

Adult Learning and Education

Canada progress report for the UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) and the end of the United Nations Literacy Decade



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The Member States of UNESCO have been asked to prepare progress reports on developments in adult learning since 2009 (CONFINTEA VI) and in literacy since 2006. UNESCO has provided detailed guidelines for the preparation of this document, in the form of a reporting template that seeks information on adult education and literacy such as policies, governance, financing, participation, and quality. This report is Canada's response to that request, developed jointly by Canada's provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education through their intergovernmental body, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); the Government of Canada, represented by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC); and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU).

Ce rapport est également disponible en français sous le titre
Apprentissage et éducation des adultes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXTUALIZING CANADA'S RESPONSE

Nature of this report

The focus of this report is on progress made in adult education and literacy policies, governance, financing, participation, and quality. It was developed jointly by Canada's provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education, through their intergovernmental body, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); the Government of Canada, represented by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC); and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU). This work was led and compiled by CMEC.

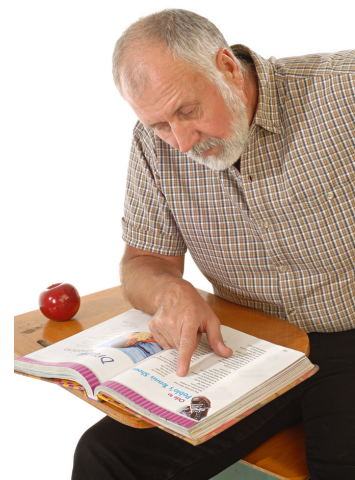
Canada's engagement in UNESCO adult education and literacy priorities

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) took place in Belém, Brazil in December 2009. The [Belém Framework for Action](#), the final document of CONFINTEA VI, was adopted by Member States, including Canada. It includes recommendations on adult literacy, policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity, quality, and the monitoring of progress toward the Belém recommendations. This report fulfills the Belém commitment to the monitoring of progress with respect to these recommendations.

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2001. UNESCO, as lead agency for UNLD, has asked its Member States, including Canada, to report on progress in implementing literacy programs and plans of action. This report serves as the final report for Canada for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2012.

Defining adult education and literacy in Canada

While there is no official definition of adult education or adult literacy at the country level in Canada, provincial and territorial governments have defined a common vision for the concept of lifelong learning at the pan-Canadian level, outlined in the *Learn Canada 2020* declaration. Literacy is understood in the context of the four pillars of lifelong learning, from the early years through to adulthood, and is not specific to any one age group. The declaration formally recognizes the link between a well-educated population (for which adult





education and literacy play an important part) and a socially progressive society and vibrant knowledge-based economy.

Demographic context

According to Canada's 2011 Census, Canada has a population of 33,476,688, an increase of 5.9 per cent since the 2006 survey. Net international migration accounts for two-thirds of this growth. Almost 70 per cent of Canada's population lives in metropolitan areas, with the three largest of these — Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver — comprising 35 per cent of the country's population.

Canada has two official languages: French and English. The vast majority of francophones in Canada live in Quebec, where 79 per cent report French as their first language. In the 2006 Census, a total of 1,172,790 Canadians identified themselves as Aboriginal, that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The Aboriginal population is growing much faster than the non-Aboriginal population. The 2006 Census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada, almost 20 per cent of the population. Recent immigrants born in Asia made up the largest portion, over 58 per cent, of newcomers to Canada since the previous census. Canadians reported more than 200 different first languages, with those whose first language is neither French nor English representing 20 per cent of the population.

Education in Canada

In Canada, executive legislative responsibility for education is granted to provinces in The Constitution Act, 1867; similar responsibilities are delegated to territories by the federal government. As a result, there is no federal ministry of education and no single pan-Canadian approach to adult education. There is, however, pan-Canadian collaboration facilitated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by provincial ministers of education.

