will be an expected 1,126,000 job openings over the next decade. There are currently about 650,000 young people in the BC education system which means that the growth in job openings is expected to outpace the number of workers. British Columbia will need to increase the size of its workforce and ensure it has the right skills to support economic development in all regions<sup>97</sup>.

The numbers of workers retiring each year is projected to swell from 56,000 to over 62,000 over the next decade. Coupled with rising life expectancies and lower birth rates, this will increase the average age of the population and create a scarcity of skills and experience in the labour market<sup>98</sup>.

In addition, almost 600,000 working British Columbians – over one quarter of those currently employed – do not have the minimum literacy and essential skills required to successfully participate in a knowledge economy. One in five people do not graduate in the expected time frame. There are also populations within British Columbia whose skills are under-represented in the workforce such as First Nations, Métis and Inuit persons, youth, women, persons with disabilities, immigrants, and older workers. Many recent skilled immigrants are also employed in occupations that do not reflect their international training and experience<sup>99</sup>.

## First Nations, Métis and Inuit

CLLN recognizes the importance of referring to First Nations, Métis and Inuit as distinct groups of people. However, some of the programs and articles referenced in this document refer to “Aboriginal People”. For this reason you will sometimes see this term used.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief, Shawn Atleo, is encouraging all sectors to invest in skills development for First Nations.

As the youngest and fastest growing segment of the population in Canada, and with half of our total population under the age of 25, there is tremendous potential for First Nations to be part of the solution. Investing in skills training and education is an economic imperative for Canada, particularly knowing that First Nations have the potential to contribute \$400 billion to Canada's economy by 2026 if the education and achievement gap is closed between First Nations and other Canadians.

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Shawn Atleo, February 2012

While historic policies, systemic issues, together with cultural and geographical considerations and a lack of resources have negatively impacted

<sup>97</sup> *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Strategy to 2020*, BC Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, 2010

<sup>98</sup> *ibid*

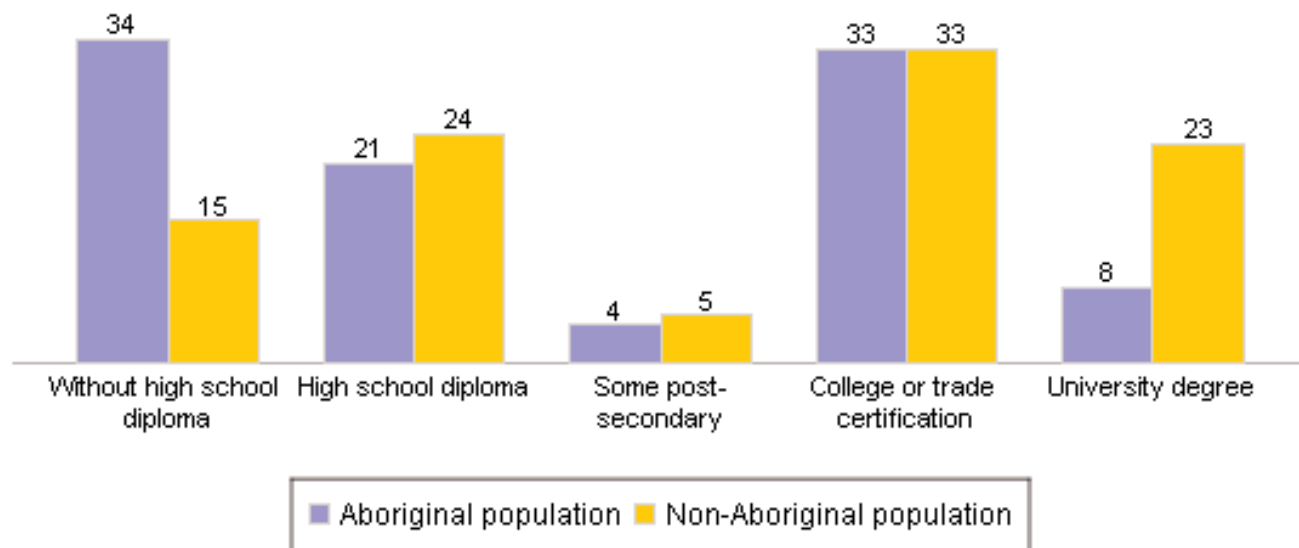
<sup>99</sup> *ibid*

First Nations, Métis and Inuit, the situation is changing and funding is now being targeted towards these populations which represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population.

Literacy and Essential Skills training needs to be holistic and recognize the importance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and traditions and the cross-cultural diversity within Native communities. Employers can find it difficult to attract qualified First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Training is often directed at those with higher levels of literacy, not those at beginning levels.

Figure 2 below shows the education levels of First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-aboriginal working age people. There is no disparity between First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-Aboriginal groups for college and trade certification. However the disparity is obvious for dropout rates. The First Nations, Métis and Inuit population has the lowest literacy levels and the highest high school dropout rates. In 2006, the proportion of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population aged 25 to 64 years without a high school diploma was 19 percentage points higher than the proportion of the non-Aboriginal population of the same age group<sup>100</sup>.

Figure 2: Level of Education, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal Populations Aged 25-64 (%)



Source: Learning - Educational Attainment, HRSDC, 2006

<sup>97</sup> Learning - Educational Attainment, HRSDC



First Nations, Métis and Inuit are significantly over-represented as offenders in the Canadian criminal justice system. Research has shown that educational programming reduces the rate of recidivism so it is important to provide programming that will better enable offenders to find jobs once they are released.

In March 2010, Canada's education ministers added to commitments made in the Learn Canada 2020 declaration. Building on the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) Summit on Aboriginal Education, held in 2009, ministers of education provided additional direction on the post-summit pan-Canadian action plan which includes work on First Nations, Métis and Inuit data and assessment, and active engagement with the government of Canada on federal funding for First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.

## **Federal Funding and Programs**

### **Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)**

ASETS replaced the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy in 2010. ASETS links training to labour market demand in order to assist First Nations, Métis and Inuit to prepare for and find long-term, high-demand jobs quickly<sup>101</sup>.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit agreement holders design and deliver employment programs and services best suited to the unique needs of their clients<sup>102</sup>. For example, the Council of Yukon

First Nations (CYFN) and the Aboriginal Labour Alliance are ASETS agreement holders<sup>103</sup>.

Agreement holders modify and adjust their training, employment programs and strategies to best meet the labour market challenges facing Canadian industries and businesses. Each organization must meet accountability requirements and demonstrate strong performance results. The programs and services include:

- ▶ skill development
- ▶ training for high demand jobs
- ▶ job finding
- ▶ programs for youth
- ▶ programs for urban and Aboriginal people and people with disabilities
- ▶ access to child care

### **Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP)**

ASEP complements ASETS and is a nationally managed project-based program that promotes maximum, sustainable employment for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in major economic developments. ASEP supports multi-year training-to-employment strategies that deliver large-scale, job-specific training that responds to employer demand for skilled workers and leads to long-term sustainable jobs. The projects are developed and managed by formal partnerships between First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations and major employers.

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<sup>101</sup> *Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), HRSDC*

<sup>102</sup> First Nations, Métis and Inuit Agreement Holders are organizations funded by HRSDC to provide employment programs and services to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations typically became ASETS agreement holders through a targeted call for strategic business plans spanning the five-year strategy, and priority was given to First nations, Métis and Inuit organizations who had an agreement with the Department under the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS), the predecessor to ASETS.

<sup>103</sup> *Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, HRSDC*

## Skills and Partnership Fund (SPF)

SPF is available to all First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations, including those who are not current First Nations, Métis and Inuit agreement holders. The SPF:

- ▶ drives innovation in service delivery and systems through partnership  
(**system improvement**)
- ▶ responds to economic partnership opportunities with targeted labour force development initiatives  
(**training-to-employment**)
- ▶ addresses program delivery weaknesses and/or gaps in Canada's network of First nations, Métis and Inuit organizations that provide labour market services  
(**service delivery gaps**)

## Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth

The federal program, *Connections for Aboriginal Youth Program* (CCAY), in partnership with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada has been set up to equip young First Nations, Métis and Inuit with the skills and experience they need to participate more fully in Canada's economy.

## Knowledge of government funded programs

Knowledge of government funded programs is not always high. In the report, *Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations*, 31.4% of employers were not aware of, or had limited knowledge of, programs that support First Nations, Métis and Inuit employment and training. It is likely that this figure is higher in the general population of Canadian Businesses, as a large number of businesses who participated

in the survey had a significant proportion of First Nations, Métis and Inuit workers and/or agreements (e.g. impact benefit agreements) to hire First Nations, Métis and Inuit workers<sup>104</sup>.

## Investing in Skills Development

The most common work performance issues that employers experience with Aboriginal workers relate to the skills, attitudes, and behaviours needed for the workplace. The most significant issues employers face in retaining Aboriginal workers are dissatisfaction with career and skills development and cultural issues (e.g., racism and misunderstandings between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers).

Conference Board of Canada,  
*Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations*, July, 2012

The *Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations* report suggests that some of the possible strategies for dealing with some of these issues would be to have ASETS agreement holders share best practices, have better coordination among services and provide cultural awareness programs to help overcome racism and misunderstandings in the workplace<sup>105</sup>.

<sup>104</sup> *Understanding the Value, Challenges, and Opportunities of Engaging Métis, Inuit, and First Nations*, Conference Board of Canada, 2012

<sup>105</sup> *ibid*

## First Nations, Métis and Inuit in the Provinces and Territories

### Inuit in Nunavut

Inuit comprise 85% of Nunavut's population. The four official languages of Nunavut are Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English and French. More than half of Nunavut's working age population struggle with serious literacy challenges. These challenges are greater in the small communities where people face a wide variety of systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving their potential.

The social, political and linguistic changes that have occurred in Nunavut over the last forty years have radically changed the literacy skills that Nunavummiut need to function in the global economy. There has been insufficient support for the transition and acquisition of what would be considered modern literacies.

This situation is made more complex and challenging by the introduction and subsequent dominance of English within the public education system, post-secondary institutions and most workplaces. In fact, it is difficult to participate in the wage economy of Nunavut without a proficient knowledge of English despite efforts by government, Inuit organizations and others to make Inuktitut the primary working language.

### First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Northwest Territories

Just over 50% of the residents of NWT are First Nations, Métis and Inuit. NWT has eleven official languages. While most schools teach the language of that community as a subject, the language of instruction is mainly English, although this is changing in early grades in some regions.

Sixty nine per cent of the non-Aboriginal population has skills at level 3 and above; sixty nine per cent of the Aboriginal population has skills below level 3. Formal education is still a relatively recent phenomenon in the NWT. The residential school system has left behind "a legacy of mistrust", which continues as an intergenerational barrier to educational success for many learners in the NWT today<sup>106</sup>. Literacy challenges affect about 11,000 people in NWT, but that may not be the real number. Adult educators report that some students who indicate that they have a grade 12 certificate are assessed at much lower levels on intake. A disturbing fact, noted in the *Youth Literacy Gap Analysis*, is that youth often believe their skills to be higher than they actually are.

### First Nations, Métis and Inuit in the Yukon

Approximately 25% of Yukon's population are First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Inhabitants of the Yukon speak English, French, Tlingit, Gwich'in, Hän, Upper Tanana, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Kaska, and Taglish.

The Aboriginal Peoples' Program (APP) supports the full participation and cultural revitalization of Aboriginal People in Canadian society. It enables Aboriginal Peoples to address the social, cultural, economic and political issues affecting their lives<sup>107</sup>.



<sup>106</sup> Malatest, R.A. & Associates, *Best Practices in Increasing Aboriginal Postsecondary Enrolment Rates*, prepared for CMEC, 2002

<sup>107</sup> *Aboriginal Peoples' Program*, Canadian Heritage, 2011

## **First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Newfoundland and Labrador**

In 2006, First Nations, Métis and Inuit made up approximately 5% of the Newfoundland and Labrador population<sup>108</sup>. However, not included in this percentage are the increasing numbers being registered by First Nations, Métis and Inuit organizations in the years since the 2006 Census was taken. Income levels are not available but are, on average, thought to be lower than for non-aboriginals<sup>109</sup>.

The Mi'kmaq, the Innu, the Inuit, and the Southern Inuit (previously the Labrador Métis) make up the largest groups in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are largely distributed in rural or remote regions across the province.

Data on Literacy levels for the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population in the province was not identified in the 2003 IALSS survey; however, we do know that a number of communities with large First Nations, Métis or Inuit populations are not achieving the high school graduation rates experienced in other communities in the province. Special initiatives are needed to respond to the needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit and those whose first language is neither English nor French.

### **Mi'kmaq and Maliseet in New Brunswick**

The Joint Economic Development Initiative (JEDI) is a non-profit organization launched in 1995 to stimulate economic development in the First Nations communities (both on-reserve and off-reserve) in New Brunswick. In early 2010, JEDI received funding from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills to create New Brunswick Aboriginal Workplace Essential Skills (NBAWES) as a pilot project starting in the fall of

2010. The project was designed to strengthen the skills, knowledge and attitudes that Mi'kmaq and Maliseet adults need to succeed in today's workplace through adapting existing Workplace Essential Skills curriculum to have a culturally relevant content.

There is a need to provide intergenerational literacy in First Nations communities. Currently, there is little information available on First Nations in New Brunswick, or programming to meet their needs. The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick (LCNB) hopes to engage with the aboriginal populations in New Brunswick in the near future.



### **First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Nova Scotia**

More research needs to be completed about the situation for Aboriginal People in Nova Scotia and there is currently very little information.

### **Mi'kmaq in Prince Edward Island**

In 2006, 1730 people identified as First Nations, Métis or Inuit. However most are Mi'kmaq, and of them, 1010 were aged 0-30. Both the PEI Native Council and the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI provide employment counselling and/or training.

<sup>108</sup> 2006 Census – Aboriginal Peoples, Statistics Canada, 2010

<sup>109</sup> Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canadian Council on Social Development, 2009



### Aboriginal and Inuit in Quebec

Eleven nations make up the Aboriginal and Inuit population of Quebec. Five of these, the Inuit, Algonquin, Cree, Mi'kmaq and Mohawk, speak English, along with varying degrees of knowledge of their mother tongue.

The Aboriginal population is the fastest-growing segment in Quebec. From 1981 to 2001 the Aboriginal and Inuit population more than doubled, and in some cases tripled, in most urban centres, and numbered over 11,000 at the time of the 2001 census.

At the time of the 2006 census, over 60% of Inuit and Aboriginal people on-reserve in Quebec had not completed secondary studies. This is twice the dropout rate for those living off-reserve, and four times the comparable rate for non-Aboriginal Quebecers<sup>110</sup>.

According to 2009 statistics, 63% of Quebec's 83,000 Aboriginals live on reserves in remote areas of northern Quebec. However, more recently, many have migrated to urban areas, in particular Montreal, while still keeping close ties with their mother communities.

As of 2010, the Aboriginal and Inuit employment rate was 61.1%, a full 19.8 percentage points lower than in the non-Aboriginal population<sup>111</sup>. In 2011, the Quebec government announced the Plan Nord initiative (see Policies and Strategies in Quebec, page 16). Plan Nord is expected to have a major economic, social and environmental impact on the Aboriginal and Inuit people in the region.

### First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Manitoba

A key concern identified in the Literacy Partners of Manitoba's Environmental Scan was the impact of Manitoba's First Nations, Métis and

Inuit population. They are the fastest growing segment, and will increase by 2017 to form 25% of Manitoba's population. Sixty percent of this population will be between the ages of 15 to 30 and many will not have a high school education. This population will be the greatest contributor to the workforce over the next 10 years. However, it also represents the population with the lowest literacy rates and highest high school dropout rates. Challenges include the comparable funding for on-reserve schools. As well, programs and services need to be more meaningful and relevant to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Local communities need to be supported to build capacity in valuing, funding and offering literacy and learning services.

There is significant intergenerational low literacy, which is compounded when school-aged children cannot get assistance with homework, either at home or in the community.

Increasingly, training programs are turning away youth who do not have a sufficiently high level of education to participate. For example, the Centre for Aboriginal Human Resource Development (CAHRD) has seen a decline in the readiness for its clients to participate in training. As a result, training spaces for high-demand jobs are going empty, leaving some courses without enough participants to go forward, despite secured funding and employment. In 2010, CAHRD used this data to secure a larger percentage of their funding for literacy upgrading.

Aboriginal Literacy roundtables in June and September of 2010, hosted by Literacy Partners of Manitoba (LPM), with sponsorship by CIBC, identified the need for an Aboriginal gathering. The LPM Board supported the idea of an Aboriginal Literacy Symposium which was

<sup>110</sup> *Aboriginal Education in Quebec, A Benchmark Exercise*, C.D. Howe Institute, 2011

<sup>111</sup> *Aboriginal People and the Labour Market: Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2008-2010*, Statistics Canada, Data excludes people living on reserves and in the territories.

hosted by LPM in the fall of 2011. Over 140 delegates attended from across Canada. Participants at this symposium created a vision and strategy encouraging LPM to take the lead in achieving these strategic goals. Beginning September 2012, LPM will have an Aboriginal Literacy Coordinator on staff who will provide planning support for the November 2012 Aboriginal Literacy Symposium and the ongoing implementation of the Aboriginal Literacy Vision and Strategy.

### **First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Saskatchewan**

In 2006, First Nations, Métis and Inuit made up almost 15% of the Saskatchewan population<sup>112</sup>. This segment of the population in Saskatchewan is growing at a faster rate than the remainder of the population. Between 1996 and 2006, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit population in the province grew by 27% while the rest of the population declined by 6.2%. The IALSS data shows that 70% of First Nations and 56% of Métis people were at literacy levels 1 and 2. The median age for First Nations, Métis and Inuit is 21.7 years of age compared to 41.4 years for the rest of population; 35.7% are below the age of 15 compared to 16.9% of the non-Aboriginal population.

### **First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Alberta**

First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples represent a significant and growing segment of the population in Canada and Alberta. Projected demographic changes make increased First Nations, Métis and Inuit participation in the workforce important for society. The working age population of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people in Alberta is 127,200 with an employment rate of 64%, of those 14% are employed part-time<sup>113</sup>.

There are many differences between segments of the Aboriginal population. In general, the Registered Indian and Inuit populations have lower levels of educational attainment than the Métis and Non-Status Indian populations. This tends to extend to other characteristics such as employment and income levels. While some of the barriers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit workforce participation have lessened, other barriers to employment still remain. These barriers include skills and training, culture, communication and negative stereotypes.

### **First Nations, Métis and Inuit in British Columbia**

British Columbia has the second largest off-reserve Aboriginal population in Canada. Over 70% of the province's Aboriginal population live off-reserves, including almost two-thirds of BC's Status First Nations population. BC's Aboriginal population is the youngest and fastest growing group in the province. Within a ten-year period, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth population has doubled and the overall urban population has grown by 33%. Aboriginal Friendship Centres are BC's largest service delivery infrastructure for the off-reserve First Nations, Métis and Inuit population.

Friendship Centres have been a cultural and community hub for First Nations, Métis and Inuit people moving into cities or rural areas for more than 60 years. Friendship Centres provide cultural resources, employment resources, health promotion and prevention services, counselling supports, and early childhood education and development services<sup>114</sup>.

Off-reserve Aboriginal people have some of the lowest social and economic outcomes in the

<sup>112</sup> 2006 Census – Aboriginal Peoples, Statistics Canada, 2010

<sup>113</sup> Alberta Labour Force Statistics September 2012 Aboriginal Off Reserve Package, Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education, 2012

<sup>114</sup> Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan, Business Case to Close the Socioeconomic Gaps for Off-Reserve Aboriginal People in British Columbia, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2011

province. For example, First Nations, Métis and Inuit people are overrepresented in the jails, within the child welfare system, and are disproportionately living in poverty. Despite all of this, there is no coordinated strategy in BC designed to improve socioeconomic conditions for this population group. However, in 2011 the Official Speech from the Throne signalled a promise to establish a coordinated strategy for off-reserve Aboriginal peoples.

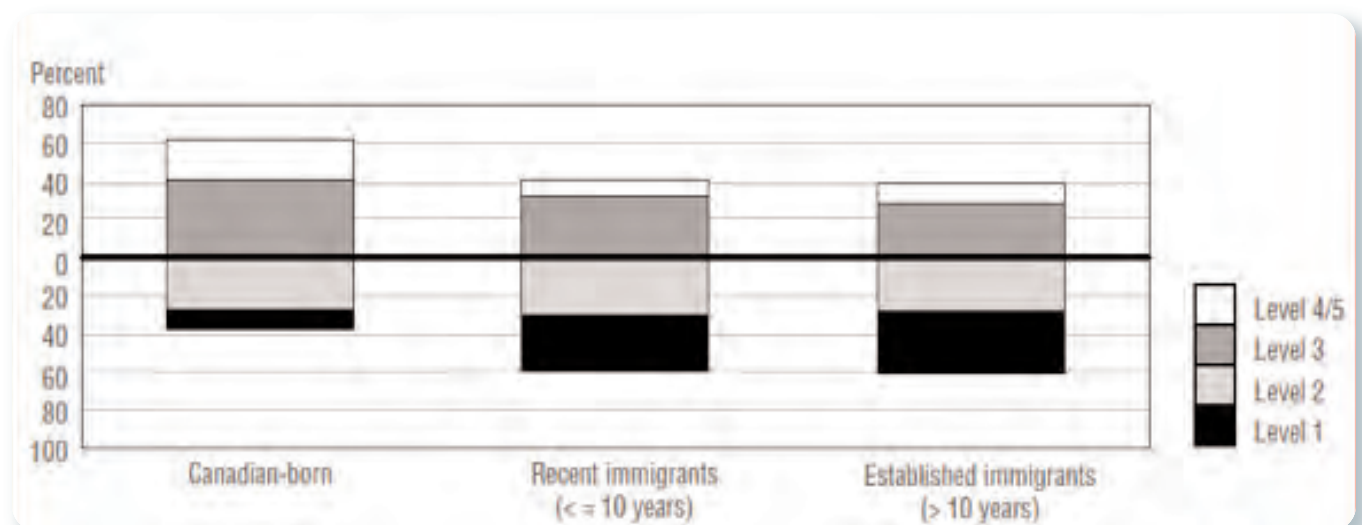
## Immigration

Immigration is one strategy to respond to the challenges we are facing due to current skills levels and a shrinking labour force. Since the mid 1980's, new Canadian immigrants have been concentrated in three provinces – Ontario, Quebec and BC. Now, many more provinces are seeing an increase in immigration.