The Government of Canada nonetheless has the responsibility for First Nation education for Aboriginal populations who live on reserves. This is delivered through federally funded, band-administered schools. The Government of Canada also plays an integral role in supporting the skills development of Canadians by investing in postsecondary education, training, and literacy in the form of transfers to provinces and territories, research and infrastructure funding, and direct support to learners.

Canada's education systems are rated among the best in the world. These systems provide high-quality learning opportunities and the skills Canadians need to successfully enter the labour market, achieve personal success and happiness, and contribute to a strong democracy.

Canada's education systems are responsive to the needs of different populations and age groups. Provinces and territories have educational programming at different levels that specifically address the needs of target populations as described in this report. In the Canadian context, adult learning and skills development are considered essential for all residents to actively engage in Canada's knowledge-based economy.

ADULT-LEARNING AND SKILLS-DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS IN CANADA

Policy

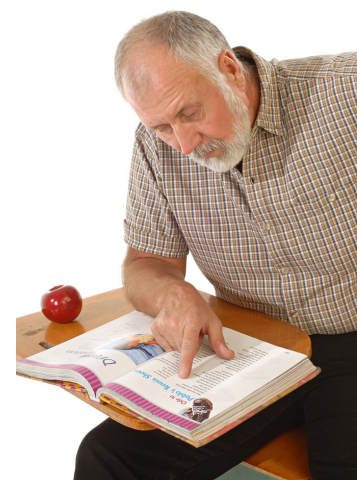
Every Canadian jurisdiction has specific strategies, policies, or legislation relating to adult learning and skills development through their ministries responsible for education. Since 2008, a number of additional provincial and territorial policies and strategies have been developed, including new legislation related to adult learning, comprehensive literacy policies, and progress toward developing comprehensive adult-literacy strategies.

Several provinces and territories have developed policies to recognize, validate, and accredit non-formal learning. Some have policies on language of instruction reflecting the demographic and cultural dimensions of the populations they serve.

Governments have made great efforts to directly involve adult learners in discussions about policy and plans for adult-learning and skills-development programs, through consultation, surveys, or focus groups, to provide input and feedback on various aspects of adult learning.

Governance

Provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education plan, implement, and evaluate policies for adult learning and skills development. This is often done through consultation and/or in partnership with organizations from other government sectors, nongovernmental organizations, or the private sector. Programs are delivered by a wide spectrum of agencies, organizations, and institutions. Provincial and territorial governments, often in cooperation with





the federal government, provide much of the funding for these programs. In all jurisdictions, the ministry (or ministries) responsible for education are responsible for ensuring the coordination of adult-learning and skills-development activities.

Each provincial and territorial government supports capacity building to ensure that different stakeholders are able to participate in policy and program development as well as the implementation and evaluation of adult-learning and skills-development initiatives.

Financing

In line with commitments made under the *Belém Framework for Action*, Canada's provincial, territorial, and federal governments recognize the value of investing in adult learning and skills development, and its social benefits. Every province and territory provides significant funding to adult learning and skills development as part of its overall expenditure on education. No common budget indicators exist at the pan-Canadian level to calculate total expenditures on adult learning and skills development for Canada. Total funding specifically for adult literacy is even more difficult to determine.

Programs and participation

The nature of adult-learning and skills-development opportunities varies across provinces and territories, sectors, and communities to meet the specific needs of the populations they serve. Programs are in areas such as basic skills and learning programs for adults, English or French as a second/additional language, community and volunteer-tutor adult-literacy programs, vocational education and training, apprenticeships, and workplace and workforce learning.

In almost all provinces and territories, information and communication technologies are used in the delivery of at least some of these programs. Most jurisdictions provide these programs in both of Canada's official languages, while others provide them in English only.

Most — but not all — provinces and territories work with forecasts for the supply of and demand for adult-learning and skills-development programs, although these are sometimes limited to informal measures such as the length of waiting lists.

Most provinces and territories have targeted specific learner groups in their adult-learning and skills-development policies. All include a focus on youth, Aboriginal learners, the unemployed, and persons with disabilities. Most focus on immigrants.

Learning materials for adult education are developed in various ways by different provinces and territories. Almost all provinces and territories track learner-level information and data on learning outcomes.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance has become increasingly important as Canada's landscape of education and training providers becomes more diverse. Each province and territory has its own approach to quality assurance and quality criteria. Ongoing professional development is also available in all provinces and territories through postsecondary institutions. Most also provide professional development through their ministry of education or school boards and through nongovernmental organizations.

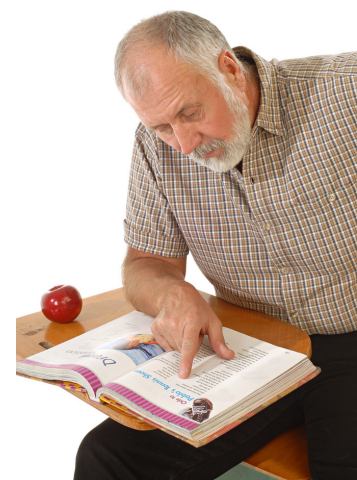
Measuring progress

There are a variety of indicators used across Canada to monitor and evaluate adult-learning and skills-development programs. International surveys, such as the 2003 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL) and the upcoming OECD [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies](#) (PIAAC), provide population-based assessment of the skill levels of adults. Most provinces and territories use administrative data on enrolments and participation provided by service providers. Some also use national census data and direct testing.

Most provinces and territories report that they face challenges in collecting adult-learning data, ranging from unavailability of data — especially on initiatives not funded by government — to inconsistent reporting and a lack of consistent standards.

Most governments have commissioned studies in order to inform adult-learning and skills-development policy, program design, and implementation.

Only a few provinces and territories have data on estimated remuneration for educators/facilitators in adult-learning and skills-development programs or for those who focus specifically on adult literacy.





CANADA'S CONTINUING ENGAGEMENT WITH UNESCO PRIORITIES

CONFINTEA VI follow-up

Since 2009, International Adult Learners' Week (IALW) in Canada has been dedicated to the follow-up of CONFINTEA VI with the cooperation of CCU. Every year, partners work together to examine the *Belém Framework for Action* recommendations that present particular challenges and choose a focus to encourage the sharing and promotion of the action undertaken in Canada that could inspire others to meet those challenges.

Partners include organizations representing Aboriginal peoples, francophones, persons with disabilities, immigrants, people living in geographically remote and isolated communities, and seniors, as well as officials from federal, provincial, and territorial governments.

Every year, the growing interest of the IALW is illustrated by greater participation of provincial governments and partners. Since CONFINTEA VI in December 2009, a number of new initiatives have been undertaken across Canada. New adult-education and literacy policies have been developed in Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. Northwest Territories introduced its Aboriginal Languages Plan (<http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>).

Workplace and workforce training initiatives have also been developed in a number of jurisdictions, and new programs and resources have been developed in a number of provinces and territories to improve the quality of and access to learning opportunities. The Government of Canada is currently exploring new and innovative ways of funding projects that address literacy and essential-skills shortages among adult Canadians.

Since the United Nations Literacy Decade mid-term review, literally hundreds of activities and initiatives have been launched in Canada to improve the literacy levels of Canadians. Most notably, provincial and territorial literacy policies have either been introduced or are in development in all of Canada's 13 provinces and territories.

Two major events are held annually in Canada to raise awareness and promote the importance of literacy: the presentation of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award and International Literacy Day. These are in addition to the

numerous local prizes and events aimed at raising awareness about the importance of literacy.

Canada's provinces and territories continue to develop system-wide strategies for building and maintaining literacy skills. These promote adult-skills development and upgrading that can serve to bolster adults' capacity to access further learning, compete for better jobs, and contribute to the social and economic development of their communities.