Nine of the thirteen provinces and territories are doing this through Immigrant Nominee Programs (Quebec has its own system: Quebec-selected skilled workers). At the same time, it is clear that employer-provided training, improved literacy rates, and a more unified education system will be needed to respond to higher skill demands<sup>115</sup> caused by changes in the nature of work.

On the whole, Canadian-born adults have stronger literacy skills than recent immigrants or immigrants that have been in Canada for many years. Figure 3 shows that immigrants make up the largest percentage of people functioning at Level 1. While over 60% of people born in Canada are at Level 3 or higher, only approximately 30% of immigrants are functioning at that level.

**Figure 3: Prose Literacy Levels for Canadian-born Adults and Immigrant**



<sup>115</sup> Miner, Rick. *People without Jobs, Jobs without People: Ontario's Labour Market Future*, 2010.

Learning English by speakers of other languages is referred to by various terms, such as English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as a Second Language (ESL) or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). This report uses the term EAL.

On average, immigrants are better educated now than in the past. However, many come from countries that do not have English or French as a main language. Some immigrants may be literate in their first language but struggle with English or French. Other immigrants are not literate in their first language and find it difficult to learn to read in a second language. People with refugee status may often fall into this category. Some immigrants need to focus on the mechanics of English and others are more in need of the application of language in a Canadian context. Family members may not all have the same levels of English and therefore they may require different programs. There are also different needs for refugees and economic immigrants. Assessment for Literacy and Essential Skills and language acquisition is different.

Literacy cannot be isolated from other issues and concerns such as housing, health care, or employment, which are all compounded by low literacy skills. These issues can impact on one another and lead to a cycle of poverty and isolation that can result in mental health issues, notably depression<sup>116</sup>.

EAL Literacy lies at the intersection of EAL and literacy. In 2007, CLLN published a discussion paper about the connections between Literacy and English as a Second Language<sup>117</sup>. It found that there was a policy gap for adults with low

literacy and education in their first language, especially for those who come from an oral culture with no written language, those who use a non-Roman alphabet and those who have been in Canada for more than 5 years. These adults often understand everyday Canadian culture and systems but still do not have knowledge of workplace culture or have the necessary reading, writing and language skills.

There is a lack of formalized knowledge about immigrants and refugees in Canada who have low education and literacy in their first language. Overall, we do not know what literacy skills and learning strategies people have in their own language. We do not know the proportion of those immigrants and refugees who have high oral skills in English or French but limited literacy skills. Additionally, the particular needs are not reflected in literature<sup>118</sup>.

CLLN's report found that a person with literacy and language issues might be referred either to a literacy program or a language program. There is currently no research to show the reasons behind the referral. Work still needs to be done to decide how to deal with this issue<sup>119</sup>.

The proportion of immigrants with literacy skills below Level 3 was 67% in 2001<sup>120</sup>. Literacy in English is key to integration into mainstream society. Immigrants often need to continue language training once they have jobs, even when they have high levels of first language literacy. They also need to become familiar with cultural norms in the workplace.

Figure 4 compares the level of formal education received by recent immigrants to the Canadian average.

<sup>116</sup> J. Geronimo, S. Folinsbee, J. Goveas, *A Research Project Into The Settlement Needs of Adult Immigrants with Limited Literacy Skills in their First Language Who Have Settled in the Greater Toronto Area*, Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre, 2001

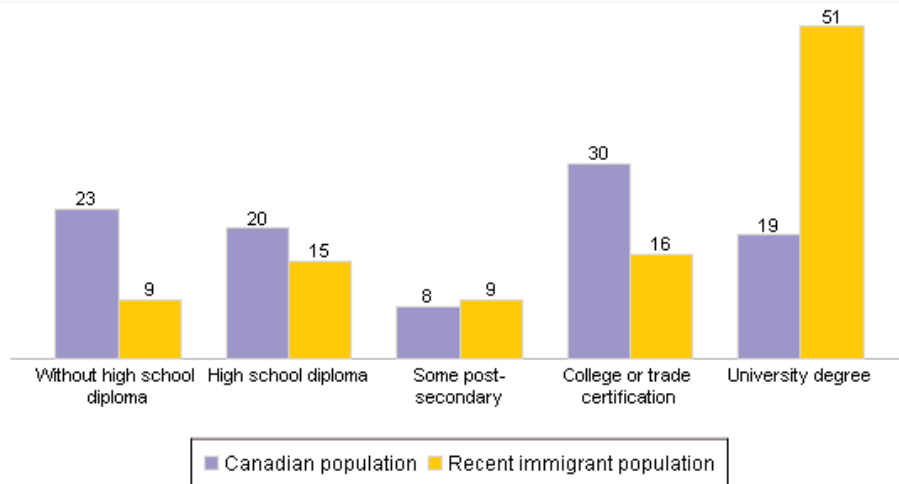
<sup>117</sup> *Linkages: Connecting Literacy and English as a Second Language*, CLLN, 2006

<sup>118</sup> *ibid*

<sup>119</sup> *Creating a Bridge: A Snapshot of ESL Literacy in Ontario*, Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2007

<sup>120</sup> T. Scott Murray et al, *Reading the Future*, Canadian Council on Learning, 2008

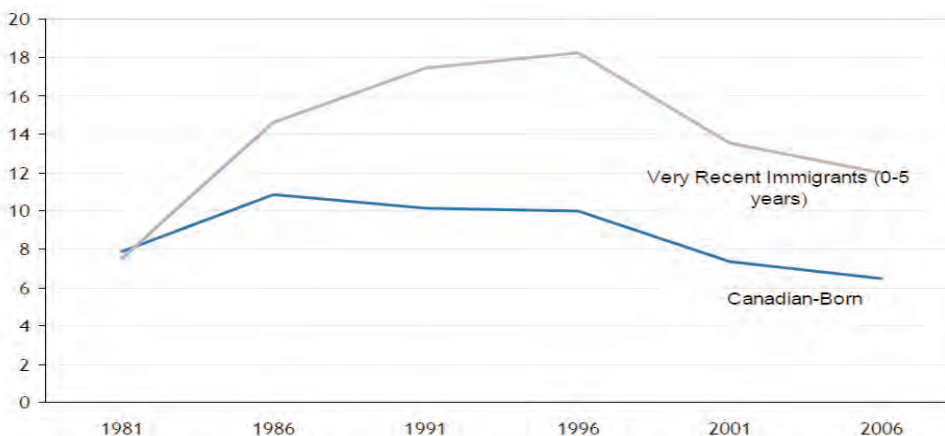


**Figure 4: Level of Education, Recent Immigrant Population Aged 24-64 years (%)**

Source: Learning - Educational Attainment, HRSDC, 2006

Despite higher education levels, Canadian immigrants experience higher unemployment rates and lower incomes than workers born in this country<sup>121</sup>. 2005 RBC Economics research estimates that the potential increased incomes for immigrants if observable skills were rewarded similarly to Canadian-born workers is \$30.7 billion or 2.1 per cent of GDP in 2006 (the latest census data available). Figure 5, taken from the report, shows the trends in unemployment between 1981 and 2006. The report also

discusses possible reasons for the poorer labour market outcomes for immigrants. Current research suggests that gaps may be due to both genuine skill differences between immigrants and Canadian-born workers, and labour market inefficiencies that prevent immigrants from making full use of their skills. Immigrant outcomes could likely be improved through more extensive language training, faster credential recognition, or other integration initiatives.

**Figure 5 Unemployment Rates, 1981-2006**

Source:  
Statistics Canada,  
RBC Economics  
Research

<sup>121</sup> *Immigrant Labour Market Outcomes in Canada: The Benefits of Addressing Wage and Employment Gaps*, RBC Canada, 2011

In June 2012, the Conference Board of Canada released *Profession-Specific Language and Communication Assessment in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy*<sup>122</sup>. This profile spotlights an online assessment tool designed to provide internationally educated physiotherapists and occupational therapists with information about their competency in language, communication, and soft skills as they seek licensure and employment in Canada. More research could be done to discover whether this model would work for those needing to improve their Literacy and Essential Skills before or after their entry to Canada. The models could be occupational specific but they could also relate to other areas of a person's life such as knowledge of Canada's K – 12 education system or non-specific workplace culture.

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC), funded by the Foreign Credentials Referral Office of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, created a resource guide *Employers Roadmap*, to aid SMEs in hiring and retaining foreign trained workers<sup>123</sup>. It has also has created links to useful websites for employers who want to hire and retain internationally trained workers<sup>124</sup>.

Literacy and Essential Skills providers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan identified that there is a deficit of programs to meet immigrant needs. Recent interviews with Literacy and Essential Skills educators revealed that there are insufficient programs to meet the needs of immigrant families who have accompanied a person who has employment<sup>125</sup>

## **Immigration in the Provinces and Territories**

### **Immigration in the Yukon**

Immigration is increasing in the territory, specifically from Asia. Much of the labour market needs are being filled by people moving from outside Canada, some of them through the Yukon Nominee Program. The Yukon Literacy Coalition recognizes the importance of addressing the L/ES needs of immigrants in the workplace through appropriate programming.

### **Immigration in Newfoundland and Labrador**

Immigrants to Newfoundland and Labrador tend to settle in the larger urban centres. Primary support for language training for newcomers is offered through the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), through the Association for New Canadians.

Once their eligibility for LINC funding expires, immigrants often seek support for language skills development through local literacy and ABE programs. The number of immigrants requiring continuing language skills development indicates the need to increase appropriate services to the immigrant population.

### **Immigration in New Brunswick**

In New Brunswick the immigrant population is increasing but there is a limited of programming to meet their literacy needs. There is programming through the Multicultural Associations but there does not seem to be a focus within the Workplace Essential Skills program to target this group of potential or current employees.

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<sup>122</sup> *Profession-Specific Language and Communication Assessment in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy*, Conference Board of Canada, 2009

<sup>123</sup> *Employers Roadmap*, TASC for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009

<sup>124</sup> *Hiring and Retaining Internationally Trained Workers*, TASC

<sup>125</sup> *A Snapshot of Occupational Task Profiles: Canadian Literacy and Essential Skills Workforce*, CLLN, May 2012

## Immigration in Nova Scotia

Business leaders in Nova Scotia cannot find people with the skills they need to take full advantage of opportunities in changing markets<sup>126</sup>. Attracting more professionally trained immigrants with international ties to industry in their countries of origin is crucial if Nova Scotia is to compete, and grow. It will also mean that adequate programming needs to be in place to address their learning needs.

Better targeting of immigrants with the skills Canada needs, along with improved language training and better recognition of foreign credentials, will lessen language barriers and reduce the number of skilled immigrants who are unemployed or in low-paying unskilled work. For those who are less skilled it is important to provide language and essential skills training.

## Immigration in Prince Edward Island

In PEI the Immigrant Work Experience Initiative provides recent immigrants with a one-time work experience opportunity in order to help them gain long-term employment.

## Immigration in Quebec

According to the 2006 census, the Anglophone population included 323,080 persons born outside Canada, representing 32.5% of the total Quebec Anglophone population. At the time of the census, Italy supplied 7.1% of the English first official language spoken (FOLS) immigrants, followed by China (6.4%) and the United States (6.2%). Europe supplied over 17% of the English FOLS immigrants, and Asia over 14%.

Although these immigrants have a spoken command of English (to a varying degree), no

information is available, whether through Statistics Canada or any provincial ministry, regarding the literacy level of these newcomers.

## Immigration in Ontario

Ontario has a large immigrant population. According to Statistics Canada, there are 832,000 immigrants in Ontario who do not read and write well in English or French<sup>127</sup>. Some of these people came to Canada with the ability to speak English or French fluently, but their reading and writing skills are less developed. The proportion of immigrants to Ontario with low prose literacy is higher than the Canadian average<sup>128</sup>.

## Immigration in Manitoba

By 2016, Manitoba will have 20,000 immigrants coming into the province annually. Manitoba's growing immigrant population heightens the challenges of navigating different mandates to access literacy and language skills. When a person has limited English or French skills and low literacy in their first language, it is challenging to determine whether the need is for a language or literacy program.

In Manitoba, refugees who have lived in camps are often not considered to be in the employable stream and are therefore often not eligible for full-time literacy or language training. There is also an identified gap for providing paid literacy training to immigrants over the age of 30. Language services are governed and funded by one department of government while literacy services are governed and funded by another. These are challenges that need to be addressed.

<sup>126</sup> *Welcome Home to Nova Scotia*, An initiative of jobsHere, Nova Scotia

<sup>127</sup> *Literacy impacts new Canadians*, Essential Skills Ontario

<sup>128</sup> E. Zubrow et al, *Landscape of Literacy and Disability In Canada*, Canadian Abilities Foundation, 2008

## Immigration in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan does not have a large immigrant population - only 5% of its 2006 population were immigrants. Of this group, 36% immigrated to the province within the last 20 years. The most rapidly growing group of immigrants are those admitted under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP). The program facilitates the entry to Canada of workers whose skills and abilities best fit the province's needs. In 2008-09, the program admitted 72% more provincial nominees – 2,914 workers and 4,886 family members<sup>129</sup>. The workers often need occupational language-specific training while family members require EAL and often literacy and essential skills training as well. Several community based literacy service providers offer limited programming in this area, as well as organizations like the Open Door Society and the more formalized regional college system.



## Immigration in Alberta

Alberta's immigrants accounted for 20% of its working population in 2010 - the third highest among the provinces<sup>130</sup>.

Most immigrants were attracted to urban areas and about half are in the 25 - 44 age range. In

2011, 11.7% of total immigration was to Alberta. Employer and provincial nominee applications through Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program (AINP) average 7,500 for the year ending December 2010. Today, immigrants comprise approximately one fifth of Alberta's working-age population<sup>131</sup>.

## Immigration in British Columbia

After continuous declines in immigration in the early 1980's, BC's share of the national total landings increased sharply until the late 1990's, due in part to a sharp increase in immigrants from Hong Kong prior to the handover to China. In 2007, immigrant arrivals in British Columbia accounted for 16.5% of total Canadian immigration<sup>132</sup>. Learning the culture and language is one of the largest challenges faced by immigrants.

ESL Settlement Assistance Program, funded by WelcomeBC, offers free language services to a fairly wide variety of immigrants in BC aged 19 and older. Participants improve English language skills and learn about Canada, Canadian society and their community. Most importantly, they have the opportunity to meet with and get to know members of their new community<sup>133</sup>.

Higher levels of immigration into rural communities to meet labour shortage demands increases stress on community services such as family centres and schools. Some family members may be able to work in a major industry, but others have to try to find work in small businesses.

<sup>129</sup> *Saskatchewan's Immigration Strategy: Strengthening our Communities and Economies*, Government of Saskatchewan, 2009

<sup>130</sup> *Alberta Labour Force Profiles, Immigrants*, Alberta Government, October 2011

<sup>131</sup> *Impact of immigration on Canada's Digital Economy: Regional Outlook – Alberta*, Information and Communication Technologies Council, June 2012

<sup>132</sup> *Off-Reserve Aboriginal Action Plan, Business Case to Close the Socioeconomic Gaps for Off-Reserve Aboriginal People in British Columbia*, BC Association of Aboriginal Friendship Centres, 2011

<sup>133</sup> *ESL Settlement Assistance Program*, WelcomeBC



## Youth

Youth literacy refers to the ability of young adults between the ages of 15 to 20 to use and understand the information they need to create and achieve goals for everyday life.

Often young people gain skills through formal education, particularly high school. But, some youth just don't do well in formal education for a variety of reasons. Youth who do not succeed in school or who "fall through the cracks" are less likely to set and achieve healthy goals. They are more likely to engage in behaviours that are antisocial, unhealthy, or illegal.

Young people drop out or struggle through school for many reasons. A lack of basic literacy skills is a common factor, as is a negative association with learning environments. Family instability, violence, substance abuse and undiagnosed learning disabilities are other factors that can make learning difficult. Often, they do not trust the adults in their lives and they may have had experiences with the justice system. Simply teaching literacy is not always enough. Community building, group decision making, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills are all part of the equation.

Young adults who drop out of school and later enrol in an adult education program also require assistance in overcoming social and emotional barriers and learning the basics of how to learn<sup>134</sup>. They typically have substantial gaps in their learning but perceive themselves to be further advanced in their education. They continue to struggle with issues of poverty and housing crisis and have a desire to work but are not ready to fully meet employer expectations.

The majority of jobs in Canada require at least Level 3 literacy skill, yet 43% of all students leaving Canada's high schools still do so with

Level 1 and 2 skills<sup>135</sup>. Some students obtain their grade 12 diploma but don't have the skills that the level of education implies. About 10% of high school students don't graduate.

Among those aged 20 to 24, the high school dropout rate fell in all provinces from the early 1990s to the late 2000s. In 1990/1993, Newfoundland and Labrador had the highest dropout rate in Canada (19.9%); by 2007/2010, it had one of the lowest (7.4%). Dropout rates were lowest in British Columbia in 2007/2010, at 6.2% and highest in Quebec, at 11.7%, followed closely by the three Prairie provinces. That being said, these rates were still significantly lower than those prevailing in 1990/1993<sup>136</sup>. First Nations, Métis and Inuit youth had higher dropout rates (22.6%) than non-Aboriginal youth (8.5%) for ages 20 to 24<sup>137</sup>.

New generations of young Aboriginal people will have the opportunity to become active participants in shaping tomorrow's society. However, the current context requires higher levels of human capital for youth to navigate the pathways to adulthood, a transition that already comes with varying degrees of uncertainty and risk. While this is true for all youth, the poor socio-economic conditions in which many First Nations, Inuit and Métis youth live create substantial additional challenges.

*Hope or Heartbreak Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future*, Government of Canada's Policy Research Initiative and the Research and Analysis Directorate at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2008

<sup>134</sup> *Youth, Decoda Literacy Solutions*

<sup>135</sup> *Towards a better understanding of the link between oral fluency, literacy and Essential Skills*, DataAngel Policy Research Inc., 2011

<sup>136</sup> *Trends in Dropout Rates and the Labour Market Outcomes of Young Dropouts*, Statistics Canada, 2010

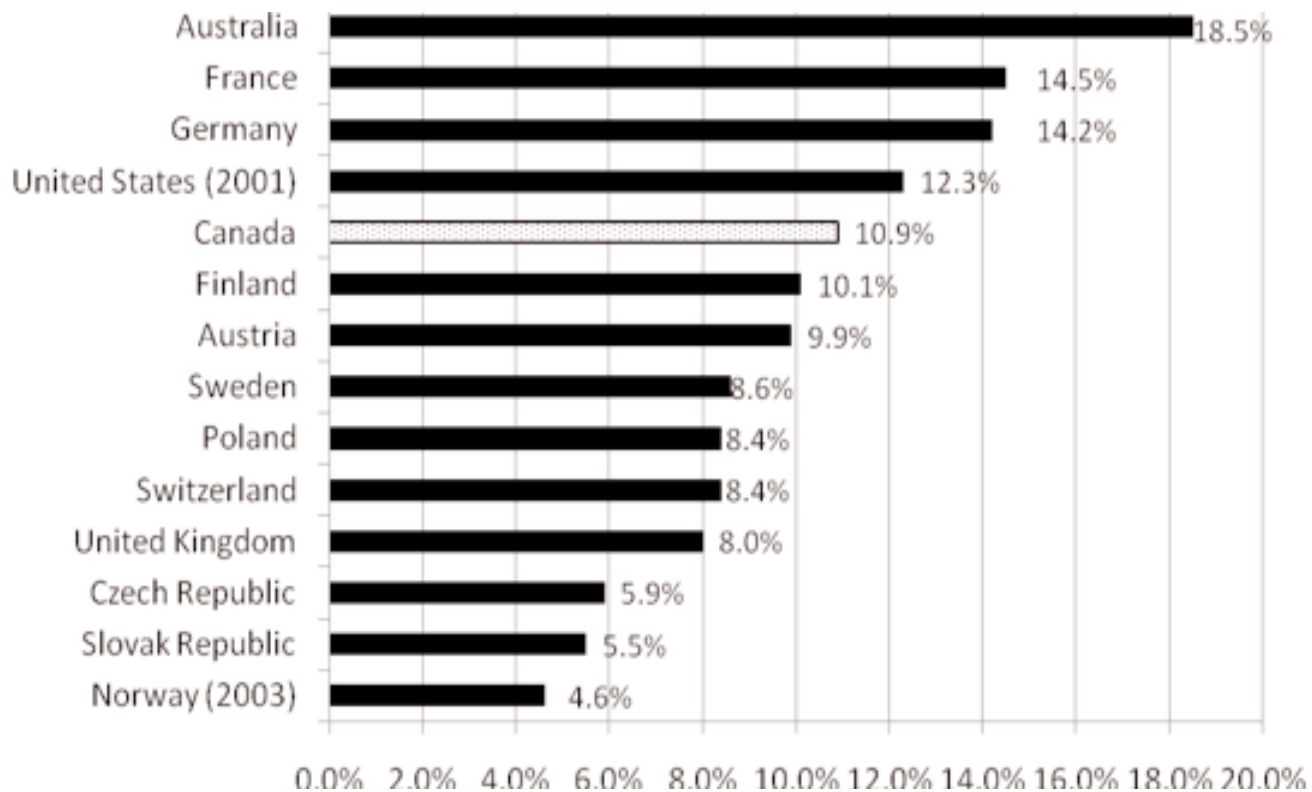
<sup>137</sup> *ibid*

Some of the initiatives, such as ASETS, ASEP and SPF, discussed on pages 57 and 58, promote employment opportunities for First Nations, Métis and Inuit, but there is still a need to target youth and to improve socio-economic conditions in order to address the high dropout rate. The federal program, *Cultural Connections for Aboriginal Youth Program* (CCAY), in partnership with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC), and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada is one program that is working to equip young First

Nations, Métis and Inuit people with the skills and experience they need to participate more fully in Canada's economy. The NWT Literacy Council is the lead researcher on a pan-northern youth literacy project that is examining and piloting potential strategies to re-engage disengaged youth in skill development.

Figure 6 compares the Canadian dropout rate to a number of other countries. While Canada performs better than some other countries, there is still considerable room for improvement. It remains an issue that affects economic outcomes.

**Figure 6: Drop Out Rates by Country, 2002**



Source: Canadian Council on Learning (2002)

Canada's unemployment rate for young people is 14.2% and the 15-24 age group has seen little improvement in the past several years<sup>138</sup>. The youth jobless rate in Newfoundland and Labrador is 19% as of June 2012<sup>139</sup>. Nova Scotia's jobless rate for young people is 19.9% – the highest in a decade. Ontario's rate is 17.2%. By contrast, Alberta and Saskatchewan have the lowest youth jobless rates in the country, at 9.7% and 8.9% respectively – a contrast that will no doubt continue to lure young people west.