Activities since the 2006 UNLD mid-term review

Since the United Nations Literacy Decade mid-term review, literally hundreds of activities and initiatives have taken place in Canada to improve the literacy levels of Canadians.

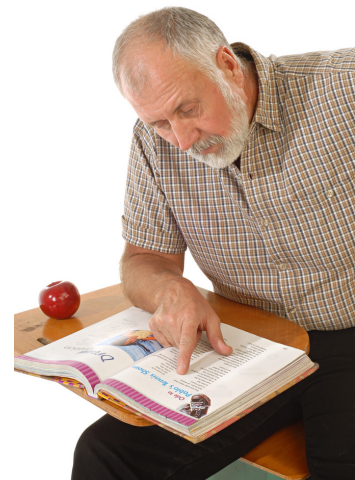
Remaining challenges

Canada faces several challenges in its efforts to increase adult literacy and essential skills. Provinces and territories have identified a range of these, including:

- assessment, data, and evaluation
- non-formal learning and certification/credentials
- coordination of program delivery
- funding
- lack of capacity
- learning methods/delivery models/tools and resources
- partnerships and citizen engagement
- culturally appropriate programming
- increased access
- learner recruitment

Future prospects

Canadian jurisdictions are optimistic about the prospects for sustaining efforts in literacy beyond 2013. In many jurisdictions, governments have expressed a strong commitment to continued support of literacy initiatives. Several jurisdictions





are developing or implementing new, comprehensive, strategic adult-literacy plans and frameworks, and some report that they are making progress with standardized data collection. In addition, some jurisdictions are developing ways to reach more of those who have been out of education the longest, to increase the number of graduates and improve how the needs of the least educated are met.



1. CONTEXTUALIZING CANADA'S RESPONSE

1.1. Nature of this report

The Member States of UNESCO have been asked to prepare reports on developments in adult learning since 2009 (CONFINTEA VI) and in literacy since 2006. The reports provide input for the next *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)*. The focus of this report is on progress made in adult-education and literacy policies, governance, financing, participation, and quality.

UNESCO has provided detailed guidelines for the preparation of this document in the form of a reporting template which seeks information on the following eight themes:

1. Definitions and data collection on adult learning and education;
2. Policy: political commitment to adult education and adult literacy;
3. Governance: governance and cooperation in adult education and adult literacy;
4. Financing: investment in adult education and adult literacy;
5. Participation: youth and adults' access to and participation in education and literacy programs;
6. Quality: quality assurance;
7. CONFINTEA VI follow-up: additional activities;
8. The United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012): specific activities under the framework of the UNLD since the 2006 mid-term review.

To provide a clear picture of the complex situation in adult education and literacy, input from a range of different sources was sought in compiling this report, including governments and nongovernmental organizations, to generate a complete picture of the state of adult education in Canada that builds on the information compiled in two previous Canada reports: [*The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education – Report for Canada*](#) (2008) and [*United Nations Literacy Decade 2003–2012, Progress Report for Canada 2004–2006*](#) (2007).

This progress report describes adult-learning and skills-development activities in Canada and is organized to respond to the UNESCO reporting template questions,



while citing specific references to Canada's literacy efforts as they relate to the different areas of action included in the report.

This report was developed jointly by Canada's provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education, through their intergovernmental body, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); the Government of Canada, represented by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC); and the CCU. This work was led and compiled by CMEC.

1.2. Canada's Engagement in UNESCO Adult Education and Literacy Priorities

1.2.1. CONFINTEA

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) took place in Belém, Brazil, in December 2009. Its goals were to renew international momentum for adult learning and education and redress discrepancies between insights and discourse, on the one hand, and the lack of systematic and effective policies and conditions for adult education and learning, on the other hand.

Canada's preparation for CONFINTEA VI began in 2008 with the publication of its report on the state of the art of adult learning and education and its participation in the Regional Preparatory Conference (Europe and North America) to inform discussion at CONFINTEA VI.

Preparations for CONFINTEA VI were further informed by the publication of a first-ever *GRALE*. Based on national reports from 154 Member States, *GRALE* analyzed trends, identified key challenges and best practices, and recommended action to vastly improve the scope of adult education and learning.

Guided by this work, the *Belém Framework for Action*, the final document of CONFINTEA VI, was adopted by Member States, including Canada, on December 4, 2009. It includes recommendations on adult literacy, policy, governance, financing, participation, inclusion, equity, quality, and the monitoring of progress toward the Belém recommendations. The preparation of this report fulfills the Belém commitment to the monitoring of progress with respect to these recommendations.



1.2.2. United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD)

The United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) was declared by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2001. According to UNESCO, UNLD aims to support the goal of achieving education for all by addressing the more than 774 million adults and 72 million out-of-school children in this world who are deprived of literacy and of access to literacy learning activities.

The UNLD, from 2003 to 2012, is based on the broad notion of literacy as the foundation for lifelong learning. UNESCO, as lead agency for UNLD, has asked its member states, including Canada, to report on progress in implementing literacy programs and plans of action.

Canada's first report, [*United Nations Literacy Decade 2003–2012, Progress Report for Canada 2004–2006*](#), was prepared by CMEC, with the support of HRSDC and CCU. The report looks at policy, programs, capacity building, research, community participation, and monitoring and evaluation. It details the work of the provincial and territorial governments; the Government of Canada; and educational, community, and voluntary stakeholders in children's, youth, family, adult, and workplace literacy.

As previously mentioned, this report serves as the final report for Canada for the United Nations Literacy Decade, 2012.

1.3. Defining Adult Education and Literacy in Canada

1.3.1. Adult-learning and skills-development

A striking lesson from the 2009 *GRALE* is that concepts and terminology commonly used in the area are understood differently across regions and countries, and sometimes even locally. To provide a common understanding of concepts in the current reporting template, UNESCO has provided definitions of the fundamental terms.



UNESCO Definitions of Fundamental Terms

Adult education and adult learning:

Adult learning encompasses “formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.”¹

Adult education and youth education:

Adult education concerns those who are “regarded as adult by the society to which they belong”.² However, “cultural and social factors have significant impact on the division of the human life-course into age-linked stages and phases. These phases vary widely across time and space. [...] Especially within a lifelong learning paradigm, it is increasingly unhelpful to make sharp distinctions between ‘youth education’ and ‘adult education’.”³

Adult education and training:

“The term ‘adult education’ denotes the entire body of organized educational processes, whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges and universities as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes or behaviour in a twofold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic, and cultural development; adult education, however, must not be considered as an entity in itself; it is a subdivision and an integral part of, a global scheme for lifelong education and learning.”⁴

1 UNESCO Institute for Education (1997). *The Hamburg Declaration. The Agenda for the Future*. Paper presented at CONFITEA V Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg. Retrieved from <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confitea/pdf/con5eng.pdf>

2 UNESCO (1976). Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education. *In Records of the General Conference, Nineteenth Session* (p.2). Nairobi. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/NAIROB_E.PDF

3 UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (2009). *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education*, 12 & 14. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001864/186431e.pdf>

4 Op.cit. UNESCO (1976).



UNESCO’s definitions provide a common backdrop against which Canada’s 13 provinces and territories have developed and operationalized frameworks and definitions of adult education and literacy in their work to provide quality learning opportunities for all. While there is no official definition of adult education or adult literacy at the country level in Canada, provincial and territorial governments have defined a common vision for the concept of lifelong learning at the pan-Canadian level, outlined in *Learn Canada 2020*. In Canada, there is formal recognition of the link between a well-educated population and a socially progressive society and vibrant knowledge-based economy.

Canada’s Four Pillars of Lifelong Learning

Early childhood learning and development: All children should have access to high quality early childhood education that ensures they arrive at school ready to learn.