Dropout rates show that there is still work to be done in improving the literacy skills of youth who have just entered or are about to enter the workforce. Youth who have dropped out of school are typically not working at the level needed for most literacy tasks in Canada.

## Youth in the Provinces and Territories

### Youth in Nunavut

Fifty-three percent of the Nunavut population is currently below the age of 25. The teen pregnancy rate is one of the highest in the country and the high school completion rate for Inuit is less than 25%. Over 80% of the Inuit youth aged 16 to 25 scored less than Level 3, in prose literacy proficiency. The territory also has the smallest working age population which, when combined with the high population of those under 15, gives Nunavut the highest dependency ratio in the country. Clearly, low literacy levels, unemployment, poverty and other social problems will continue to increase unless action is taken at all levels. Addressing the needs of marginalized youth is a critical issue. Out of school and often isolated from the community, improving the Literacy and Essential Skills of youth is one of Nunavut's biggest and most important challenges. Through youth, workplace/workforce, and family literacy

research projects, stakeholders have consistently voiced concern over the need to develop Literacy and Essential Skills programming to engage marginalized youth (those who have dropped out and who are not employed). Recommendations for the development of flexible, non-formal, community-based programs were identified within all of these stakeholder groups as being a top priority.

In March, 2007, Ilitaqsiniq, Nunavut Literacy Council produced a report: *Barriers to Youth Employment in Nunavut*<sup>140</sup>. These barriers could also be applied to other areas in the North. They include:

- ▶ racism and colonialism and their effects
- ▶ Inuit language and traditional learning style
- ▶ family/school divide and other challenges to the school system
- ▶ limited opportunities within smaller communities and the college system
- ▶ learning disabilities
- ▶ lack of literacy skills, including workplace skills
- ▶ policy and program supports



<sup>138</sup> CANSIM data, Statistics Canada, 2012

<sup>139</sup> Labour Force Information, June 10 to 16, 2012, Statistics Canada

<sup>140</sup> Barriers to Youth Employment in Nunavut, Nunavut Literacy Council, 2007

The report highlights some crucial recommendations as can be seen below. These are areas that will be important in moving forward.

***For employers, including the Government of Nunavut:***

1. Support apprenticeship training, including building it into government-funded contracts
2. Offer Inuktitut as a first language training for employees without full fluency
3. Offer literacy and other essential skills training in the workplace
4. Offer Inuktitut as second language training in the workplace
5. Expand housing options available to students relocating to take further training
6. Explore on-the-job mentoring for youth entering the workforce, anticipating that literacy skills may be incomplete

***For educators:***

1. Extend learning programs to include pre-school components, with an early childhood education focus across the territory
2. Develop and implement programs to engage families of students in the school community. This could be as simple as holding an annual feast to celebrate the start of school
3. Offer literacy support to all students who are failing to grasp material being taught
4. Integrate more hands-on learning opportunities and learning by doing, rather than relying heavily on text-based materials
5. Develop alternatives to written tests to assess students' learning
6. Increase access to vocational resources and training for secondary school students
7. Offer evening courses to allow access for people in the workforce

8. Adapt high school and adult basic education programs to be pre-workforce training programs
9. Develop part-time options for adult basic education programs
10. Offer space at school for homework after school hours
11. Consider developing 'homework clubs' for students
12. Develop and implement more programs for marginalized youth – those who may never go back to school

***For governments:***

1. Implement a plain language policy for all print materials in all languages.
2. Extend training funding to employers wishing to offer literacy training and/or Inuktitut as a second language training to employees
3. Apply 'healing foundation' funding to test for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) and provide appropriate supports for learning and working for those in need
4. Fund summer employment in trades-related fields to provide youth with experience and exposure to more skilled jobs
5. Fund mentorship programs for youth who are more suited to land-based economic activity with elders who possess the necessary skills for success

***For communities:***

1. Build on existing resources and models to create programs that will include youth who are not likely to undertake formal training for cash-economy employment
2. Document promising practices in place in communities, including an analysis of what conditions are necessary to achieve success and what lessons have been learned over the life of the program



***For Ilitaqsiniq, Nunavut Literacy Council:***

1. Explore and develop workplace literacy materials and programs
2. Continue to develop community outreach and development strategies to support non-formal learning such as family literacy and programs with a cultural focus
3. Develop and distribute a template to capture information about successful programs, including necessary conditions for success and lessons learned in delivering the programs
4. Seek funding to gather completed templates and disseminate them to communities throughout the territory to encourage customization and replication

**Source: Nunavut Literacy Council, *Barriers to Youth Employment in Nunavut, 2007***

**Youth in Northwest Territories**

The NWT has one of the youngest populations in Canada. The proportion of the population under 15 years of age (21.7%) is the second highest after Nunavut. Approximately 46.3% are under the age of 29. Although the Grade 12 graduation rate has increased in recent years to approximately 50%, it is still considerably lower than in the rest of Canada, and this rate is considerably lower in smaller communities. There is also a significant gap between the graduation rates of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-Aboriginal populations. IALSS found that the percentage of NWT youth below level 3 in all skill areas is considerably higher than the national average. It is also higher than all other provinces and territories, except Nunavut. Youth whose parents have not completed high school have the lowest literacy scores. Thus a disproportionate number of NWT youth are at a disadvantage because of low literacy levels and have difficulty participating in the Territory's wage economy. The literacy skills of young people are important,

because this group has the most time to contribute their knowledge and skills to their families, their communities and the labour market.

Overall almost 21% of NWT's population 15 years and older have no high school diploma, but in the smaller communities that rate rises to 32%. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is focusing on improving the success rate of Aboriginal students through its Aboriginal Student Achievement initiative with its four priorities: early childhood and care, family and student supports, Aboriginal language and culture, and literacy.

Non-formal programs are community designed and delivered programs that respond to the unique needs of people in a specific community. They are generally not delivered in a classroom setting, but are well-planned and carefully designed to include literacy components. They often appeal to people with lower levels of literacy because they are less threatening than formal classroom-based instruction. Participants do not receive certificates or diplomas, allowing more flexibility in program content and delivery. They are particularly effective in engaging youth in learning. In NWT the Community Literacy Fund offers small amounts of funding to support non-formal programs, but, given their importance and their potential, much more must be done to support community groups plan and run such programs.

**Youth in the Yukon**

As of March 2012, around 15% of Yukon's population were under the age of 15. The territory experiences relatively low graduation rates in communities and many youth are not ready to undertake vocational training when they leave the public school system. Yukon Literacy Coalition recognizes the need for more support for non-formal programs in both Whitehorse and rural Yukon.

## Youth in Newfoundland and Labrador

Over the past 20 years, the province has experienced the out-migration of over 80,000 people, 80% of whom were young people aged 15 to 29. It is estimated that by 2022, there will potentially be one new labour force entrant (15-24 years old) for every two retirees (55-64 years old).

In Newfoundland and Labrador, close to 60% of youth ages 16 -25 had prose literacy proficiency at Level 3 or above while 40% were below Level 3. Low literacy could impact adversely on youth in terms of participation in postsecondary education and success in the labour market<sup>141</sup>.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a Youth at Promise basic literacy program for people ages 16 -24. It provides a supportive learning environment for youth who face significant barriers to obtaining access to education because they have dropped out of school. The program offers an individualized program based on academic need, re-introduces learning to youth and increases their confidence and self esteem<sup>142</sup>.

## Youth in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI

There appears to be a youth unemployment problem in urban centres of Atlantic Canada as individuals aged 15-24 years have much higher unemployment rates than nationally<sup>143</sup>.

The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick (LCNB) reports that there is a gap in programming for those students who have dropped out of high school but are not eligible for adult programs. There are a number of youth at-risk who drop out of school at the age of 16-17, but if they want to continue with their education they have to return to the school system which is not a setting that works for them. This challenge is also acknowledged by literacy staff in Nova Scotia and PEI.

## Youth in Quebec

Quebec's Plan Nord initiative has identified that manpower training will present a challenge. The dropout rate is much higher for Aboriginal students than elsewhere in the province (2008-2009):

- ▶ Quebec – 24%
- ▶ Naskapi – 70%
- ▶ Inuit – 81%
- ▶ Cree – 92%

If these students are to benefit from the Plan Nord project, it is clear that they will require skill upgrades.

## Youth in Manitoba

The drop-out rate in Manitoba has improved significantly in the past decade. More students are staying in school longer and those who have left are returning in unprecedented numbers. However, as the C.D. Howe Institute noted in *Drop Outs: The Achilles Heel of Canada's High School System*, Manitoba has higher than national rates for those without high school certification for both the 20 to 24 and 25-34 age groups<sup>144</sup>.

## Youth in Alberta

Among the provinces, Alberta had the third highest proportion of youth in its working age population at 16.9%, after Manitoba's 17.3% and Saskatchewan's 17.1%. Alberta's youth employment rate of 62.7% was the highest among the provinces. The Services-Producing sector in Alberta comprised 77.9% of all youth employment<sup>145</sup>.

In 2011, Alberta youth accounted for 37.7% of those employed in the Accommodation and Food

<sup>141</sup> Caroline Vaughan, *Submission to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Justice Consultation on the Human Rights Code*, Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, 2009

<sup>142</sup> *Youth at Promise*, Thrive Community Youth Network

<sup>143</sup> *Meeting the Skills Challenge: Five Key Labour Market Issues Facing Atlantic Canada*, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, October 2012

<sup>144</sup> *Drop Outs: The Achilles Heel of Canada's High School System*, No. 298, C.D. Howe Institute, October 2009

<sup>145</sup> *Alberta Labour Force Profiles, Youth*, Employment Alberta, 2011

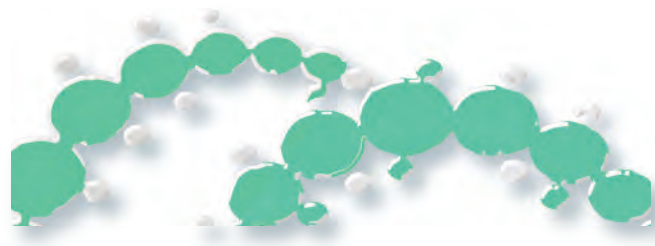
Services industry. 75.2% of employed youth had obtained a high school graduation, a post-secondary certificate or diploma, a university degree, or had some post-secondary education. Of employed youth, 76.5% of female youth and 74.1% of male youth had attained a high school diploma.

In 2011, 24.8% of employed youth had less than high school education compared to 11.5% of employed Albertans, and 35.2% of youth were high school graduates compared to 23.3% of Albertans.

### Youth in British Columbia

While British Columbia's literacy profile is stronger than the Canadian average, scores among younger adults (16-25) are lower than the Canadian average with 12% of younger BC adults having difficulty with even the most basic written materials<sup>146</sup>. One in five people enrolled in the school system do not graduate in the expected timeframe.

The McCreary Centre Society is a not-for-profit organization committed to improving the health of BC youth through research, education and community based projects. It sponsors and promotes a wide range of activities and research to identify and address the health needs of young people. McCreary conducts the Adolescent Health Survey and also survey research with youth not captured in a mainstream school survey. These include youth in custody, street involved youth, and youth in alternative education projects<sup>147</sup>.



### Youth neither in Employment nor Training

In the youth population as a whole, there are young people who are neither in employment, nor in education or training (called NEET in many countries). This segment has been growing in recent years reflecting a deepening detachment from the labour market. Analysis by Statistics Canada finds 13% or 904,000, of the 6.8 million Canadians between the ages of 15 and 29 weren't in school nor at work last year <sup>148</sup>. However, Statistics Canada has the following explanation:

The data suggests most Canadian youth who are NEETs are not in a high-risk, negative state. Certainly some youth are having a tough time finding a job matching their credentials, but that's not the majority. Many Canadians in the NEET category are in a period of short-term unemployment, or out on a temporary absence such as parental leave, suggesting they are not disengaged with the labour market.

Katherine Marshall, Statscan

The report stated that, among young people who were not in the labour force, one in five said they wanted a job, despite the fact that they were not looking for one. Half had reasons for not looking, such as feeling too discouraged about finding

<sup>146</sup> Satya Brink, *Literacy in British Columbia*, Statistics Canada, 2006

<sup>147</sup> *BC Adolescent Health Survey*, McCreary Centre Society, 2012

<sup>148</sup> Katherine Marshall, *Youth neither enrolled nor employed*, Statistics Canada, May 2012

work, waiting for recall and being sick. Most young people not in the labour force (82%) didn't want a job. Of the 82% of youth not in the labour force who did not want a job, 5% had future work arrangements, 6% were permanently unable to work, 7% were non-traditional students, 20% had no known activity but had young children at home, and 44% had no known activity and no children at home. Lower levels of education were associated with higher rates of youth unemployment and long-term unemployment.

CLLN believes this is an issue that needs careful monitoring, given the risks of both future employability and social exclusion. To reach NEETs the report cites a U.S. joint initiative with business leaders and communities to give summer jobs to hundreds of thousands of disconnected and low-income youths to help them gain work experience, skills and contacts.

### **Skills for Jobs**

For the next two decades at least, there will be many people without jobs, and even more jobs without people. Many unemployed and underemployed youth won't be considered for jobs because they will not have the skills employers need. Those who receive good career guidance, coaching and mentoring will have information to prepare them for their futures. Those who embrace lifelong learning will be in high demand. They will literally have their choice of opportunities. Those who don't have clear goals and don't see the point in continuously upgrading their knowledge, skills, and networks will be unsuccessful. To this end, it is important that all Canadians participate in lifelong learning and that we have the programs in place for them to do so. It is also important that we raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning and Essential Skills and are able to clearly

demonstrate the benefits. It is important that outreach strategies and career guidance reach all segments of the youth population both in high school and when youth are no longer part of the school system.



### **Seniors and Older Workers**

This section looks at seniors and older workers and the impact that an increasing number of retirees has on the workforce<sup>149</sup>. Demographic changes are increasing the average age in Canada. As a result, there will be more people relying on fewer active workers coming into the workforce. However, because many Canadians are healthier than in previous generations it is likely that fewer people will retire at 65 and that more will choose to continue working, especially those without adequate pensions.

As older Canadians continue to work they will probably need to update their skills and continue learning to cope with the fast pace of change in the workplace. This emphasizes the importance of continuous learning throughout life. Unfortunately, adult training is not spread evenly across the workforce. Those who most need training – older workers and those with limited education – are the least likely to receive it<sup>150</sup>.

<sup>149</sup> There are ongoing debates about the definition of "senior". According to the Government of Canada, a senior is a person over 65.

<sup>150</sup> *OECD Policy Brief, July 2007*





While there is a lack of programming to meet the literacy needs of seniors in New Brunswick, the governments of Canada and New Brunswick have worked in partnership on the Initiative for Older Workers. Activities have included promoting the value of older workers to employers, delivering training workshops, matching participants with employers to help them gain work experience and supporting them through their placements. This initiative has supported about 1,000 people. This could be an initiative to explore for other provinces and territories.

The New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) is a federal grants and contributions program that supports projects led or inspired by seniors who make a difference in the lives of others and in their communities. It is important for Literacy and Essential Skills providers to be aware of this program so that they can promote it in communities across their provinces and territories.

The National Seniors Council advises the Government of Canada on current and emerging issues and opportunities related to the quality of life and well-being of seniors, both now and in the future. In 2011, the National Seniors Council examined the labour force participation of seniors and near-seniors, and intergenerational relations. In 2012, it is building on that momentum by talking to employers about the challenges and opportunities posed by an aging workforce and seeking best practices from employers in recruiting and retaining older workers.

## Consultations with Older Workers and Employers by HRSDC

In 2011, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) used a series of roundtables to gain a better understanding of the labour market opportunities and challenges for older workers and employers in the context of population aging<sup>151</sup>. The focus was on workplace practices and conditions that affect the labour market attachment of older workers. Separate consultations with employers and older workers encouraged frank discussion. In the past, employer perspectives on retaining and recruiting older workers have remained largely unexplored in Canada.

Many older workers stated that ongoing opportunities for personal and professional growth played a key role in keeping them motivated and interested in their work. With respect to skills recognition, many older workers were interested in trying new and different kinds of work but were not sure what types of employment their existing skills and knowledge would allow them to pursue.

In general, employers and older workers agreed on a number of promising practices for older worker retention. They can be categorized as follows:

- ▶ accommodating workplaces
- ▶ financial incentives and pension benefits
- ▶ quality work experience
- ▶ skills development
- ▶ health benefits and wellness supports

Issues of skills development were repeatedly discussed by both employers and older workers, as they could play a critical role in older worker retention. Participants discussed the opportunities presented by investments in training and professional development,

<sup>151</sup> *Consultations with Older Workers and Employers, HRSDC, October 2011*

succession planning and mentoring. Whether it was to improve a worker's skills for their current position or for allowing them to move to a new role within the organization, employers stressed the value of on-the-job training, workshops and peer support. However, these programs typically target either *all* employees or specific occupation groups rather than older workers specifically.

Some employers noted that giving older workers the opportunity to train others through formal or informal mentoring, or by contributing to the development of training materials and programs, is a good way to transfer skills and knowledge. One employer in the health care sector shared an example of what was called "reverse mentoring": new nurses (with extensive knowledge of the latest technological advances) were paired with experienced ones (with knowledge of clinical practice) to support two-way knowledge sharing.

This research shows the importance of supporting older employees to stay in the workforce. It would appear from this information that employees are willing to participate in training and yet other research suggests that it is difficult to get older workers to commit to training<sup>152</sup>. The Statistics Canada report, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, found that older workers are still significantly less likely to participate in job-related training than their counterparts in the 25-54 age range, even after taking labour market and socio-economic factors into account<sup>153</sup>. Between July 2007 and June 2008, 32% of workers 55-64 took some training compared to 45% of those aged 25-54<sup>154</sup>. Given the recent trend towards delayed retirement, job-related training (courses and programs) is increasingly important for older workers and for employers working with an aging workforce<sup>155</sup>.

As the numbers of young people decline, and as older workers are encouraged to stay in the workforce, it is unthinkable that older workers would not receive further training. Statistics Canada report, *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, states that the training gap between older and younger workers shrank between 1991 and 2008<sup>156</sup>. The training participation rate of older workers doubled in that period, however, the participation rates remained significantly below those of younger workers (14% lower in 2007/08). Almost two-thirds of the increase in participation can be attributed to changes in educational attainment and workplace characteristics but there is also evidence of a general upward trend.

In **PEI**, Passport to Employment is a joint initiative of the Federal and Provincial government to address the employment needs of older workers (55 – 64) wanting to stay in the workforce or return to employment. It is made up of a short course on job skills, knowledge and confidence and is followed by the opportunity to seek employment through a federally-funded job search program.

The **NWT** has a low proportion of seniors, but this has been the fastest growing age segment over the last 20 years. Seniors have lower levels of school achievement than younger adults: this is more apparent in smaller communities with proportionately larger Aboriginal senior populations.

The topic of Seniors' Literacy and Essential Skills, when they are no longer in the workforce is one that needs further research and investment.

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<sup>152</sup> *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Statistics Canada, Summer 2012

<sup>153</sup> *ibid*

<sup>154</sup> *ibid*

<sup>155</sup> Y. Carrière and D. Galarneau, *Delayed Retirement: A New Trend?* *Perspectives on Labour and Income*. Vol. 23 no. 4 Winter. Statistics Canada, 2011

<sup>156</sup> *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Statistics Canada, Summer 2012

## Essential Skills in the Workforce

The last decade has seen an increasing volume of research that suggests a significant percentage of the Canadian workforce has levels of Literacy and Essential Skills below that required for their occupations. This is not only an issue facing the long-term unemployed or workers recently displaced from traditional resource-based sectors or goods-producing industries. More than a third of frontline workers in service sectors, including Retail Trade and Tourism, have literacy levels below the skill profiles typically demanded in their jobs<sup>157</sup>. The Literacy and Essential Skills profile of a population affects the performance of enterprises and communities in that society.

### Workers with Low Essential Skills

The sectors with the highest number of workers with low essential skills are those in which small businesses account for over two-thirds of employment. This is illustrated in Figure 7.

Differences in average literacy levels explain more than 55% of differences in the long-term growth rate of gross domestic products (GDP) per capita at both the national and provincial level. The proportion of adults with low literacy levels constrains long-term economic growth rates, and some effects at the national level appear to stem from the increased prevalence of illness and accident suffered by low skilled adults.

McCracken and Murray, *The Economic Benefits of Literacy: Evidence and Implications for Public Policy*, 2010

**Figure 7: Percentage of workers with low essential skills by sector**

Sector/Industry	Percentage of people in sector who are employed by small business	Share of all workers in sector with low ES (< level 3)
Construction	76%	49%
Forestry	67%	47%
Health care	89%	32%
Accommodation & Food	67%	53%
Other services	73%	NA

Source: Making Required Skills Investments Go Further Webinar, OLES, HRSDC, 2012

<sup>157</sup> D. Gyarmati, *UPSKILL: A Ground-Breaking Evaluation of Workplace Essential Skills Training*, Literacy Nova Scotia News, Spring 2012



Successfully addressing the challenges of low literacy can enhance the effectiveness of technical training and increase performance on-the-job. This is observed in reduction of errors, higher productivity, reduced costs, increased sales and even improved customer satisfaction. Workers also benefit in the form of improved wages, greater job stability and even from lower health risks from workplace injury.

Nunavut is a complex employment environment. Workplace education in the Nunavut context is challenged by factors such as dual languages, high turnover, dispersed workplaces, a population with low Essential Skills, and a relatively new territorial government. Inuit comprise 85% of Nunavut's population. More than half of Nunavut's working age population struggle with serious literacy challenges. The four official languages of Nunavut are Inuktitut, Inuinnaqtun, English and French. The social, political and linguistic changes that have occurred in Nunavut over the last forty years have radically changed the literacy skills that Nunavummiut need to function in the global economy. There has been insufficient support for the transition and acquisition of what would be considered modern literacies. These challenges are greater in the small communities where people face a wide variety of systemic barriers that prevent them from achieving their potential.

Despite the availability of a small amount of employment in traditional occupations such as hunting and trapping, employment created by the cash economy and other aspects of contemporary society have radically changed the skills required to function effectively in many aspects of modern Nunavut. In fact, it is difficult to participate in the wage economy of Nunavut without a proficient knowledge of English and highly developed reading, writing and computer skills despite efforts by government, Inuit organizations and others to make Inuktitut the primary working language.