Elementary and high school systems: All children in our K–12 education systems deserve teaching and learning opportunities that are inclusive and that provide them with world-class skills in literacy, numeracy and science.

Postsecondary education: Canada must increase the number of students pursuing postsecondary education by increasing the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education.

Adult learning and skills development: Canada must develop an accessible, diversified and integrated system of adult learning and skills development that delivers training when Canadians need it.

The concept of adult learning and skills development, the fourth pillar of lifelong learning, is used throughout this report to denote all adult education and learning that takes place outside of formal postsecondary education.

1.3.2. Literacy

Literacy recognizes the wider picture of individual development that leads to lifelong opportunities. Acquiring and developing literacy skills are a part of everyday living — at home, school, work, and in the community. Understanding this reality must be part of any approach to literacy. In Canada, literacy is understood in the context of the four pillars of lifelong learning, from the early



years through to adulthood, and is not specific to any one age group. As such, a number of provincial and territorial governments have taken an integrated, collaborative, and coordinated approach to raising literacy levels.

Several international definitions are used at the provincial and territorial level, formally or informally, to guide the development of policies and programs.

Literacy Concepts Used in Canada

“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society.”⁵

Literacy is “the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work, and in the community, to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”⁶

Reporting on Canada’s progress under UNLD extends beyond adult learning and skills development, recognizing developments in early learning and in elementary and secondary education. For the purposes of this report, reporting of literacy activities will mainly focus on adult literacy initiatives.

In an effort to further contextualize literacy for development programming for the workplace, the Government of Canada and other national and international agencies have identified and validated key [essential skills](#) for the workplace. These skills are used in nearly every job and at different levels of complexity. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

5 Richmond, M., Robinson, C. and Sachs-Israel, M. (2008). *The Global Literacy Challenge*. UNESCO. Retrieved from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001631/163170e.pdf>

6 Ibid.



Nine Essential Skills

1. Reading refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs. It generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports, or journals.
2. Writing includes writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms) and non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer).
3. Document use refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons, and other visual characteristics (e.g., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs, and labels are documents used in the world of work.
4. Numeracy refers to workers' use of numbers and their need to think in quantitative terms.
5. Computer use indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.
6. Thinking differentiates between six different types of interconnected cognitive functions: problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, significant use of memory, and finding information.
7. Oral communication pertains primarily to the use of speech to express thought and exchange information among workers in an occupational group.
8. Working with others examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks.
9. Continuous learning examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of skills and knowledge acquisition.

For more information, visit: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/definitions/definitions.shtml>



1.4. Demographic Context

According to Canada's 2011 Census, Canada has a population of 33,476,688, an increase of 5.9 per cent since the 2006 survey. Net international migration accounts for two-thirds of this growth. Almost 80 per cent of Canada's population lives in metropolitan areas, with the three largest of these — Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver — comprising 35 per cent of the country's population.

1.4.1. Official languages

Canada has two official languages: French and English. The 2006 Census enumerated over 18 million anglophones and almost seven million francophones. The 2006 Census further explored the use of Canada's two official languages. Over 57 per cent of the population reported English as their first language. The percentage of those reporting French as their first language has been declining steadily. In 2006, it was 21.8 per cent, compared with 22.6 per cent in 2001 and 23.3 per cent in 1996. An additional group, about 0.5 per cent, reported having French as a first language along with English or another language.

The vast majority of francophones in Canada live in Quebec, where 79 per cent report French as their first language. New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in Canada, also has a large proportion of francophones — over 32 per cent of the population report French as their first language. Outside of Quebec, francophones live in minority-language situations, which presents particular challenges for the language and the culture.

1.4.2. Aboriginal population

In the 2006 Census, a total of 1,172,790 Canadians identified themselves as Aboriginal persons, that is, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit. The Aboriginal population is growing at a much faster rate than that of the non-Aboriginal population. Children and youth aged 24 and under made up almost half (48 per cent) of all Aboriginal people, compared to 31 per cent of the non-Aboriginal population.