Article 23 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* was created to ensure increased employment opportunities for Land Claim Beneficiaries. Under this article, Inuit with the skills to fulfill job criteria competing with non-Inuit for a particular position are given hiring priority. The Nunavut Implementation Commission set a goal in which the government workforce reflects 85% Inuit population. This figure was decreased to 50% as a result of the lack of Inuit with appropriate levels of education. Consequently, the Government of Nunavut still heavily relies on an imported labour force and Inuit are not fully benefitting from new employment opportunities. The need for increased training and education opportunities in Nunavut is clear.





## Skills Shortages

In December 2011, there were 222,000 employment vacancies across the country, according to Statistics Canada. The Bank of Canada's business outlook survey, released in April 2012, showed employers are struggling to fill positions. The survey showed 27% of firms reported a labour shortage this spring, near a three-year high, though below levels seen last decade.

There's no shortage of people looking for work. Groups with high jobless rates such as First Nations, Métis and Inuit, recent immigrants and those with disabilities, are struggling to land good jobs. Youth unemployment is nearly 14%. Despite this, employers across the country say they can't find the right workers for all kinds of available jobs.

Mr. Carney, Central Bank Governor, reported that shifts in the labour market mean workers in declining industries may not have the skills or experience to match immediately the needs of employers in expanding industries<sup>158</sup>.

In 2008, 83% of Canadian CEOs are most concerned about lack of key labour skills.

In 2012, half the CEOs around the world felt that hiring was difficult for reasons of skills shortages.

Annual Global CEO Surveys,  
PricewaterhouseCooper, 2008, 2012

The *Ten Point National Plan* released February 8, 2012, by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce (CCC) also identified a shortage of skilled labour as the biggest impediment to Canadian competitiveness in the global economy. The report was compiled after a year of business roundtables and consultations with members, experts in the field and other key stakeholders.

Skills were the number one concern — no matter where you went, no matter whom you talked to.

CCC president and CEO, Perrin Beatty

In February 2012, Perrin Beatty, CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce predicted that over the next decade there would be shortfalls of 163,000 in construction, 130,000 in oil and gas, 60,000 in nursing, 37,000 in trucking, 22,000 in the hotel industry and 10,000 in the steel trades<sup>159</sup>.

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) has also completed extensive research on the industries that will be hard hit by skills shortages<sup>160</sup>. In a snapshot of the current skills shortage crisis in Canada it reported that the construction sector will need approximately 260,000 new workers over the next eight years.

**graphic element**

<sup>158</sup> Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of Canada, *Presentation to: Greater Kitchener Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Waterloo, Ontario, April 2, 2012*

<sup>159</sup> P. Beatty, Canadian Chamber of Commerce, February 2012

<sup>160</sup> The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) is a national, voluntary membership organization representing colleges and institutes to government, business and industry, both in Canada and internationally. The ACCC interacts with federal departments and agencies on members' behalf and links college capabilities to national industries.

Canada is expected to suffer greatly with the aging working population slowly moving out of the market, affecting sectors from the food industry to mining, construction to technology. A survey put out by the Canadian Federation for Independent Business in 2006 found that because of a lack of skilled workers, many CFIB members were choosing to function with fewer employees and ignore new business opportunities.

Without the people with the right skills, there simply won't be the same level of economic flourish that Canada has seen in the past—withstanding the current economic downturn Canada is experiencing.

Canadian Business Journal, May 2012

Construction is not the only industry that will suffer without skilled workers. The Canadian Food Industry Council indicates a skill shortage

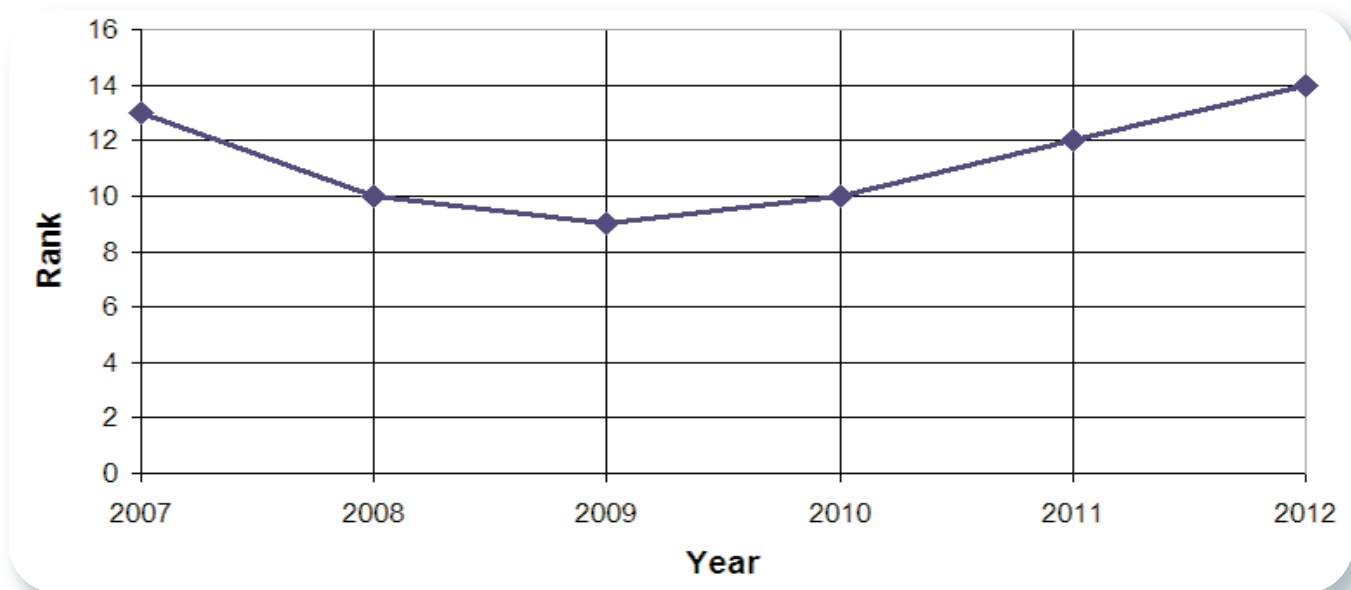
in the areas of meat cutting, floral design, natural foods, deli, bakery, pharmacy and store management.

People just don't realize how fundamental the food industry is. We need people interested in careers in food safety, real estate, advertising, store design, finance, information technology, marketing, franchise operations, merchandising, and human resources just to mention a few.

James Knight, CEO of the ACCC

The World Economic Forum recently reported that Canada's competitiveness ranking has slipped from 9th place in 2009 to 14th place in 2012<sup>161</sup>. In part, this decline is attributed to a decline in workplace training. The trend in Canada's ranking in the Global Competitiveness Index from 2007 to the present is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Canada's Global Competitiveness Ranking



<sup>161</sup> *Global Competitiveness Report, 2012-13*, World Economic Forum, September 2012

... Canada has been successful in nurturing its human resources compared with other advanced economies (it is ranked 7th for health and primary education and 15th for higher education and training), the data suggest a slight downward trend of its performance in higher education (ranking 8th place on higher education and training two years ago), driven by lower university enrollment rates and a decline in the extent to which staff is being trained at the workplace.

World Economic Forum, *Global Competitiveness Report*, 2012-13

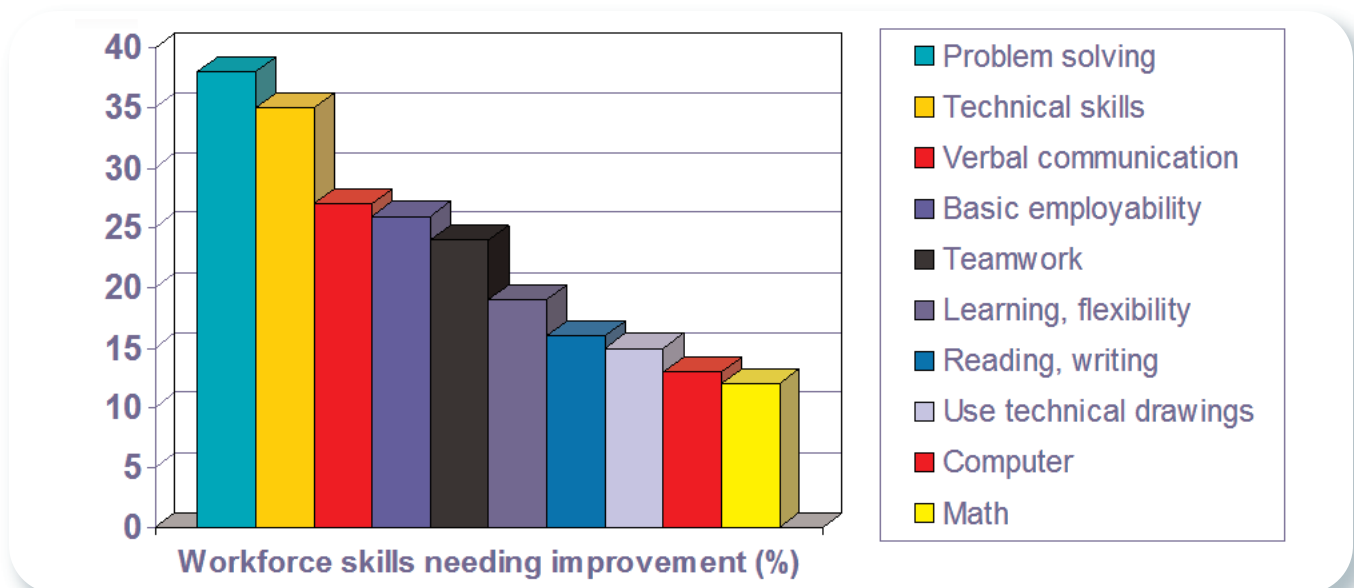
A minimum required literacy level of IALSS Level 3 is considered necessary for Canada's workforce in order for Canada's businesses to remain competitive in a global context<sup>162</sup>.

There are two identified skills gaps in Canada; specific occupational gaps and general skills gaps.

- ▶ Specific occupational gaps arise in areas such as nursing, construction and the hotel industry
- ▶ General skills gaps cover the whole workforce and arise because of the increasing skills requirements in today's workforce

Figure 9 below shows the skills that employers in the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association feel their employees need to improve. 47% also reported that skilled labour is an important or critically important issue.

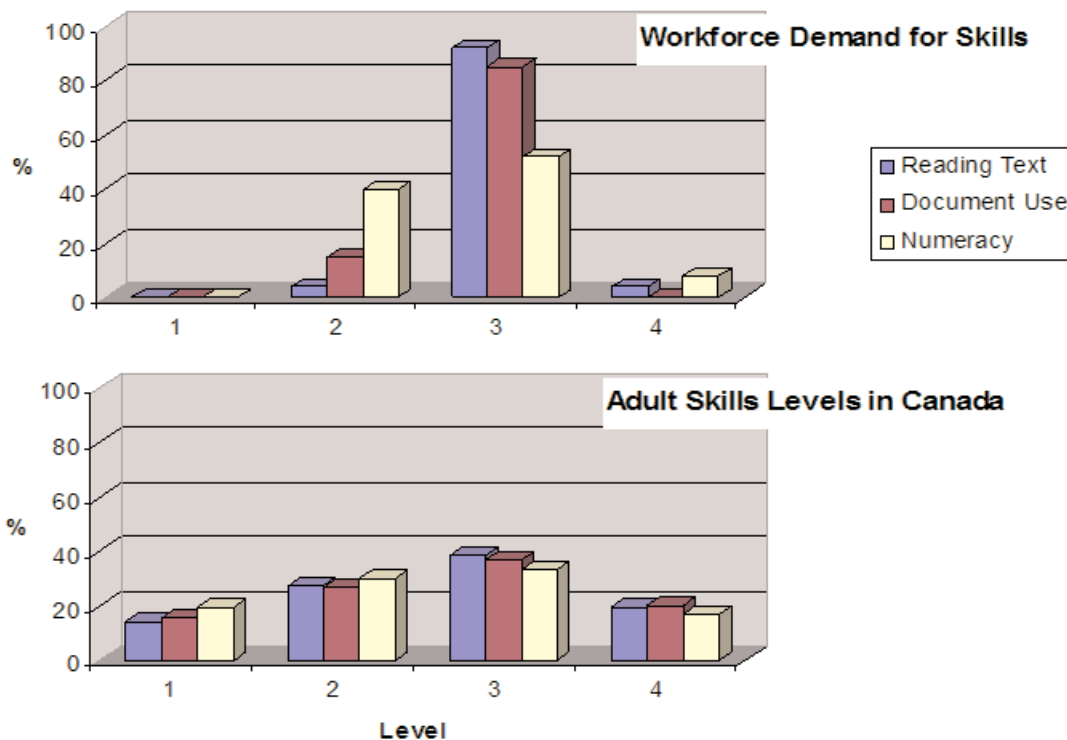
Figure 9: Skills Needing Improvement



Source: Annual Management Issues Survey, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, 2007-2008

<sup>161</sup> *Learning a Living First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, OECD and Statistics Canada, 2005

Figure 10: Comparison of Skills Needed by Employers and Skills of Canadians



Source: Training and Development Outlook, Conference Board of Canada, 2003

Figure 10 shows that there is a discrepancy between the skills that are needed and the skills that employees have. It shows that the employers want people with IALSS Level 3 skills whereas the Canadian workforce has a significant number of people with lower skills that do not meet job needs.

As discussed in Demographics on page 48, the aging of Canada's workforce is expected to result in a shortfall of about 1 million workers by 2020. This demographic shift will greatly exacerbate the effects of skills shortages.

Addressing these skills gaps requires a variety of inter-linked solutions; CLLN believes that strong Literacy and Essential Skills are needed to provide the foundation for success.



## Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium-sized businesses (excluding agriculture) with fewer than 100 employees make up 98% of businesses. Small and medium-sized businesses, with less than 500 employees, account for 54.2% of business-sector GDP and employ 64% of private sector workers. SMEs are more prevalent in services-producing industries than in goods-producing industries. In Canada, the wholesale and retail industries combined produced the largest share of small-and-medium-sized business GDP (21%), followed by mining and manufacturing (17%), finance (16%), construction (12%), and professional services (8%). The top five SME sectors in major cities (Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, and Vancouver) by number of businesses are:

- ▶ Professional Scientific and Technical Services
- ▶ Construction
- ▶ Retail and Wholesale Trade
- ▶ Health Care and Social Assistance
- ▶ Accommodation and Food Services

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC) notes that SMEs are rather similar across major cities with their most notable differences being sector-specific solutions, rather than regional-specific<sup>163</sup>.

Each year 139,000 new SMEs are created. As a significant and growing employer group, SMEs need to be able to access, hire, and integrate skilled workers where and when they need them. Yet in February 2012, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce stated that one of the top 10 barriers to Canadian international competitiveness is a 'desperate shortage of skilled workers'<sup>164</sup>.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) research revealed there were over 300,000 positions sitting vacant for four months or more in Canada's SMEs<sup>165, 166</sup>. Two-thirds of Canada's SMEs felt finding adequately skilled workers would become more difficult in the future, compared to only 4% believing it would become easier. Even with the weaker economy, 81% of SMEs report they will maintain or increase staffing levels in the year ahead. An important consideration for SMEs is that training costs twice as much per trainee as for a large business and in difficult economic times it is not easy to find the money to implement training.

### 85% of business in Nova Scotia is small business with less than 10 employees:

The typical business owner in Nova Scotia works 24/7 with limited human resources, so they have a very long work day and they fulfill many roles. The business owner, employees and often the owner's family must pitch in to get the work done: answering phones, taking orders, loading trucks, making deliveries, carrying and stacking materials and products, and whatever else needs doing to make the business run. That is the reality of small business in Nova Scotia, and therein lays the challenge of incorporating Workplace Education into an already hectic work day that never seems to end.

Sandra McKenzie, Deputy Minister, Labour and Advanced Education, NS, Feb. 2012

<sup>163</sup> *Newcomers in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Are SMEs Ready to Hire Internationally Trained Workers*, The Alliance of Sector Councils, 2012

<sup>164</sup> *ibid*

<sup>165</sup> *Hard Facts Survey*, CFIB, Oct.-Nov. 2000-2001

<sup>166</sup> Note that, as of December 2012, Statistics Canada reports that there were 220,000 job vacancies.

## SkillsPlus BC

SkillsPlus, a program of the Labour Market Development Agreement, is administered by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology. It is an example of how Labour Market Development Agreements can be administered in a province or territory.

Through SkillsPlus, small and mid-sized businesses in BC can enhance the foundation skills of current employees, improving productivity and reducing costs. The program is designed to assist employers, in providing foundation skills development for their employees by integrating essential skills into workplace training. In a series of pilot-projects, SkillsPlus supports the development and delivery of customized, effective curriculum and assessment tools to meet the human resources training needs of British Columbia's small and mid-sized businesses. In the 2011/12 project year, nine SkillsPlus projects were funded, with delivery spanning four economic development regions across the province – Vancouver Island/Coast, Lower Mainland/Southwest, Cariboo and Northeast.

Since its inception, and prior to the 2011/12 investment, approximately \$4 million was allocated to SkillsPlus projects resulting in essential skills training being delivered to approximately 900 employees of small-to-medium sized businesses throughout the province. SkillsPlus projects have delivered essential skills training in the following sectors: tourism and hospitality; retail, wholesale and grocery; health services; construction; social housing; security; manufacturing; forestry; and mining.

SkillsPlus has also completed a series of essential skills studies for various sectors: construction,

forestry, health care, mining, petroleum, retail/wholesale/grocery, tourism hospitality, small business and First Nations, Métis and Inuit workers. While the program is not restricted to these sectors, the reports provide a useful overview of skill levels and increasing skills challenges in a number of industries.

## SMEs Employing Immigrants

The full utilization of skilled immigrants is the key to Canadian productivity<sup>167</sup>.

Encouraging SMEs to hire skilled immigrants has been approached as a response to a deficit, problem, gap or challenge for the SME employer, and/or the internationally trained worker and/or the labour market as a whole. By contrast, we note that the most promising practices are actually based on incentives.

*Newcomers in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Are SMEs Ready to Hire Internationally Trained Workers? The Alliance of Sector Councils, 2012*

The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC) has developed an *Employers' Roadmap* that is published by Citizenship and Immigration<sup>168</sup>. The *Roadmap* provides information to guide and assist employers in small- to medium-sized enterprises in small- and medium-sized cities in recruiting and retaining internationally trained workers.

<sup>167</sup> *Newcomers in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Are SMEs Ready to Hire Internationally Trained Workers*, The Alliance of Sector Councils, 2012

<sup>168</sup> *The Employers Roadmap*, The Alliance of Sector Councils for Citizenship and Immigration, 2010

## Newcomers in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Are SMEs Ready to hire Internationally Trained Workers?

### SUMMARY OF KEY INSIGHTS:

- ▶ most SMEs are looking for more focused and streamlined coordination and timely, tailored supports and strategies to access internationally trained workers
- ▶ SMEs themselves are rather similar across major cities, with their most notable differences being sector specific
- ▶ some sector councils have developed highly effective tools and resources to support SMEs
- ▶ peer knowledge is highly valued and powerful
- ▶ employers may not engage on the issue of ITWs until their need is immediate so they may not participate in or seek out information until it is specifically relevant
- ▶ the most promising practices are actually based on incentives, particularly in hiring programs and awareness/education initiatives
- ▶ SMEs are looking for clear processes and policies that support swift credential recognition, competency assessment, bureaucratic processing, and community/integration supports.

*Newcomers in Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises: Are SMEs Ready to hire Internationally Trained Workers?* The Alliance of Sector Councils, 2012

## SMEs Employing Older Workers

With regard to employer size, older women working at small firms (less than 20 employees) were less than 50% as likely to participate in employer supported training as those working at firms with more than 500 employees<sup>169</sup>.



## Technology

The demand for improved Literacy and Essential Skills in Canada has evolved to include digital technology. Our rapidly changing global economy is pressuring business to invest in technology to improve efficiency and stay competitive. Consequently businesses are demanding higher digital and technology skills at all employment levels. There is an increasing need for entry-level employees to access, use and interpret information using digital technology. The *Menial No More* discussion paper produced by Ontario Literacy Coalition demonstrates that technological innovations are driving the upskilling of jobs that were once considered entry-level or low-skilled. In the past many companies viewed low-skilled workers as easily replaceable and have consequently resisted investing time and money into Literacy and Essential Skills training. However, as Literacy and Essential Skills organizations gain recognition in the workplace, practices are changing. A large Canadian manufacturer recently told Quebec English Literacy Alliance (QELA) “We used to replace these workers but now we keep them.”

<sup>169</sup> *Perspectives on labour and Income*, Statistics Canada, Summer 2012

The gap between the demand for a skilled workforce and the supply of workers with adequate Literacy and Essential Skills is widening. Employees in the workforce need to commit to continuous learning and skills upgrading as jobs are constantly evolving. Technological competencies are a key essential skill for most employees. More than ever, the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills is evident. Canadians need the continued efforts of the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), L/ES organizations and forward-thinking companies working together to develop programs that raise literacy levels and build digital technology skills. Businesses must hire workers at an entry level and be willing to provide sequenced training until they become highly skilled. This increases the return on investment (ROI) for businesses because they are not continually hiring new staff and training is often instrumental in increasing the loyalty of employees.

## Job Trends

The labour market in Canada is changing at a greater rate than at any other time in history. Jobs are changing due to globalization, technological change and development of knowledge-based economies. Demographic trends are leading to major changes in the workforce. Providing a skilled workforce capable of addressing skills shortages in a rapidly changing labour market is an identified target. In response to these challenges, effective partnerships between industry, governments, educational providers, organized labour and community agencies need to be fostered.

Availability of labour market information helps communities, regions and employment sectors to understand the changing landscape and plan effectively for the future. Regional economies will thrive when training opportunities are provided

so that communities can take advantage of changing economic circumstances. Investment in the people of Canada brings the greatest return for individuals and the economy.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has developed an online tool that provides some guidance on the number of jobs in specific industries that are likely to be available in the future. The Canadian Occupational Projection System shows declines in agriculture, paper manufacturing and rubber, plastics and chemicals<sup>170</sup>. It sees gains in oil and gas extraction, mining, professional business services and health care and social assistance. Sometimes a lack of worker mobility, such as a working spouse or elderly parents, means that it is difficult to respond to changes in regional demand for jobs. Also, the shifts in employment opportunities lead to skills gaps and hence training needs that must be addressed.

Clearly, many traditional jobs will remain although the tasks involved could be vastly different. At the World Economic Forum 2006 annual meeting, delegates agreed that educational systems must be restructured in order to meet future skill requirements and “include broad-based skills so that future workers find it far easier to switch between different occupations<sup>171</sup>.” At the same time, society must put a higher value on vocational qualifications, which will be as important as a university degree.

Among people with high skills, half will be able to find another job within nine weeks of becoming unemployed. For those with low skills, the average period of unemployment may be as high as 38 weeks<sup>172</sup>. In Canada, one-third of the variation between low-wage and high-wage earners is attributable to difference in literacy skills. This illustrates the importance of having a skilled workforce.

<sup>170</sup> *Canadian Occupational Projection System, HRSDC*

<sup>171</sup> *Annual Meeting 2006, World Economic Forum, 2006*

<sup>172</sup> T. Scott Murray, *An Analysis of Adult Aboriginal Literacy Levels in the Northwest Territories – How skills influence outcomes, 2011*



## Collaborative Economic Clusters

Governments may look to economic clusters as a way of increasing labour market growth on a regional basis<sup>173</sup>. However, regional priorities are best addressed by combining local analyses of labour markets and other stakeholder information. For this to be effective there needs to be strong links between enterprises and services at a regional level. Labour Market Information (LMI) can be used to identify and

assess needs of a region, develop a strategic plan and make decisions regarding regional workforce development issues. LMI reports generally include data on the changes in occupational demands, demographics, technological shifts, labour market trends and occupations skills and educational requirements<sup>174</sup>.

Literacy and Essential Skills are a key driver in local economies.

Ontario's local economic clusters are changing. Regions that were historically production centres are re-orienting their local economies towards advanced manufacturing, information and communication technology, higher value-added services and other creative industries. Other regions are building for the future and are anticipating growth in specific sectors. In this context, we must capitalize on the shift to build off of our growing sectors and create a workforce development pipeline that supplies the human capital necessary to support our changing local economic landscapes.

From the development of the Ring of Fire region in the James Bay Lowlands to the growing wineries and luxury hospitality in the Niagara region, the 'Silicon Valley' of Kitchener-Waterloo to Biotech in the nation's capital, and the wind farms of Sault Ste. Marie to the growth of creative industries in Toronto, Ontario's economy is shifting. Diversity is Ontario's value-added approach; we see this in our people and our local economies. However, while our diversity is one of our strongest assets, it also poses significant challenges in our systems' ability to produce effective 'one-size-fits-all' solutions. Different regions and different local economies possess different challenges and have access to different resources and assets. As such, our local economies require provincially-supported, collaborative, locally-made and locally-focused interventions.

[...]



<sup>173</sup> Clusters are geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries and associated institutions in a particular field. (Source: Wikipedia). A hybrid cluster uses a top-down and bottom-up approach. Governments monitor and contribute to enhancing tools, and regional clusters pinpoint priority areas, and opportunities and interventions.

<sup>174</sup> *Realizing Workforce Potential through Workforce Planning Boards and Regional Literacy Networks*, Essential Skills Ontario, revised from March 2012

Partnership engagement can create a coordinated feedback loop that can help programs design initiatives that are better aligned to the needs of a given community. Enterprises, industry associations, college educators, trainers and employment services providers must be included in this process to help track changes in labour demand and needs and to create effective coordinated workforce planning and training initiatives (Grant 2011). This joined-up approach has the potential to help create a higher level of shared responsibility, as key stakeholders will have a vested stake in workforce development and regions will have greater sense of ownership.

Local regions, networks, boards and community-based services have used LMI to highlight:

- ▶ workforce planning opportunities
- ▶ business demographics
- ▶ companies hiring or downsizing
- ▶ growing occupations which have sound employment prospects
- ▶ literacy and basic skills levels
- ▶ workforce shortages
- ▶ skills shortages and training opportunities
- ▶ build local talent and attract new talent
- ▶ integration and utilization opportunities for newcomers into the labour market
- ▶ employment opportunities for vulnerable individuals

*Realizing Workforce Potential through Workforce Planning Boards and Regional Literacy Networks,*  
Essential Skills Ontario, revised from March 2012

Combining Labour Market Information and a cluster approach could give local communities the tools and frameworks they need to plan ahead, coordinate activities and assist in providing services to meet the needs of their

communities<sup>175</sup>. Integrating workplace planning and Literacy and Essential Skills delivery could help address issues of fragmentation which result from the silos that are commonly found in different parts of the country.

<sup>175</sup> *Realizing Workforce Potential through Workforce Planning Boards and Regional Literacy Networks*, Essential Skills Ontario, revised from March 2012

## Labour Market Trends in the Provinces and Territories

### Labour Market Trends in Nunavut

Despite the availability of a small amount of employment in traditional occupations such as hunting and trapping, employment created by the cash economy and other aspects of contemporary society have radically changed the skills required to function effectively in many aspects of modern Nunavut. Most wage paying jobs require a proficient knowledge of English and highly developed reading, writing and computer skills.

Article 23 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* was created to ensure increased employment opportunities for Land Claim Beneficiaries. Under this article, Inuit with the skills to fulfill job criteria competing with non-Inuit for a particular position are given hiring priority. The Nunavut Implementation Commission set a goal in which the government workforce reflects 85% Inuit population. This figure was decreased to 50% as a result of the lack of Inuit with appropriate levels of education. Consequently, the Government of Nunavut still heavily relies on an imported labour force and Inuit are not fully benefitting from new employment opportunities.

The need for increased training and education opportunities in Nunavut is clear. The authors of the 2010 Nunavut Economic Outlook warn that the current lack of a qualified workforce could put many opportunities at risk, and could potentially jeopardize Nunavut's projected economic expansion.

...the economic growth in the Kivalliq region has exposed a shortage in labour. A single construction project at Meadowbank that made a point to hire Nunavummiut managed to employ no more than 250 local people, approximately 20 per cent of the required workforce. The newly-formed Mine Training Society will help in the future, but with two additional mine developments coming to the region in the next five years, more actions are needed. Nunavut must look at other barriers to employment such as labour mobility and high-school dropout rates.

2010 Nunavut Economic Outlook

This places pressure on the territory to ensure that education and training become a top priority.

### Labour Market Trends in Northwest Territories

The NWT Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased 79% between 1999 and 2009. Much of the growth occurred in the non-renewable resource sector. Diamond-related activity accounts for 50% of the GDP (Investment, Tourism & Industry, 2009). However, in 2011, the NWT was the only province or territory to experience a decline in GDP, falling by 5.5%<sup>176</sup>. This is in contrast to Nunavut, which increased by 7.7% and the Yukon by 5.6%.

<sup>176</sup> *Newstats: Gross Domestic Product, Northwest Territories, 2011 Preliminary*, NWT Bureau of Statistics, April 27, 2012

Many people in Nunavut and the NWT are benefiting from the increase in mining activity. It is projected that should the ten planned mines come on line in the next few years they have the potential to employ all able-bodied Inuit. However, the reality is that there are not enough skilled Inuit to take advantage of this. This is particularly the case as the mines go from the construction phase to the operations phase because operations involve more highly skilled labour.

A decline in production in diamond mining in NWT caused the GDP in the territory's largest industry to decrease by 12.5% in 2011. Yet, despite the recent economic downturn, the NWT economy is still expected to show strong growth. Diamond mining is again ramping up production. However, there is a move to underground mining which requires a different skill set than open pit mining. This has caused layoffs or redeployment among people who lack the necessary skills. The diamond mines have a limited life span of approximately 20 years: two of the diamond mines will soon have reached that life span. Oil and gas exploration has seen an upward trend, as have support activities for mining and oil and gas extraction. Support activities, which include mineral exploration, can be indicative of potential future resource development<sup>177</sup>. The Mackenzie Gas pipeline recently received environmental approval to move ahead. It is important to note, however, that while there are thousands of short-term jobs during the construction period of the pipeline, only about 45 to 55 long-term jobs are forecast once construction is complete.

The strong economy has ensured high employment in the NWT. In August 2012, the overall employment rate was 72.8%, compared to the national rate of 62.8%. Again, there is a gap

among the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations: 59.4%, compared to 84.2%. Smaller communities have lower employment rates because of more limited job opportunities. The diamond mines all have Impact Benefit Agreements with communities within the scope of their activity. These agreements include quotas for employment of local people, but the mines have had difficulty filling the quotas because of the lack of skilled northern workers. All three diamond mines have training programs for their workers.

### **Labour Market Trends in Yukon**

Mining is gaining momentum in Yukon. There are more opportunities for all Yukon citizens to be part of a growing economy. Yukon's Oil and Gas sector is an important emerging industry. Yukon has unexplored oil and gas basins rich in potential. Yukon's government, in cooperation with its private sector partners, is actively marketing oil and gas development and investment opportunities. However, resource development contributes to a boom and bust economy, often creating an uncertain future. Forestry is another growing industrial sector in Yukon; boreal forests cover 57% of land.

### **Labour Market Trends in the Atlantic Provinces**

Overall employment has increased little over the last decade. The retail industry, the largest single employer in Atlantic Canada, employing 180,000 people, has experienced no job growth since 2001. Employment in other industries has fallen. Employment in accommodation and food services has fallen by 9% since 2007 following fifteen years of growth.

The ongoing shift in employment from the goods sector to the service sector has favoured employment in urban centres. About 66% of the

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<sup>177</sup> *Newstats: Gross Domestic Product, Northwest Territories, 2011 Preliminary*, NWT Bureau of Statistics, April 27, 2012



service sector jobs created in Atlantic Canada between 1987 and 2011 were in urban regions, even though urban markets accounted for only 49% of total employment at the beginning of the period.

The demand for unskilled labour has declined and this trend is expected to continue. There has been a decline in Atlantic employment in primary industries and manufacturing, largely in rural regions while employment continues to shift to the service sector. This has boosted job growth in urban centres.

Increased use of immigration and temporary foreign workers, despite continuing high unemployment in rural regions, points to a possible mismatch in the region's labour market. Reducing rural unemployment is an obvious source of labour but these potential workers are generally older and have limited formal education.

Policy measures to reduce rural unemployment would benefit from more detailed analysis of the labour force dynamics of these individuals, including the role played by seasonal employment and the EI program<sup>178</sup>.

Increasing the participation of under-represented groups could expand the size of the Atlantic labour force, although it is unlikely to prevent the overall impact of the aging of the workforce. Targeting broad demographic groups, such as women, older workers and the disabled, may offer greater potential than focusing on smaller demographic groups such as Aboriginals, immigrants and Francophones. However, reducing labour market barriers for these individuals is still important to improve social inclusion<sup>179</sup>.

Little is known about how employers are responding to tighter labour markets other than the fact that wages have been rising. Employers play a key role in funding the majority of job-related training. Employers will need to be more responsive to the needs of employees, especially as they reach out to under-represented groups, but smaller firms may find it more difficult to adjust.

High school dropout rates have fallen dramatically over the last two decades in Atlantic Canada, but Atlantic high school students still perform below the Canadian average on standardized tests.

Labour market information (LMI) is critical to enable individuals, employers, education and training institutions, and governments to make informed choices and to facilitate labour market adjustment. While there have been improvements to LMI, gaps still remain including a lack of data on labour mobility; real wages across jurisdictions; and the demand and supply of workers for major investment projects. Further improvements in LMI need to be carefully considered to ensure they maximize value for money.

Meeting the Skills Challenge: Five Key Labour Market Issues Facing Atlantic Canada, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, October 2012

<sup>178</sup> *Meeting the Skills Challenge: Five Key Labour Market Issues Facing Atlantic Canada*, Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, October 2012

<sup>179</sup> *ibid*

Provincial governments have taken on increased responsibility for labour markets through the devolution of labour market programming and the development of Provincial Nominee Programs.

Labour markets in Atlantic Canada are undergoing a profound shift from high unemployment to increased concern about a skills mismatch and a shortage of workers. Policymakers need to ensure that their strategies and programs are responsive to changing labour market requirements; consistent and well integrated; and appropriately focused. Governments can also help to facilitate dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that Atlantic labour markets work efficiently and are appropriately adjusting to changing realities.

### **Labour Market Trends in Newfoundland and Labrador**

For the last thirty years Newfoundland and Labrador has had the weakest job growth in the Atlantic region. It took more than a decade for employment levels in the province to recover from the recession of the 1990s and the restructuring following the collapse of the cod fishery. However, the province has had the fastest job growth in the Atlantic region during the last two years, boosted by new investment in its mining and energy industries – a trend that is likely to continue for a few more years at least.

Newfoundland and Labrador faces imbalances in labour market supply, with fewer people entering the labour force and large numbers of retirees. A recent report from the Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment predicted 7,700 new jobs will be created from 2011 to 2020, of which approximately 67% will be in management and require some form of post-secondary education<sup>180</sup>. The resource and construction sectors continue to grow and are

likely to continue to do so until about 2015 when a decline is forecasted.

Among the most significant labour market challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador are labour shortages associated with under-employment and aging. Literacy and Essential Skills training initiatives can play a role in addressing these forecasted labour market shortages.



### **Labour Market Trends in Nova Scotia**

Nova Scotia is facing a time of change and opportunity. Winning the \$25 billion shipbuilding contract will provide great opportunities, however there are some challenges. Nova Scotia's economic stability is tied to its ability to compete and respond to changes in the global market. Nova Scotia requires an adaptable workforce that is strong in numbers and in skills.

*jobsHere* highlights actions the government will take to promote long-term sustainable economic growth and job opportunities for Nova Scotians. It focuses on three priority areas:

- ▶ learning the right skills for good jobs
- ▶ growing the economy through innovation
- ▶ helping businesses be more competitive globally

<sup>180</sup> *Newfoundland and Labrador Market Outlook 2020*, Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Human Resources, Labour and Employment, 2011

## Labour Market Trends in New Brunswick

In the 12 month period up to August 2012, there have been job gains in the service sector but these have been exceeded by losses in the goods-producing sector. Overall, unemployment has risen above 10% in 2012<sup>181</sup>. New Brunswick has seen a significant increase in the number of older workers in employment. Workers of 60+ years increased from about 3% of the labour force in 2000 to over 9% in 2011<sup>182</sup>.

The labour market in New Brunswick will face some dramatic shifts as the Irving shipbuilding project gets underway in Nova Scotia. There will be an increasing need for skilled labour that will most likely see a migration of New Brunswick workers to Nova Scotia, leaving a skills gap in New Brunswick.

## Labour Market Trends in Prince Edward Island

Prince Edward Island had the strongest average employment growth in the region over the last three decades. Expansion of its food processing industry and the development of its aerospace sector during the 1990s were supplemented by growth in federal employment.

Primary and seasonal industries in PEI, such as agriculture, fishing and forestry, remain very important aspects of the PEI economy and sustain many jobs and businesses directly and indirectly. Much of the job growth has been in these industries. Tourism has grown in most years (since the advent of the Confederation Bridge) and provides employment for many during the May to September season. Combined, employment was up by 700 persons compared to 2011. A slight increase in manufacturing was offset by a moderate decline in the construction industry. There are plans to improve infrastructure. A total of 54,400 people were working in the service-sector in January 2012, which was up by nearly 2% compared to the

previous year. Employment is likely to increase in the sectors targeted by the PEI Literacy Strategy: bioscience, information technology, aerospace, and renewable energy.

Over the past decade, the skill demands of the PEI economy have risen. At the same time, the population is aging, the birthrate is declining and many educated youth are leaving the province. These trends are interacting with rising skill demands to create a dramatic and pivotal shift in the labour market.

The main employment challenges include: seasonal employment, low prices for natural resources, high rate of school drop out, declining number of youth staying in PEI, lack of skilled workers, few large businesses, aging population, and both levels of government (federal and provincial) closing offices and laying people off. Over 23,000 people in PEI do not have a high school diploma. PEI Literacy Alliance has identified the following key focus areas:

- ▶ encourage more employers to invest in the literacy and essential skills development of their employees
- ▶ develop connections between literacy and essential skills and workplace education
- ▶ create alternative learning opportunities for low level literacy learners who are not at work
- ▶ integrate L/ES into college curricula
- ▶ provide easier access to flexible training through SkillsPEI
- ▶ align adult learning programs and opportunities with the needs of PEI communities, workplaces, and individual learners

Making these opportunities available, accessible and attractive is crucial to PEI's social and economic future.

<sup>181</sup> *Labour Market Information Monthly September 2012*, Government of New Brunswick, September 2012

<sup>182</sup> *New Brunswick Labour Market Trends and Challenges*, New Brunswick Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour, June 2012

## Labour Market Trends in Quebec

Anglophones tend to be over-represented in sales, service, business, finance and administration, and are growing in numbers in sectors such as wholesale trade, real estate, accommodation and food service. However, they are under-represented in utilities, mining, construction and public administration. In addition, Anglophones, in increasing numbers, choose self-employment.

Labour market trends are not classified according to language; however, given that the highest concentration of English First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) is in the Montreal area, the recorded 13% of low-skilled jobs during the 2008-2009 recession had an impact on employment of low literacy English speakers<sup>183</sup>.

In the second quarter of 2010, the employment market recovered, posting over 43,000 new jobs, driving the unemployment rate below 10%. However, low-skilled jobs were in less demand, prompting a large number of low-skilled workers to leave the job market altogether. By the end of 2010, the unemployment rate for people with less than nine years of education was 17.9%<sup>184</sup>.

The Primary Sector (agriculture, mining, oil and gas extraction, forestry, hunting and fishing) has been shrinking for a number of years. The loss of 18,300 jobs in this sector since 2000 can be explained by a drop in forestry, while a further loss of 8,500 jobs is attributable to higher agricultural productivity, which allowed for greater production with fewer workers.

The Secondary Sector (e.g., construction, food, manufacturing, textiles) is led by growth in the construction industry, offsetting losses in the clothing, electronics manufacturing and textile

industries. These industries traditionally hire lower-skilled workers.

The Tertiary Sector (e.g., health care and social assistance, educational services, accommodation and food services, transport and warehousing) experienced growth in the health care and social assistance sector, in retail and in professional, scientific and technical services. Warehousing dropped during this period.

The lingua franca of business remains English, with 40% of all Quebecers over 15 years of age claiming they use English at work “most often” or “on a regular basis”<sup>185</sup>.

Anglophones, when employed, still tend to earn higher salaries than their Francophone counterparts. However, the number of Anglophones 15 years or older who have never worked or who have been out of work for an extended period of time is increasing. This is also reflected in the percentage (22%) of Anglophones living below the low-income threshold, compared to 16% of Francophones<sup>186</sup>.

## Labour Market Trends in Manitoba

In 2011, Manitoba’s service sector employment, which accounts for 76.4% of total employment, increased by 300 jobs; goods producing sector employment increased by 5,100 jobs.

The average percent growth for the Manitoba services producing industries was 0.3% in 2011. The individual industries that experienced employment growth over this period include: health care and social assistance (6.4%), finance, insurance, real estate and leasing (5.2%), public administration (3.4%), information, culture and recreation (2.7%), and accommodation and food services (2.5%). Manitoba services producing industries that experienced reductions in

<sup>183</sup> Recensements de 1996 et 2006 et compilation spéciale de la Direction de la planification et de l’information sur le marché du travail, Direction régionale d’Emploi-Québec de l’Île-de-Montréal, Statistique Canada

<sup>184</sup> *Employment in Québec: Key Figures (2011 Edition)*, OMT Information sur le marché de travail

<sup>185</sup> *Portrait of Official-Language Minorities in Canada - Anglophones in Quebec*, Statistics Canada, 2010

<sup>186</sup> Study conducted by the Réseau communautaire de santé et de services sociaux



employment over this period included: business, building and other support services (-11.1%), educational services (-10.4%), other services (-2.7%), and transportation and warehousing (-1.4%).

The average percent growth for the Manitoba goods producing industries was 2.2% in 2011. The individual industries that experienced employment growth over this period include: construction (9.3%), utilities (4.9%), and manufacturing (2.5%). There were however reductions in agriculture (-8.3%) and forestry, fishing mining, quarrying, oil and gas (-8.3%).

### Labour Market Trends in Alberta

Over the next ten years, Alberta's labour market is projected to grow by approximately 607,000 workers at an annual average rate of 2.4%. A net increase of 492,000 workers is expected to join the labour force, as occupational supply increases at an annual rate of 1.9%. For the coming decade, Alberta could experience a labour shortage of approximately 114,000 workers<sup>187</sup>.

There are areas of major growth in Alberta. Areas with over 10% growth last year were:

- ▶ natural and applied sciences and related occupations
- ▶ occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities



Despite the numbers of people we attract to our labour market, there will be continued pressure on the labour market in Alberta, especially in areas of growth – such as the Oil Sands. The projected shortage will be further exacerbated by the following factors likely to affect Alberta's labour market<sup>188</sup>:

- ▶ global economic and financial uncertainty created by the Eurozone debt crisis
- ▶ economic growth in emerging markets
- ▶ pace of economic growth in the United States (US)
- ▶ value of the Canadian dollar
- ▶ price of oil and natural gas
- ▶ household debt and its impact on consumer spending
- ▶ baby boomers beginning to retire
- ▶ interprovincial and international net migration

There will continue to be a high demand for workers with high levels of skills, including essential skills.