1.4.3. Immigration and diversity

The 2006 Census enumerated over six million foreign-born people in Canada, almost 20 per cent of the population. Recent immigrants born in Asia made up



the largest portion, over 58 per cent, of newcomers to Canada since the previous census. Canadians reported more than 200 different first languages, with those whose first language is neither French nor English representing 20 per cent of the population. These include languages long associated with immigration to Canada, such as German, Italian, Ukrainian, Dutch, and Polish. Between 2001 and 2006, language groups from Asia and the Middle East, including the Chinese languages, Punjabi, Arabic, Urdu, Tagalog, and Tamil, recorded the largest gains.

As Canada's population ages and diversifies, steps are being taken across all levels of government and civil society to ensure its population remains highly skilled to help ensure a healthy democracy, personal well-being, and a globally competitive labour force.

1.5. Education in Canada

In Canada, executive legislative responsibility for education is granted to provinces in *The Constitution Act, 1867*; similar responsibilities are delegated to territories by the federal government. As a result, there is no federal ministry of education and no single pan-Canadian approach to adult education. There is, however, pan-Canadian collaboration facilitated by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by provincial ministers of education, as all jurisdictions seek to share information regarding the legislative, policy, and program directions of one another.

CMEC is the collective voice of Canada's ministers of education. It provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the fulfillment of the constitutional jurisdiction for education.

While there are a great many similarities among provincial and territorial education systems across Canada, there are also important differences that reflect the geography, history, culture, and specialized needs corresponding to the populations served. The comprehensive, diverse, and widely accessible nature of education systems in Canada reflects the country's widespread belief in the importance of education. More information on education systems in Canada can be found by consulting "Education in Canada: an Overview" at <http://www.cmec.ca/299/Education-in-Canada-An-Overview/index.html>.

Though there is no federal department responsible for education, the Government of Canada's support and funding for adult learning and skills



development is linked to its interest in developing a well-functioning labour market. The Government of Canada plays a lead role in support of postsecondary education, adult learning, and skills development with a labour-market orientation. The Government of Canada also has responsibility for Aboriginal education for First Nation populations who live on reserves. This is delivered through federally funded, band-administered schools. The Government of Canada places an emphasis on measures to enhance the participation of the unemployed and under-represented groups in the Canadian labour market (e.g., persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people, older workers, and youth) through renewal and implementation of programs designed to address their learning and training needs, as well as through ongoing policy research and development. This work is undertaken in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders.

Canada's education systems are rated among the best in the world. These systems provide high-quality learning opportunities and the skills Canadians need to successfully enter the labour market, achieve personal success and happiness, and contribute to a strong democracy.

Canada's education systems are responsive to the needs of different populations and age groups. Provinces and territories have educational programming at different levels that specifically address the needs of target populations as described in this report. In the Canadian context, adult learning and skills development are considered essential for all residents to actively engage in Canada's knowledge-based economy.



2. ADULT-LEARNING AND SKILLS-DEVELOPMENT SYSTEMS IN CANADA

This section of the report describes the initiatives of Canadian jurisdictions relating to adult learning and skills development. It responds to the *GRALE* questions while also highlighting key adult-literacy initiatives as part of Canada's final report on activities related to the UNLD.

2.1. Policy

Every Canadian jurisdiction has specific strategies, policies, or legislation relating to adult learning and skills development through their ministries responsible for education.

One of the most comprehensive sources of information on the policies and legislation in each province and territory for adult learning and skills development is the 2005 report from CMEC, [Developing an Adult Education Policy Framework: Terminology, Typology and Best Practices](#). This information was updated in the 2008 Canada report for CONFINTEA VI. Since then, a number of additional provincial and territorial policies and strategies have been developed. Most notably, two provinces have introduced new legislation related to adult learning. Nova Scotia's [Adult Learning Act](#), introduced in December 2010, strengthens standards for adult-learning programs in the province. Manitoba's [Adult Literacy Act](#) came into effect in 2009, and [The Advanced Education Administration Act](#) was passed in 2010.