### Labour Market Trends in British Columbia

British Columbia has evolved significantly from a primarily resource-based economy to a diverse knowledge-driven economy in all sectors. In the mid-1970s, nearly a third of all workers were employed in primary industries, including logging, mining, fishing and agriculture. British Columbia's economy has undergone significant growth and change, developing a more diverse economic base. Resource industries continue to be the primary economic drivers in many regions and are expected to grow and evolve as they take advantage of new technologies and develop products for new markets. The province is also now one of the most small-business, service-oriented economies in Canada, with just over three-quarters of economic activity originating

<sup>187</sup> *Alberta's Occupational Demand and Supply Outlook 2011-2021*, Government of Alberta, 2011

<sup>188</sup> *Alberta Labour Market Outlook*, Government of Alberta, Human Services, 2012

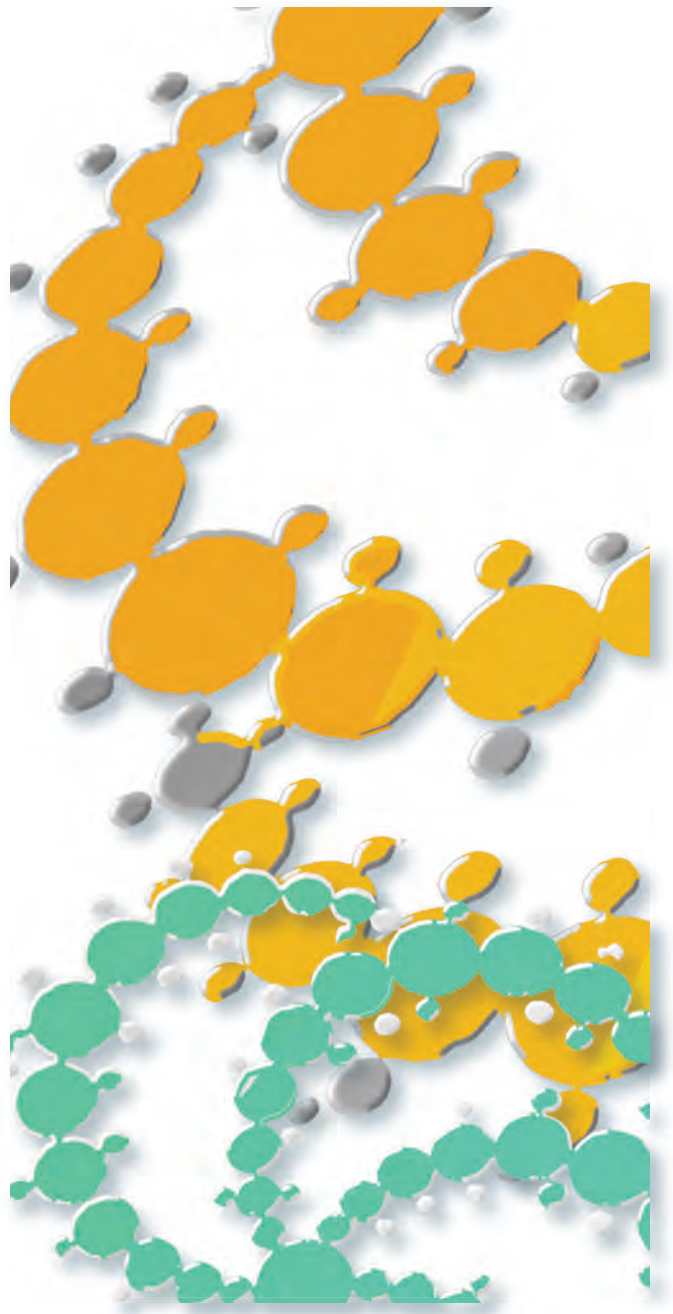
from the service sector, and nearly four-fifths of its workforce now employed in this sector.

British Columbia's economy is also experiencing growth as a global trading partner. As Canada's Pacific Gateway, British Columbia is becoming a trade hub for goods, services and people travelling to and from the Asia-Pacific region to Canada and the United States. It is predicted that British Columbia will be one of Canada's economic leaders in the years to come. By 2017, British Columbia's Gross Domestic Product is anticipated to increase by over 25 percent. The growth in services, from health care to emerging high-tech to retail sales, will drive this growth.

To address skills shortages in BC, it will be imperative to understand regional diversity and opportunities. The unique economic and skills differences that exist in regions and sectors across the province must be recognized. Some regions have young First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations; targeted investments in training will provide opportunities to support development of major projects and sustainable employment. Other regions, such as the lower mainland, tend to be the hub for arrival of international migrants; coordinated action to attract internationally skilled workers to regions facing shortages will be required. Small businesses are an important part of the economy in many smaller and rural communities. In view of the aging demographic of business owners, effective responses to business succession will also be a priority. By understanding regional diversity and opportunities, British Columbia is better positioned to strategically target regional workforce gaps<sup>189</sup>.

There is a need to develop well-coordinated partnerships between all participants in the labour market system to successfully prepare all British Columbians to enter, transition into, or

re-skill for a constantly changing labour market. *Skills for Growth: British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020* is about investing in the people of British Columbia to drive individual and provincial prosperity. Labour market information is critical to helping those involved in the labour market plan for the future, allocate resources and navigate a dynamic and often complex labour market.



<sup>189</sup> *Skills for Growth British Columbia's Labour Market Strategy to 2020*, BC Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, 2010

## Training

People of all ages in the workforce need to continue raising their skill levels, which, in turn, can improve their earnings prospects and make it easier for them to find new work in the event of job loss. Globalization has led to increased competition, technological change and development of knowledge-based economies.

In recent years, a number of converging factors have focussed attention on the economic role of human capital. One of the most important is the rise of the so-called knowledge economy, which relies less on manufacturing and more on producing and managing data and information. This trend has resulted in companies such as Google and caused a gradual shift in the sort of jobs people do. In 1995, just over 28% of workers in OECD countries were in industry and about 63% in services; 10 years later, the figure for industry was below 25% against more than 69% in services.

[...]

Unfortunately adult training is not spread evenly across the workforce. Workers who are younger and have higher levels of existing qualifications are more likely to receive training from their employers. In effect, those who most need training – older workers and those with limited education – are least likely to receive it.

*OECD Policy Brief, July 2007*

The impact on GDP is greatest when educating people with low skill. In 2004 Coulombe, Tremblay and Marchand identified the greater return from human capital investment than from physical capital investment<sup>190</sup>.

Hence, [...] the long run effects of human capital investment in literacy are much more important – around three times – than investment in physical capital. A country that achieves literacy scores one percent higher than the average ends up in a steady state with labour productivity and GDP per capita respectively higher than other countries by 2.5 and 1.5 percent on average.


S. Coulombe, J. Tremblay, and S. Marchand, *Literacy scores, human capital and growth across fourteen OECD countries*, Statistics Canada, 2004

The following year, the authors also highlighted that investment in people with low literacy levels, including immigrants, is a cost-effective stimulus to economic growth.

Moreover, the results indicate that raising literacy and numeracy for people at the bottom of the skills distribution is more important to economic growth than producing more highly skilled graduates.

These findings have important policy implications.

First, they demonstrate that literacy and numeracy test results are in fact connected to economically important, quantifiable outcomes – a point on which many education specialists have expressed doubt – and therefore underline the importance of producing publicly available indicators of student and school performance based on standardized skills tests. Such tests also



<sup>190</sup> S. Coulombe, J. Tremblay, and S. Marchand, *Literacy scores, human capital and growth across fourteen OECD countries*, Statistics Canada, 2004



improve school accountability. This suggests a role for explicit incentive mechanisms for teachers and school administrators based on these educational output measures.

Second, raising the skills level of people who have left the school system should not be neglected.

Policy incentives for job-related training and lifelong learning, particularly measures targeted at people with very low skills, would likely generate substantial economic rewards.

Finally, in the context of a rapidly aging population, attracting skilled immigrants to Canada will become increasingly important.

**S. Coulombe & J. Tremblay, *Public Investment in Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?* C.D. Howe Institute, October 2005<sup>191</sup>**

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) is an independent think tank dedicated to economic progress in Atlantic Canada. Its president, Elizabeth Beale, in *The Literacy Challenge* calls for a shift in the policy arena where more prominence is given to literacy<sup>192</sup>. Her broad focus for essential skills upgrading as part of a “training solution” includes opportunities inside and outside the workplace. She notes that jobs that require post-secondary education are on the rise while those that do not are decreasing rapidly. At the same time at least 50% of adults in Atlantic Canada need more opportunities to participate in the economy. She describes this issue as one that affects both individuals in terms of their ability to participate in the economy and the survival and growth of workplaces. The APEC report also emphasizes the importance of literacy and essential skills in terms of companies being able to maintain their competitiveness. Beale’s remarks point to the

importance of all players involved in literacy and essential skills working together to address the need, which she describes as great.

Despite the correlations between training and a company’s economic success, few companies offer workplace education programs to their employees.

There are also difficulties with the ability of educational institutions to meet the demand for training. ACCC expresses concerns about the lack of places available in colleges for qualified students. It is also possible that students who have struggled with Literacy and Essential Skills will be less likely than other people to obtain college places once they have upgraded their skills. This could become a concern for L/ES providers.

Policy makers have underestimated the contribution of literacy and other essential skills to economic growth, choosing to focus their attention and investment on other determinants of productivity growth, including the elite end of the skill distribution.

*Addressing Canada’s Literacy Challenge: A Cost / Benefit Analysis*, DataAngel, 2009

Figure 11 shows that employers invest less in Basic Skills than any other area. It should have the highest investment<sup>193</sup>. According to the Conference Board of Canada it should also be built into other training, not taken for granted. The term “basic skills” has largely been replaced in Canada by Literacy and Essential Skills.

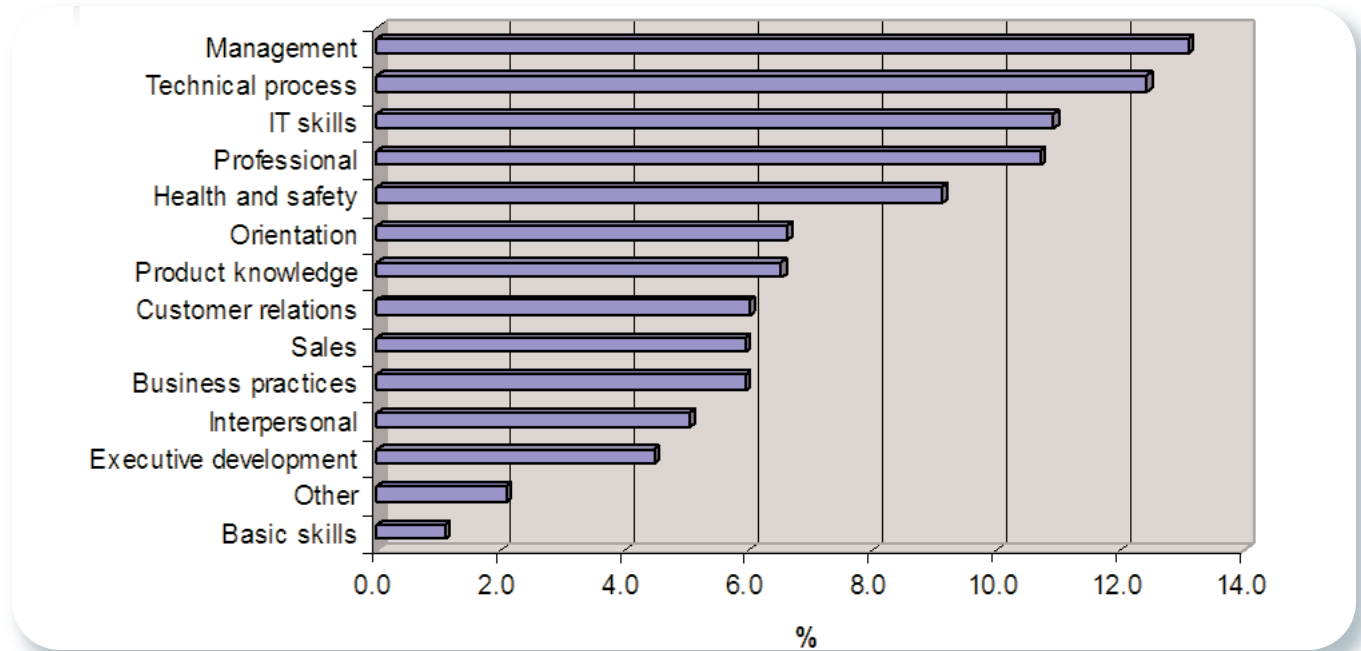
<sup>191</sup> S. Coulombe & J. Tremblay, *Public Investment in Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?* C.D. Howe Institute, October 2005

<sup>192</sup> Elizabeth Beale, *The Literacy Challenge*, APEC Commentary, 2008

<sup>193</sup> *Training and Development Outlook*, Conference Board of Canada, 2003



Figure 11: Employers' Investment in Training



Source: Training and Development Outlook, Conference Board of Canada, 2003

When employees have low Literacy and Essential Skills, it can have a negative impact on the workplace. If a business is experiencing the following issues then it may be that the employees need to further develop their Essential Skills<sup>194</sup>:

- ▶ high staff turnover
- ▶ high absenteeism
- ▶ low motivation and/or productivity
- ▶ employees who resist change
- ▶ on-the-job accidents
- ▶ difficulty meeting business goals

Companies may provide Health and Safety Training, but if they are not always including Essential Skills, they may not get the results that they expect. Even people with higher skills often only understand 60% of health data sheets.

Safety and/or productivity can be affected if employees:

- ▶ do not follow instructions correctly
- ▶ have not read the safety manual
- ▶ do not understand warning signs
- ▶ mix chemicals that should not be mixed

Literacy and Essential Skills contribute to the success of business by contributing to effective communication and increased overall productivity. Literacy and Essential Skills influence how people get and use information and communication technologies. It is possible to delegate a higher level of tasks. Employee retention is improved because employees feel better about themselves and their work. Also the incidence and severity of workplace illness and accident is reduced.

*Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: A Cost / Benefit Analysis, DataAngel, 2009*

<sup>194</sup> Got 'em, need 'em, want 'em: The Essential Skills Paradox, CLLN, 2009

There is an inverse relationship between investment in literacy skills and industries requiring a high level of health and safety. Employees with good essential skills can reduce accidents, injuries and downtime, as well as minimize insurance premiums, claims and fines associated with workers' compensation boards<sup>195</sup>.



### Learning a Culture of Safety

Literacy and language issues around health and safety become increasingly important as the number of immigrant and First Nations, Métis and Inuit workers increases. Employers need to assign a high priority to ensuring that their employees understand health and safety requirements. An example is provided by The Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME), Canada's largest trade and industry association, which was funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), with the mandate to embed essential skills in Occupational Health and Safety training (OHS). It focused on providing a curriculum about a culture of safety for workers who do not have English or French as their first language, or who have difficulties with reading and writing in English or French. The curriculum, *Learning a Culture of Safety*, was developed as a 10-week program of one hour per week, with two workers from each of the 35 companies who agreed to pilot the project. Par-Pak Industries and Westland Plastics were two of these companies, and their response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive.

### Reasons for Training

When developing training it is important to identify the objective for training. Reasons for training can include:

- ▶ improving productivity
- ▶ reducing errors
- ▶ improving customer service
- ▶ empowering employees
- ▶ improving communication
- ▶ improving teamwork
- ▶ improving safety
- ▶ reducing absenteeism
- ▶ improving ability to implement change
- ▶ reducing turnover

Many workers over the age of 45 do not see the value of skill upgrading; as well, it is estimated that it takes up to twice as long to address literacy issues with older workers. This needs to be taken into account when designing and promoting programs. Often the best advocate for training is a worker who has already participated in training. Sometimes people from cultures that do not value lifelong learning are also reluctant to participate. It is important that issues that might prevent uptake of training are explored and that solutions are found before training opportunities are promoted. Issues are often avoided when workers are part of the development team for training.



<sup>195</sup> *All Signs Point to Yes, Literacy's Impact on Workplace Health and Safety*, Conference Board of Canada, 2008

## Training by Industry Sector

Mining is an area that highlights the need for training by industry sector. Many mining projects are in the North where there is a mismatch between the skills needed by the mining industry and the skills of potential workers.

An example of industry sector training is the NWT Mine Training Society (MTS) which receives most of its funding from the federal government, the territorial government, Aboriginal governments and industry partners. Its role is to support First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other northerners to find employment in the mining sector. MTS offers a number of specific courses at any given time, in partnership with Aurora College and industry partners, including the Underground Miner Training Program and Northern Leadership Development Program.

Another example of mine training is taking place in BC. The Association of Mineral Exploration sponsors the BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association. Industry, Aboriginal, educational and government partners have collaborated to form a minerals and mining specific Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) through the BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association (BCAMTA). The partnership shares the cost of implementing the proposal with significant investment funding from the private sector, major employers and the Aboriginal groups involved. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada provides federal funding to the partnership, which is focused on training-to-employment plans that cover a broad range of basic skills, literacy, academic upgrading, job-specific training and apprenticeships, retention counselling and other support while on the job<sup>196</sup>.



## Apprenticeship

One of the nine barriers to apprenticeship identified in Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) research was the lack of Essential Skills among apprentices. Stakeholders identified this barrier both in terms of apprentices being work-ready and their ability to successfully complete level and certification exams. Those who don't excel in an academic environment are often encouraged to pursue the trades. In high school, these students are placed in tiered academic streams that may not provide the level of instruction required to excel in the trades. For example, in many trades there is a requirement for quite advanced math skills, such as using formulas or calculating tolerances. Because post-secondary schooling is not a prerequisite for most of those pursuing trades training, the myth that academic requirements are lower is perpetuated. Unfortunately, apprentices who were not strong learners in the K – 12 education system often struggle with the academic and technical training in apprenticeship programs. The requirement to pass certification exams creates anxiety among many apprentices that could be caused by low L/ES, a lack of confidence or a general dislike of academic procedure. This anxiety can contribute to lower completion rates, as about only 50% of registered apprentices achieve certification. Much of CAF's essential skills work is aimed at correcting misperceptions with an accurate understanding of skills requirements related to literacy, document use, numeracy, problem-solving, etc. and encouraging apprentices to identify skills gaps that may prove to be barriers to their success.

<sup>196</sup> *Stake your career in mining*, BC Aboriginal Mine Training Association

Apprentices and tradespeople face Essential Skills challenges both in the classroom and on the job. Low Essential Skills has been identified as a barrier to in-class training and certification success. Additionally, rapidly evolving technology is putting more pressure on skilled trades workers to improve their ability to adapt.

Canadian Apprenticeship Journal,  
*Governments Investing in Essential Skills  
and the Skilled Trades*, Summer 2011

The importance of literacy and essential skills in the labour force has been identified and accepted by federal, provincial and territorial governments. Organizations connected to trades and labour by way of apprenticeship, such as the (CAF) and the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) working with the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), have created initiatives to implement Essential Skills programs within Canadian apprenticeships and trades and labour. CAF has formed partnerships across Canada to promote Essential Skills and apprenticeship training among First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups<sup>197</sup>.

As provinces and territories have responsibility for education, labour and apprenticeship, the majority of programs and training implemented are at the provincial/territorial level. Although

most provincial/territorial authorities and national associations like CAF and CCDA recognize and are actively discussing the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills development for apprentices, the training and programs available to date are generally available through provincial/territorial and national workplace training and education programs and are not standardized across jurisdictions.

On a national level, with the inter-provincial apprenticeship certification program Red Seal, organizations, such as OLES, are working to supply tools and support to provincial and territorial organizations to ensure apprentices are able to reach their certification goals and continue to develop their Essential Skills in the workplace.

OLES's ES Integration into Apprenticeship is a CCDA-led partnership with provincial and territorial stakeholders and working groups, aimed at developing and disseminating 27 essential skills tools for the skilled trades. These free, online, CCDA-certified tools are aimed at informing, assessing and supporting clients (apprentices, tradespeople, employers, trainers)<sup>198</sup>. In order to ensure proper use and knowledge of the tools, OLES developed a Tool Workshop in 2011 to provide direction on how the tools can be used. The workshop was delivered to over 500 workplace stakeholders and was tailored to meet the specific needs of different target audiences<sup>199</sup>. The ES Integration into Apprenticeship program will publish the results of an evaluation of its effectiveness.


Preliminary feedback shows that the tools are being used in a variety of settings, including career counselling, skills upgrading programs

<sup>197</sup> C. Wynn, *Governments Investing in Essential Skills and the Skilled Trades*, Canadian Apprenticeship Journal, Summer 2011

<sup>198</sup> *Essential Skills Tools*, Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

<sup>199</sup> *Consultation on HRSDC's Suite of Literacy and Essential Skills Tools*, HRSDC





and skilled trades courses<sup>200</sup>. In 2010-11, a total of 824,479 OLES tools were ordered and downloaded – an increase in uptake from 2009-2010 (572,703) of 44%<sup>201</sup>.

A new tool has been developed to assist career counsellors to integrate an informal, essential skills needs assessment into their interview process. The tool is currently undergoing field testing (CLLN is part of the process) and should be available to the public in 2012<sup>202</sup>.

The relationship between level of education, employment and income is well established<sup>203</sup>. Schooling is an indicator of stability in the labour market; a higher level of education is associated with a higher employment and retention rate. Employment losses in apprenticeable occupations for workers who have not finished high school can be substantial. For example, during the economic downturn in 2009, figures show there was a loss of 12.3% among workers without high school completion, compared to 1.9% for workers who had an apprenticeship or trades certificate<sup>204</sup>.

Apprenticeship stakeholders clearly recognize the benefits of connecting Essential Skills training and upgrading to apprenticeship programs as they result in higher completion rates and greater success for apprentices as well as increased productivity, improved workplace health and safety and better team performance for businesses.

## Evaluation of Workplace Essential Skills Training

Delivery of Essential Skills training within the workplace remains low in many sectors even though much anecdotal evidence suggests that it may be successful in addressing unnecessary errors, reduced productivity, increased costs and even reduced customer satisfaction and sales revenue. Recent research indicates that fewer than 1 in 20 firms are making these kinds of investments in foundational and transferable skills training, in spite of promotional efforts and support from governments and sector councils. Industry consultations also suggest that part of the reason for low levels of training investments, in spite of the apparent need, is the lack of a rigorous business case that provides clear evidence of improvements in skills, job performance – and ultimately in positive returns on training investments<sup>205</sup>.

Appendix 4: *UPSKILL Essentials to Excel* describes a pan-Canadian research and demonstration project by implementing a model of Essential Skills training based on best practice and testing with rigorous research methods.

<sup>200</sup> C. Wynn, *Governments Investing in Essential Skills and the Skilled Trades*, Canadian Apprenticeship Journal, Summer 2011

<sup>201</sup> *Consultation on HRSDC's Suite of Literacy and Essential Skills Tools*, HRSDC

<sup>202</sup> *ibid*

<sup>203</sup> *Education Indicators in Canada: An International Perspective*, Statistics Canada and Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2010

<sup>204</sup> *Apprenticeable Occupations and the Employment Downturn in Canada*, Statistics Canada

<sup>205</sup> David Gyarmati, *UPSKILL: A Ground-Breaking Evaluation of Workplace Essential Skills Training*, From Literacy Nova Scotia News, Spring 2012

## Governments

Federal, provincial and territorial governments are shifting towards a literacy agenda focused on the economy. Historically, there has been tension between federal and provincial/territorial levels of governments regarding national policy on adult and worker skills training in Canada. However, the new Employment Insurance Act authorizes the federal government to enter into Labour Market Development Agreements with the provinces and territories. The federal government still retains jurisdiction for adult training to members of targeted groups, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit <sup>206</sup>.

### **Labour Market Agreements (LMA) and Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA).**

In 2011, CLLN produced a report to provide further information about LMAs and LMDAs in the provinces and territories<sup>207</sup>. The report provided each provincial/territorial coalition with a customized package outlining the situation in their province/territory. It gave an analysis of the situation, and suggested questions that might be raised with the provincial/territorial governments. This report has been a valuable resource for provincial and territorial literacy coalitions and has enabled them to more easily make connections with organizations that are involved with LMA/LMDA activities.

Coalitions are strategically placed to advise government, channel information to the national level, and monitor LMA/Strategic Training and Transition Fund (STTF) activities. They can provide assistance to programs/organizations that are trying to embed Literacy and Essential

Skills in their programming (e.g. apprenticeship, employability programs and trades training). Coalitions can assist government in determining the best means to deploy resources intended for Literacy and Essential Skills.

The Labour Market Agreements (LMA) and Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDA) provide an opportunity for incorporating Literacy and Essential Skills into labour market training. This governmental fund transfer is directed towards meeting the labour needs of employers and helps Canadians and immigrants improve their skills and employability.

In both 2008-09 and 2009-10, Employment Services interventions were by far the highest proportion of interventions at 79% and 62% respectively. In the second year reported, the percentage of Skills Development and Upgrading interventions and the combined Skills Development and Work Experience interventions both rose. These are the areas where literacy and Essential Skills training would likely be categorized. Workplace-based Skills Development interventions were only 3% of all 2008-09 interventions and 5% of those in 2009-10.

*Labour Market Transfers and the Implications for Literacy and Essential Skills, CLLN, January 2012*

<sup>206</sup> Brisbois & Saunders, 2005, *Skills Upgrading Initiatives in Canada: Regional Case Studies*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2005

<sup>207</sup> *Labour Market Transfers and the Implications for Literacy and Essential Skills*, Briefing Package, CLLN, 2011, revised January 2012

The aim of the LMA is to increase access to training for those who are unemployed and/or underrepresented in the labour market and do not qualify for Employment Insurance (EI). Employed individuals will also be able to access LMA-sponsored skills training programs and will have increased opportunities for credential recognition and certification. LMA clients include youth, immigrants, persons with disabilities, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, older workers, and women.

The goal of LMDA programs is to help EI clients and the unemployed public to prepare for and obtain employment. Activities include sector specific initiatives to assist employers in meeting their human resource needs. LMDA clients include employers, unemployed persons, EI clients, income assistance recipients, and the underemployed (LMA/LMDA, 2008).

Labour market development funds will be focused on building the pool of skilled workers needed for strategic sectors to tap their full potential for growth. Greater emphasis will be placed on increased support to help newcomers integrate and settle placing more emphasis on attracting skilled immigrants, and higher priority on recruiting international students.

The Canadian government has created several structures and programs to encourage and support business investment in employee training including the Essential Skills, Workplace Skills Strategy supported by the Office of Sectoral Intelligence. Apprenticeship and training includes programs such as the Secondary School Apprenticeship as a way of facilitating the development of the labour force.

As discussed by the Canadian Council on Learning, there is a case for governments to provide further incentives for employers to invest

in workplace learning<sup>208</sup>. This is because some of the benefits of improved learning, such as increased tax revenues and reduced social assistance spending for governments, are not benefits to the employer or employee.

### **Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency**

The labour skills gap is more pronounced in the territories than in the rest of the country and there are fewer educational opportunities for adults in the North. Across the territories 17,000 working-age Northerners have not completed Grade 12. To address this issue, the federal government announced new funding to expand adult literacy and basic education in Nunavut, Yukon and the Northwest Territories (NWT). This funding, announced in February 2012, is administered through the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency (CanNor). The Northern Adult Basic Education Program (NABEP) aims to help Northerners get jobs or be able to take job-specific training through innovative programming. Funding goes to the three territorial colleges in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the Yukon.

Aurora College in the NWT will receive \$9.1 million over three years. In order to develop a strategic plan for the funding, Aurora College held consultations with First Nations, Métis and Inuvialuit groups and partner organizations about the priorities for the new funding. The NWT Literacy Council was part of these consultations, and is a partner on the project.

The Nunavut Arctic College will also receive \$11,112,750 over five years to carry out a number of program enhancement initiatives including capacity building through additional adult educators and resources, curriculum development, assessment tools for literacy,

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<sup>208</sup> Ron Saunders, *Employer investment in Workplace Learning: Report on the Toronto Roundtable*, Canadian Policy Research Networks, April 2008

pan-territorial planning and monitoring, and a career experience program linked to local labour market and opportunities. Nunavut Arctic College is working in partnership with groups including the Nunavut Literacy Council.

Yukon College will receive \$308,000 in 2011-12 to develop strategic priorities and a four year work plan for adult basic education (ABE) in the territory. Yukon College will work in partnership with Yukon First Nation governments, relevant service providers and employers to introduce programming to improve the literacy and employability successes of Yukoners, with a strong emphasis on rural initiatives to respond to unique regional social and economic realities. Additionally, the ABE program will focus on training opportunities for faculty and instructors, placing Yukon College's ABE teaching materials for instructors online, and developing and piloting a series of ABE programming initiatives to significantly improve literacy, numeracy and computer skill levels. New programming initiatives through the ABE program at Yukon College include a Skills for Employment Plumber's Helper program and a Skills for Employment Cooking program.

Many of the CanNor projects have been started. CanNor is now responsible for the Canada Business Network (CBN) in the North. The CBN offers a single service window for businesses, improves opportunities for Northerners and increases the economic potential of the North.

## Sector Councils

Sector councils are industry-led partnership organizations that address skills development issues and implement solutions in key sectors of the economy. Sector councils work as a uniting element to engage employers, workers, industry/professional associations, education and government in a strategic alliance that is focused on developing and implementing solutions to the specific skills and human

resource needs that will enable their sector to thrive.

Over the years the federal government has supported the creation of over 35 sector councils many of which are currently transitioning to self-sustaining business models. Some provincial governments have also created sector councils, some of which have been in existence for a long time. As the federal government will no longer be funding sector councils, the Sectoral Initiatives Program has been created.

Canada's national sector councils represent about 50% of Canada's labour market and cover a broad range of sectors including: construction, information and communications technology, trucking, tourism, mining, cultural industries, agriculture, printing, environmental careers, electricity, child care, biotechnology, policing, automotive servicing, aviation/aerospace and many more.

For a current listing of sector councils, visit:

Canada: <http://www.councils.org/sector-councils/list-of-canadas-sector-councils/>

Manitoba: <http://www.amsc.mb.ca/sector-councils/>

Nova Scotia: <http://www.aisc.ca/members.html>

Sector Councils often provide labour market information and essential skills resources as can be seen from the following two examples.

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council provides many different services including up-to-date labour market information and labour supply and demand reports. It measures long-term economic and demographic trends affecting the tourism sector by using a macroeconomic model to report potential labour shortages out to 2025. By determining the gap between the potential demand for labour and the supply of labour available, the degree to which labour shortages will affect the sector over the medium and long term can be assessed for both tourism



occupations and Canadian regions. The report uses industry input to ensure accuracy and to develop strategies for mitigating future shortages. The Ready to Work (RTW) program of the Council delivers a structured transition into the tourism workforce through classroom and workplace training based on emergent National Occupational Standards. Over 11,000 unemployed and underemployed people across Canada have accessed job readiness training and career planning through the Ready to Work internship program. The program provides participants with the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and experience required for long-term, stable employment in tourism.

Currently, the Social Research Demonstration Corporation is mid-way through a national Return on Investment (ROI) study with the tourism sector, funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. By estimating the performance of education and training systems in generating adult learning, the project will establish a clear business case for employers to invest in Literacy and Essential Skills training.

Another example of labour market information from a sector council is the Canadian Automotive and Repair Service Council (CARS) which is responsible for human resource and training development for the automotive power repair and service industry.

According to CARS own research, only one in five employers—21 percent—use written or practical tools to assess their employees' skills or identify training needs<sup>209</sup>. The majority of employers, 62 percent, simply rely on monitoring day-to-day performance.

CARS identified the belief within their industry that simply holding a license was sufficient for employees in their sector. With the aim of

correcting this belief within their field and helping employees develop their skills and knowledge to maintain as well and go beyond minimal licensing, CARS has developed an array of L/ES tools: CARS-OnDemand, CARSability and CARSessentials.

- ▶ CARS-OnDemand is a library of online courses specific to their sector's employees' needs
- ▶ CARSability is a question bank containing several hundred questions aimed at helping employees work through workplace specific tasks. 22,286 user accounts were created in 2008 to access and utilise the tools
- ▶ CARSessentials assesses Essential Skills. It can be used for self-assessment by individuals who want to develop their skills and by educators who are looking to help students. It can also be used by human resource professionals and employers who want to evaluate either current employees or job candidates, whether they are newly trained apprentices or experienced veterans

Apprentices without an appropriate level of Essential Skills tend to find training challenging, be less productive and get less job satisfaction. Assessing and upgrading their Essential Skills, where necessary, makes sound business sense.

Essential Skills provide the foundation for improving productivity and ensuring we have the skilled workers we need to get the job done.

Ed Nasello, Project Manager, CARS  
Essential Skills Program

<sup>209</sup> *Performance Driven: Labour Market Opportunities and Challenges for Canada's Motive Power Repair and Service Sector*, CARS Council, 2009

## Sectoral Initiatives Program

HRSDC's *Sectoral Initiatives Program* (SIP) aims to address current skills shortages and reduce the likelihood of new skills shortages, by supporting the development and dissemination of labour market intelligence. Connecting Canadians to the labour market intelligence needed to make informed human resources, career and training decisions will support a more systemic match between employers and job-seekers. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) announced this approach in July 2011.

Through a competitive process, SIP will fund partnership-based projects that are national in scope and/or nationally significant and that support the development of labour market information (LMI), national occupational standards (NOS) and certification/accreditation regimes, to address skills shortages in sectors of Canada's economy.



## Canadian Labour Movement

The labour movement has supported literacy over many years. Labour has identified many positive aspects to Essential Skills, and several unions have been involved in Essential Skills projects. However some more negative issues exist, such as the emphasis on individual deficits and individual responsibility for training rather

Unions are actively involved in providing workers with literacy and other basic forms of education and training, not just to improve their job security, but also to build consciousness about politics in the workplace.

Former Canadian Labour Congress  
President, Bob White, 1988

than seeking systemic solutions.

Labour organizations recognize that literacy is a systemic issue requiring a holistic approach that is sensitive to workers' needs. They measure success by finding out if learning was meaningful, if learners met their goals and whether the workplace and the employer benefitted.

The Canadian Labour Movement is continuing its efforts to win policies and programs that secure:

- ▶ The right to learn for both employed and unemployed workers mandated by law
- ▶ A pan-Canadian strategy and system of adult education and training, which ensures quality programming and equitable access across the country
- ▶ A serious investment in literacy and training by employers and governments

- ▶ The integration of literacy in skills training and apprenticeship programs
- ▶ The development of a culture of learning in our unions and workplaces

**(A Quest for Learning, The Canadian Labour Movement and Worker Literacy Education, extract from June 2012 draft, printed with permission.)**

Joint labour-management training partnerships have become common, such as that of the steelworkers when 17,000 laid-off workers were given support in finding new employment<sup>210</sup>. In 2006 the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) undertook an Essential Skills project, federally funded by OLES. This project is ongoing and is focused on developing tools to facilitate skills inventory and identification; ensuring that Essential skills are built into all workplace training; making training more cost-efficient, productive, effective and accessible; integrating Essential Skills into existing CSTEC course and upgrading the skills of the current workforce.

Partnerships have played a key role in furthering Canadian Union Public Employees' (CUPE's) literacy work. Partners include employer organizations, literacy organizations, education providers and others in the labour movement. Currently, there is a trend away from partnerships, as funding is difficult to obtain. The emphasis has returned to negotiating programs with individual employers.

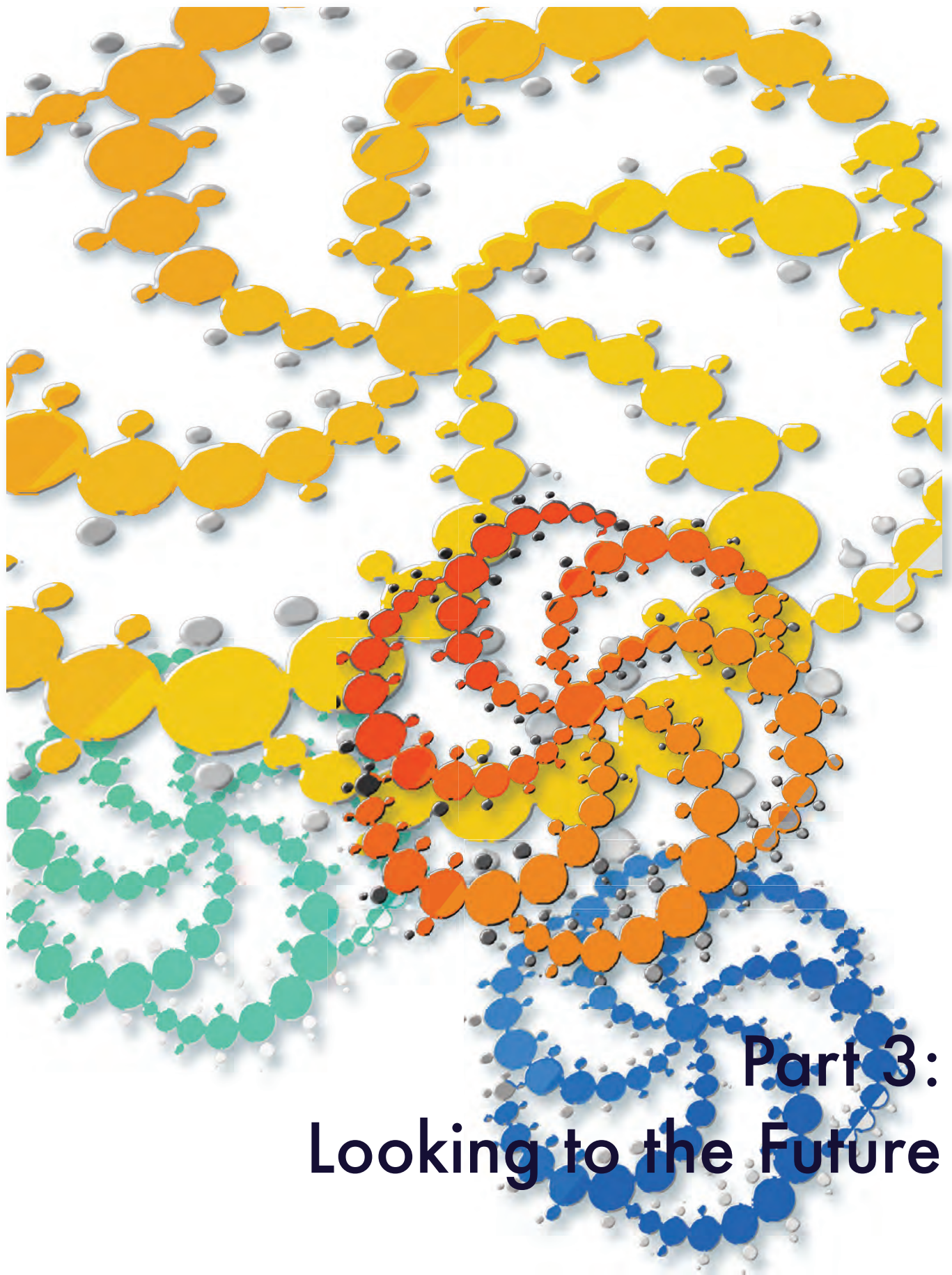
However, in 2013, CLLN will be partnering with CUPE and an employer organization to identify what research and knowledge is available about learners in the workplace, including success indicators from workplace learners' perspectives, gaps in workplace learning, and accommodating cultural, linguistic and racial diversity in workplace learning. This information will be sought through surveys and key informant interviews. A national forum will identify ways to build support for workplace learning and addressing learners' needs.

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<sup>210</sup> *A Quest for Learning, The Canadian Labour Movement and Worker Literacy Education*, extract from June 2012 draft, printed with permission







## Part 3: Looking to the Future

## Summary and Future Directions

CLLN is the hub for Literacy and Essential Skills in Canada and plays a crucial role in research for the field. It has conducted an environmental scan and prepared this *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report, together with separate summaries from each of the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions, in order to highlight the current situation and to look at how to move forward.

CLLN and other stakeholders believe there is a need to invest significantly in Literacy and Essential Skills and to increase awareness among employers and the Canadian population of the benefits of adult learning and continuous upskilling. Canada needs to embrace a culture of learning that places an emphasis on Literacy and Essential Skills as the foundation for the skills, knowledge and attitudes (human capital competencies) that individuals can put into productive use. There is a need for a cultural paradigm shift to lifelong learning and continuous upskilling.

Learning needs to be encouraged in a variety of environments. This learning can be formal, non-formal or informal, but it needs to be lifelong. Lifelong learning is economically and socially important to individuals and helps them face the challenges of a rapidly changing work environment. It also ensures employers have access to workers with the skills needed to establish innovative and sustainable industries.

While education and training remain a provincial and territorial jurisdiction there is a need for a national vision and strategy that will bring together the multiple strands involved in upskilling the labour force. Improving Canadians' skills and literacy levels is an issue that needs to be tackled by all levels of government, industry, organized labour, economic development agencies, literacy and

essential skills organizations, educational institutions and individuals.

Literacy and Essential Skills are a cross-cutting issue and there is a need for partnerships across sectors and communities and at the federal and provincial government level. Upskilling is not something that can be tackled by one group alone. The impact of higher Literacy and Essential Skills on an individual's success and a country's economic development is too important an issue to relegate to the back burner. It needs the best brains and innovative solutions to build on what is already being done.

CLLN has recently commissioned research into literacy and earnings, generating a substantial body of work that provides new insights based on current data. CLLN found that the minimum cost of raising all Canadian adults to the literacy level needed for a competitive workforce would be a one-time investment of \$29 billion. The research demonstrates that investments in Literacy and Essential Skills can provide economic benefit by reducing the amount spent on Employment Insurance, Workers Compensation and Social Assistance. If Canadians' literacy level was increased to the OECD recommended standards for internationally competitive productivity (IALSS Level 3), costs for all three programs would drop dramatically.

Direct annual savings resulting from an assumed one-time \$29 billion investment in upskilling Canadian adults 16 and over would be \$2.92 billion: \$330 million on Employment Insurance, \$2.1 billion on Social Assistance, and \$490 million on Workers Compensation. Investment in upskilling Canadians would increase earnings by \$85.25 billion or an average of \$3,244/worker annually bringing a commensurate rise in tax revenues. Increasing the reach of Literacy and Essential Skills programs could reduce the

number of people receiving benefits and money saved could be channelled into the establishment of a pan-Canadian adult learning strategy. Governments may want to examine the potential for support by providing incentives and leverage. Some options include: tax credits, matching training funds, training levies, initiatives targeted at SMEs, use of Employment Insurance for paid training leave, training vouchers and individual learning accounts.

Provincial and territorial literacy policies and strategies help define the scope of the issue and lead to action plans, delivery of programs and evaluation. Literacy and Essential Skills professionals identify the need for a literacy strategy in those provinces and territories where one is not currently in existence. Draft strategies need to be ratified and implemented. All provinces and territories benefit from a literacy strategy that commits to early literacy, family literacy, school age literacy, youth literacy, working age adult literacy, and seniors literacy. A well-funded pan-Canadian Adult Learning Strategy with a systemic approach to Literacy and Essential Skills could address many of the issues raised in this report. Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and PEI also have provincial programs and funding for various aspects of workplace literacy programs.

Federal–provincial Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements (LMAs and LMDAs) have gone some way to putting in place a skills training infrastructure that reflects the needs of Canada's provincial and territorial jurisdictions. The upcoming renewal and strengthening of these agreements is important to sustaining the skills and innovation agendas underway in provinces. Going forward, these agreements need to be updated to reflect the continued need for Literacy and Essential

Skills training for people with low literacy skills. Federally directing the embedding of Literacy and Essential Skills training with dedicated funds into training investments, such as LMAs/LMDAs, as they get renewed or are replaced, would be an important step forward.

The economic benefits of good Literacy and Essential Skills apply equally to employees and businesses and have a long-reaching impact. It is important for CLLN, together with other Literacy and Essential Skills organizations and organized labour to provide a compelling case to convince employers of the benefits of investing in workplace training.

Workers with good Essential Skills are:

- ▶ better at their jobs
- ▶ adaptable to new tasks
- ▶ more likely to have skills for advancement
- ▶ more self-confident
- ▶ motivated to succeed

Businesses employing staff with good Literacy and Essential Skills benefit from:

- ▶ increased output and profitability
- ▶ lower error rates
- ▶ increased ability to do on-the-job training
- ▶ better team performance
- ▶ improved labour relations
- ▶ increased quality of work
- ▶ reduced time per task
- ▶ improved health and safety records
- ▶ better retention of employees and customers

Literacy and Essential Skills initiatives need to be sustainable. Programs must be piloted, but serious consideration needs to be given to ways to make successful pilots sustainable. A culture of learning and learning communities helps pave the way for learning to be lifelong.



CLLN believes it is important to provide efficient and effective programs that meet the needs of the community and workplaces. For example, OLES is funding CLLN and ABC Life Literacy Canada in a joint project: *Building Solutions: Engaging Employers in L/ES Development for the Canadian Workforce*. This project will develop increased awareness on the part of Canadian small, medium and large enterprises of the need for L/ES workplace training and its implementation as a business solution; make links between the business sector and the adult L/ES sector in order to address workplace training gaps; identify a specific action plan for business, labour and the L/ES sector; and find national champions who can engage other employers moving forward.

Many immigrants are highly educated, but lack the English language skills needed to fully participate in the labour force. Without appropriate language skills, a great inefficiency will remain, as many among the highly educated immigrant population will remain unemployed or underemployed. To decrease inefficiencies resulting from a lack of English language skills it is important to ensure that English as an Additional Language programs are both available and accessible. It is also important to ensure that immigrants have a good understanding of workplace culture, Canadian society and their new communities. However, for immigrants who are not highly skilled, basic skills and upgrading programs need to be in place. With the rapid changes in immigration patterns and the changing labour market, a more rigorous evaluation of existing language and literacy programs would also be helpful in understanding why gaps persist and how best to address them.

The First Nations, Métis and Inuit populations have the lowest literacy rates and highest high school dropout rates. Challenges include the disparity between achievement in on-reserve and off-reserve results. As well, programs and

services need to be more meaningful and relevant to First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Local communities need funding to provide literacy and learning services and support to build awareness of the value of literacy and education. There is also significant intergenerational low literacy, which is compounded when school-aged children cannot get assistance with homework, either at home or in the community.

While historic policies, systemic issues, together with cultural and geographical considerations and a lack of resources have negatively impacted First Nations, Métis and Inuit, the situation is changing and some funding is now being targeted towards these populations who represent the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population. Literacy and Essential Skills training needs to be holistic and recognize the importance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit languages and traditions, and the cross-cultural diversity within Native communities. Employers can find it difficult to attract qualified First Nations, Métis and Inuit. Training is often directed at those with higher levels of literacy, not those at beginning levels. As a result, training spaces for high-demand jobs are going empty, leaving some courses without enough participants to go forward, despite secured funding and employment. It is important to share best practices, have better coordination among services and provide cultural awareness programs to help overcome racism and misunderstandings in the workplace.

The Literacy and Essential Skills of youth is still an area of concern, even though fewer youth are dropping out of school than in previous years. Often young people gain skills through formal education, particularly high school. However, some youth don't do well in formal education for a variety of reasons. It is crucial to integrate L/ES into all Youth Employment/Training initiatives to address the needs of youth who do not succeed



in school or who “fall through the cracks” as 43% of all students leaving Canada’s high schools have Level 1 or 2 skills. Some students obtain their grade 12 diploma but don’t have the skills that the level of education implies.

Youth in high school or youth training programs need a clear understanding of job requirements and the skills that are needed. Career counsellors need to understand the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills in the workplace.

Employment counsellors need to be able to recognize when clients have the skills to access technical skills programs and when clients need to upgrade their skills before entering technical skills programs.

An aging Canadian population will reduce the size of labour force and affect economic growth and productivity. Even though people are staying in the workforce longer, there is not enough population growth to compensate for skilled employees who are retiring. However, groups with high jobless rates such as First Nations, Métis, Inuit, recent immigrants and those with disabilities are struggling to find good jobs. Youth unemployment is nearly 14%. Despite this, employers across the country say they can’t find the right workers for all kinds of available jobs. With the current skills shortage in Canada, it is important that adults needing to upgrade their skills to meet current demands have access to quality programs. It is also vital that employers recognize the ability of an Essential Skills culture within the workplace to increase productivity, improve workplace health and safety and build better team performance. The clear link between literacy and economic growth provides the impetus to increase the number of Literacy and Essential Skills programs.

The knowledge-based economy and increasing skills requirements of even “low level” jobs illustrate the need for a stronger emphasis on Literacy and Essential Skills. An effective Literacy and Essential Skills program, whether

offered by organized labour, workplace trainers or external trainers, can have a positive impact on productivity, safety and quality while still providing benefits to the individual, such as a better understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Essential skills also transfer to other aspects of a person’s life, but also contribute to higher earnings. Broader economic benefits include less need for social assistance, employment insurance and workers compensation.

Low-skilled work has been most affected by technological change. There is an increasing need for entry-level employees to access, use and interpret information using digital technology. This is an issue that needs to be addressed through active collaboration between employers, policy makers and the Literacy and Essential Skills workforce.

Strong Literacy and Essential Skills provide the key to success for individuals, the community and businesses. It is important to breakdown negative attitudes to upgrading Literacy and Essential Skills and persuade people to improve their Essential Skills even when they think they are doing all right now.

CLLN believes it is critically important for the L/ES workforce, regardless of program setting, to have a key set of skills and competencies; these must be kept current to ensure educators have the means to deal with increasing and changing demand. We also believe it is important to examine the skills and competencies of this workforce so that they can be recognized for the skills they currently have and to develop new skills. Creating career pathways will benefit people currently working in the L/ES field and will help to attract new practitioners into the field.

Literacy and Essential Skills agencies need to continue to build partnerships with organizations such as Chambers of Commerce,

Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and the Canadian Public Policy Forum. These relationships are needed as they have an interface with employers.

Government, Literacy and Essential Skills organizations and program providers all agree on the importance of outcome measurement and use of measurement tools; however, there is a gap in measurement consistency. Without the development of a measurement system supported by both program providers and government ministries, outcomes of Literacy and Essential Skills investment will be difficult to determine. CLLN believes there is value in creating national standards and qualifications. The Mining Industry Human Resources Council, for example, has successfully developed and implemented a credentials program recognizing essential skills in the mining industry. Another example is the Ready to Work (RTW) program of the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, which delivers a structured transition into the tourism workforce through classroom and workplace training based on *emerit* National Occupational Standards.

CLLN is fulfilling an important role by interpreting pertinent data for the literacy field. CLLN shares those findings with other sectors that have not traditionally seen themselves as facilitators of learning. CLLN is seeking to engage a very broad range of stakeholders,

illustrating the deep connection between an engaged, learning society and the degree to which society will thrive – individuals as much as the nation.

CLLN and our national partners, L/ES and non-L/ES, will continue to work together to further increase our understanding of the state of the Literacy and Essential Skills field as trends develop. CLLN will lead the examination of gaps and identify ways to advance the state of the field through our environmental scans and action plans. Our goal is to improve the Literacy and Essential Skills of Canadians.

To address challenges resulting from economic changes affecting industries, CLLN will continue to work with OLES and its national network partners to identify strategies and share best practices for improving the Essential Skills of Canada's labour force, especially those who are historically underrepresented in the labour market. We will create and maintain partnerships with industry, workers, organized labour, governments and educational and academic institutions.

CLLN's hope is that the *State of the Literacy and Essential Skills Field* report will help to promote the development of a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to upgrading and skills development both inside and outside the workplace.







## Appendix 1: International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey

In 2003, the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) measured the literacy levels of 23,000 working age Canadians <sup>211</sup>. Level 1 indicates very low literacy skills. Level 2 is considered to be less than the skills needed to graduate from high school. People with skills at Level 2 often either assume that they understand information or don't feel the need to increase their skills, even though they do not have the skills associated with a high school diploma. IALSS Level 3 is the level needed for most literacy tasks in our society. It is the level of literacy needed to graduate from high school and enter college. The table below gives a brief description of the characteristics of each level.

**Descriptions of the International Literacy Level**

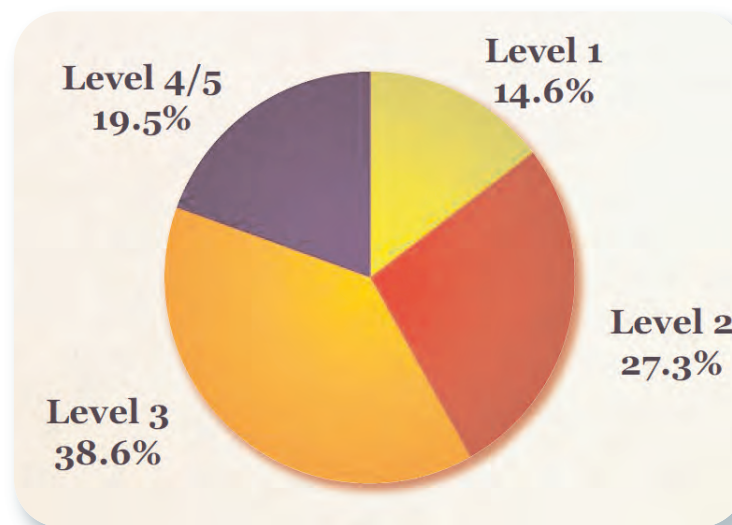
<b>Level 1</b>	Read relatively short text, locate, and enter a piece of information into that text, and complete simple, one-step tasks such as counting, sorting dates, or performing simple arithmetic. (However, it should be noted that only 3.8% of Canadians have extremely limited word reading ability, what the public might consider “illiterate”)
<b>Level 2</b>	The ability to sort through “distracters” (plausible, but incorrect pieces of information), to integrate two or more pieces of information, to compare and contrast information and to interpret simple graphs.
<b>Level 3</b>	Demonstrate the ability to integrate information from dense or lengthy text, to integrate multiple pieces of information and to demonstrate an understanding of mathematical information in a range of different forms. Level 3 tasks typically involve a number of steps or processes in order to solve problems.
<b>Level 4</b>	Tasks involve multiple steps to find solutions to abstract problems. Tasks require the ability to integrate and synthesize multiple pieces of information from lengthy or complex passages, and to make inferences from the information.
<b>Level 5</b>	Requires the ability to search for information in dense text that has a number of distracters, to make high-level inferences or use specialized background knowledge and to understand complex representations of abstract formal and informal mathematical ideas.

Source: Canadian Council on Learning,  
*Reading the future: planning to meet Canada's future literacy need*, 2008

<sup>211</sup> In the 2003 survey literacy tasks covering prose, document use, numeracy and problem solving were scaled by difficulty from 0-500. This range was divided into five broad literacy levels. Level 1 indicates very low literacy skills, where the individual has very basic reading skills. Skills at levels 4 and 5 reflect college and university skill levels and require the ability to integrate several sources of information or solve complex problems.  
<http://www.nald.ca/library/research/booc/booc.pdf>

Figure 12 shows that 42% of the adult population in Canada is working at less than Level 3. Nine million adults have skills at Levels 1 and 2. The number rises to twelve million if seniors are included. Over seven million adult Canadians working at Levels 1 and 2 don't identify literacy as an issue. This can impact their motivation to improve their skills and this has a negative impact on the Canadian economy. Consequently, it is important to look at ways in which Canada can make changes to raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

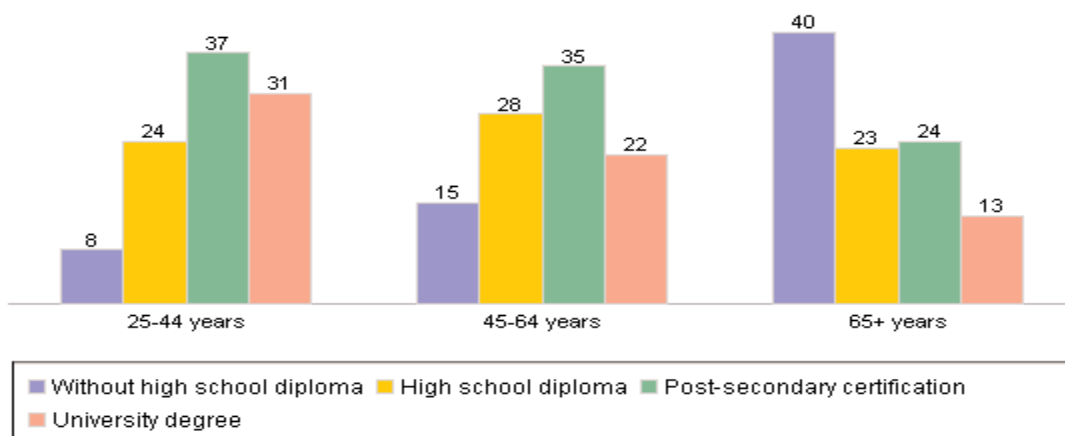
**Figure 12: IALSS Levels in Canada**



Source: The Big Picture, CLLN, 2012

Literacy is an issue for people who were born in Canada as well as for immigrants. Research shows that literacy skills improve with practice and deteriorate if not being used. Literacy levels are not necessarily a reflection of educational levels. Figure 13 shows Canadians' level of education from less than high school diploma to university degree in three different age groups. It can be seen that the situation is improving for the youngest age group but there is still room for improvement.

**Figure 13: Level of Education by Age (%)**



Source: HRSDC, 2010

The following lists (from IALSS) show the breakdown of information for Canadians at IALSS Levels 1 and 2. People who are working at IALSS Levels 1 and 2 who are employed may find aspects of their work very challenging and could find themselves facing problems if the requirements of the job change. If they lose their jobs it takes them longer to find new jobs. Low literacy skills also have a negative impact on safety in the workplace, which in turn leads to increased health care costs.

### Level 1

- ▶ 3.1 million adult Canadians are at this level (54% male, 46% female)
- ▶ 1.4 million are immigrants
- ▶ 60% are employed
- ▶ 12% are unemployed
- ▶ 28% are not actively seeking employment
- ▶ 50% have less than high school
- ▶ 30% finished high school
- ▶ 20% have post-secondary education

### Level 2

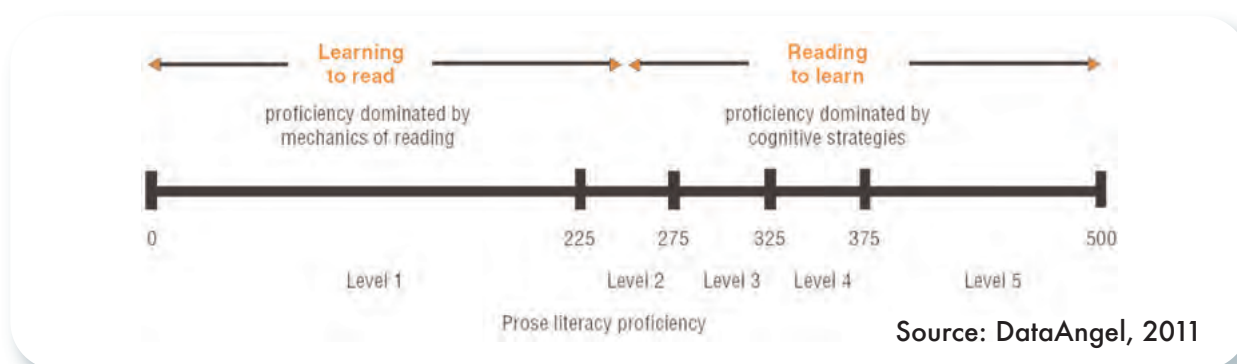
- ▶ 5.8 million adult Canadians are at this level (52% male, 48% female)
- ▶ 1.2 million are immigrants
- ▶ 70% are employed
- ▶ 8% are unemployed
- ▶ 22% are not actively seeking employment
- ▶ 28% have less than high school
- ▶ 37% finished high school
- ▶ 35% have post-secondary education

Essential Skills levels correspond to IALSS levels.

## Reading Proficiency

Figure 14 below highlights the fact that below a score of 250 on the IALSS scale, adults are still in the process of learning to read, in the sense that they have yet to master the mechanics of reading that underlie the emergence of fluid and automatic reading. Above a score of 250, adults are fluid and automatic readers, a fact that frees up space for building meaning and higher order problem-solving.

**Figure 14: Learning to Read, Reading to Learn (IALSS data)**



Literacy enables people to 'read the world' by providing the tools for people to reflect and take action based on the information they have accessed. A population that embraces lifelong learning and is adaptable to change will enable Canada to better cope with economic and social challenges.





## Appendix 2:

# National Network Partners Baseline Survey: Practitioners

The Executive Directors of provincial and territorial literacy coalitions were asked to complete this survey in May 2012. CLLN analyzed the results to help guide its future directions.

**Please circle any of the areas where your coalition is actively involved with practitioners**

Practitioner training courses/certification	3
PD for practitioners:	
• school board	8
• college	10
• community-based	10
PD includes:	
• conferences	10
• workshops	9
• webinars	5
• online training	5
general information sharing with:	
• administrators	11
• practitioners themselves	10
Online discussion groups	2
Networking	9
Listing programs	9
General information sharing with:	
• for practitioners	6
• sharing research by practitioners	8

**How does your coalition interact with practitioners? Please list anything that wasn't included in the boxes above:**

- e-bulletins, one-on-one
- using as expertise, input, focus groups, information sharers, recommending learners, promoting our work and resources
- finding grants, computer PD fund
- events, resource provision
- print materials, grant funding, newsletter, award ceremonies, fundraising events
- we are trying to expand and support our role to practitioners
- meetings, one-on-one conversations
- on-line community of practice, surveys
- regional network, regional support, regional meetings for info
- exchange & PD, electronic conferencing system

**What would you like to see happen to strengthen the position of practitioners?  
Please circle the statements that you agree with:**

I want to enhance perception and understanding about practitioners.	10
Together we could play a leadership role in bringing key stakeholders to the table.	9
There needs to be more consistency around practitioner training and PD.	8
Practitioners need more recognition and respect.	11
We need to have a road map of how to proceed with strengthening field.	10
Practitioners need opportunities to network and share.	12
Practitioners need more training opportunities.	11
We need to build a collective sense of professional pride among practitioners.	10
There should be standards for L/ES programs.	10
There should be NOC codes for L/ES workforce.	8

**Other statements that you think are key to strengthening the position of practitioners Please list anything that wasn't included in the boxes above:**

- recognition of all direct delivery providers – both volunteer and paid instructors
- at our college they get no benefits – laid off 4 months of year – need some advocacy

## Appendix 3: Profile of a Learner

Source: Toronto District School Board, Tutor Training Handbook<sup>210</sup>.

### Adults with IALSS Level 1 and 2 skills may be:

- ▶ people who didn't get their grade 12 and graduate
- ▶ older people who grew up in Canada at a time when it was much easier to get a skilled job with little education
- ▶ people with physical disabilities, mental health issues and/or learning disabilities, people who never had the opportunity to attend school, or to attend school for very long
- ▶ immigrants with limited literacy in their first language
- ▶ people who haven't been using their literacy skills as adults

In some other countries, education is too expensive for the majority of people.

A young person coming to Canada with very little schooling may be placed in a class appropriate to age level, but not to skill level. This person may become frustrated and drop out of school.

If an individual has a learning disability that was not addressed in school, she may feel frustrated and drop out of school.

For some learners, their difficulty in school wasn't related to actual learning difficulties, but to social and/or family troubles, drug or alcohol abuse, mental or physical health problems, unsupportive learning or home environments.

Poverty can have a negative effect on education as it can lead to hunger and this affects a person's ability to concentrate on learning. Poverty can also cause tension stress and result in frequent moves.

Peer pressure, drug and substance abuse, pregnancy or family problems may also cause children to drop out of school.

An individual may leave school at an early age because of the structure of the school system. For example, a residential school system may have presented a difficult learning environment for an Aboriginal person.

An individual who was doing well in school, but left early for economic reasons, will have a different experience of school than someone who left out of frustration. Someone who enjoyed school, and is now getting the opportunity to return to learning, will approach the learning experience very differently from someone who associates learning with frustration and fear of failure. For example, someone who felt humiliated in front of classmates for making mistakes in written work or in reading out loud will be very wary of exposing herself to that kind of risk again.

Similarly, someone who never had the opportunity to attend school will approach learning differently than someone who didn't do well in school.

Many people who have completed high school still have problems with reading and writing. Some individuals who faced the problems in school may have developed coping strategies that enabled them to finish school while still feeling uncomfortable with their reading and writing. Their nervousness

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<sup>210</sup> *Tutor Training Handbook*, Toronto District School Board, 2010

about risk taking may be compounded by the fear of being “found out”. However, because they stayed in school and were passed through with their age mates (social progression) they may have enjoyed the social aspects of school.

Individuals who completed secondary school (depending on place and era) in the “basic stream” may not have developed strong reading and writing skills. They may have been placed in this stream because of developmental disabilities, undiagnosed learning disabilities, behavioural issues, or because they were behind for any number of reasons. They may feel cheated by the school system and distrustful in a learning environment.

**Learners may be:**

- ▶ frightened
- ▶ insecure
- ▶ isolated and/or depressed
- ▶ fearful of failure
- ▶ inconsistent in their progress
- ▶ facing financial issues
- ▶ lacking in child care
- ▶ having health issues
- ▶ lacking free time
- ▶ stressed

While learners may be used to making decisions and having responsibility in other areas of their lives, they may be passive learners. This could be a result of previous negative experiences or because they have established fixed habits and patterns of thought related to education.

**However, learners may also:**

- ▶ know what they want to learn
- ▶ learn well, given encouragement and feedback
- ▶ be enthusiastic and highly motivated
- ▶ have good memories
- ▶ be creative and adaptable
- ▶ be continually growing

**Reasons for Joining a Literacy Program**

- ▶ to cope with life changes
- ▶ to become more independent
- ▶ to get qualifications and go onto further training
- ▶ to get a job
- ▶ to be able to cope with changes to their job
- ▶ to learn skills for a new job or promotion
- ▶ to keep up with their children’s education
- ▶ to help their children with homework



## Appendix 4:

# UPSKILL Essentials to Excel

**UPSKILL Essentials to Excel** is a pan-Canadian research and demonstration project that aims to fill the knowledge gap by implementing a model of Essential Skills training based on best-practice and testing it with the most rigorous research methods<sup>210</sup>. The study is utilizing a randomized control trial (RCT) to measure the impacts of Essential Skills training on workers, their job performance, and business outcomes.

The project is being implemented through a pan-Canadian set of partners including the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) and their counterparts in the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Department of Labour and Advanced Education is currently being engaged to coordinate delivery of training in the province of Nova Scotia. National and provincial literacy organizations – including the Canadian Learning and Literacy Network (CLLN) as well as Literacy Nova Scotia – are being consulted on the design, the recruitment and referral process, and engaged in an ongoing dialogue to help interpret the research findings.

The study began in the spring of 2010 and will run for three years through March 2013. Nearly 100 firms have been recruited in seven provinces, with over 1,200 workers participating, half of whom will receive training, while the other half serves as a control group in the study. The research strategy includes three main components – an experimental evaluation of impacts, implementation research to explore delivery lessons and best practices, and a cost-benefit analysis to estimate returns on investments in Essential Skills training by firms and government.

The program is offering employers a customized training solution for their frontline staff to help improve performance on-the-job while providing professional growth for employees. By addressing underlying Essential Skills needs of workers, the program aims to serve as a “bridge” towards higher levels of performance, which is critical for both business success and for professional growth of employees. Accommodations in the tourism industry, provides a suitable environment for a successful demonstration project and one that has broad applicability to other service sectors. Over a dozen frontline occupations are represented in the project including a number in retail sales, food services, clerical and administrative positions.

Employers will be provided with an organizational needs analysis to determine if any performance gaps exist and how they may relate to underlying Essential Skills training needs of their frontline staff. This process will ensure that the training solution will be well aligned with the business needs of the organization. The training curriculum will be tailored to the specific jobs and needs of employees is professionally designed by recognized leaders in workplace education and in their establishment. The program is being delivered in partnership with several recognized leaders in Essential Skills training, including SkillPlan, the Training Group at Douglas College, and Workplace Education Manitoba.

The program will provide up to 40 hours of training, over a three-month period, for about 20 employees per firm, at no charge. The participation of all employees in the program will be voluntary. It will be delivered during work hours using a blend of group sessions, one-on-one instruction, and self-paced learning. In addition to paying for the development and delivery of training, the program will also pay employers for up to half of the required release time for their employees to participate in training. As part of the research, participants will engage in assessments that can provide partial credit for occupational certification offered by national and provincial sector councils, which can provide further opportunities for professional growth.

The results of this research will be very important in informing the future of workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs

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<sup>210</sup> The project is being managed by the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), a non-profit organization specializing in policy research. The project is funded by the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), a branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

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