In Canada, adult-learning and skills-development policies are often linked to provincial/territorial strategies, cross-ministry strategies, poverty-reduction strategies, or specific skills-development strategies.

For example, the BC Jobs Plan is a new provincial labour-market strategy aimed at building a highly skilled and globally competitive workforce. Quebec adopted a series of measures in June 2011 to align training and employment. Yukon's [Comprehensive Skills and Trades Training Strategy](#) is a long-term planning tool aimed at addressing current and future training needs, complementing and supporting other strategies in the Labour Market Framework for Yukon.



Alberta has developed new policy around e-learning: greater recognition of credentials for foreign-trained professionals through meeting with licensing bodies in Alberta and offering enhanced assessment services for individuals.

The Government of Canada has made it a priority to ensure that Canada has the best-educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world.

The Government of Canada partners with employers, provinces, and territories to help Canadians acquire the skills needed to succeed in the labour market. Ongoing priorities include updating key components of the essential-skills methodology, continuing work with the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) to explore an occupational performance standards framework for Red Seal trades, and enhancing the recognition of foreign credentials in Canada by establishing and negotiating partnerships for target occupations under [Foreign Qualification Recognition](#) agreements. For more information, please consult the [Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications](#).

In addition to these policies, Canada's governments have also implemented a number of literacy policies to improve coordination, programming, and outcomes of literacy initiatives.

Strategies to improve adult literacy are high on the policy agenda and focused on improving access to and enhancing learning opportunities. Since 2006, four jurisdictions have implemented comprehensive literacy policies:

- Alberta's [Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy](#) (2009);
- New Brunswick's [Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick](#) (2009);
- The Northwest Territory's [Towards Literacy: a Strategy Framework – 2008–2018](#);
- Manitoba's [Adult Literacy Strategy](#) (2009).

Progress was also made toward developing comprehensive adult-literacy strategies in Newfoundland and Labrador, Saskatchewan, Prince Edward Island, and Nunavut. In Saskatchewan, two ministries are working together and have drafted a provincial literacy framework that will identify opportunities for collaboration with other ministries. This approach recognizes that policy,



programs, and services with literacy implications affect many areas of government and therefore require a coordinated approach to literacy across government.

Similarly, the Newfoundland and Labrador government is using partnerships across ministries and sectors to develop initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the importance of literacy, improving access to literacy programs and services, enhancing opportunities for effective practice, and encouraging and increasing adult literacy participation. Nunavut's literacy framework forms the basis for engagement and collaboration with stakeholders on the development of a literacy strategy. This has included participation in a three-day Elders Conference to gather the traditional thoughts of elders to inform the framework discussions. Prince Edward Island is developing an updated literacy and essential-skills strategy over the next two years.

These strategies focus on developing a whole-system approach attuned to the varying demands and constraints people face at different stages in their lives and to the pathways they follow through education and training into work. Through the Employment Ontario system, the province is implementing its own [Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework](#), designed to improve the ability of people to transition successfully to their next steps in employment, further education and training, and independence.

Nova Scotia has committed to assisting more than 500 learners over the next three years through the jobsHere initiative, which aims to improve literacy, encourage the completion of high-school diplomas, and increase employment opportunities. In addition, Nova Scotia has set a goal to double the number of employers each year that are able to provide customized education and essential-skills development for employees through the province's Workplace Education Initiative.

Initiatives across jurisdictions include [Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity – An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009–2014](#), developed by New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, through the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET). The plan was launched in September 2009 and directs CAMET ministers to develop an action plan to improve literacy rates in Atlantic Canada.

CMEC, through its Literacy Action Plan (2007), recognizes literacy as a priority for Canada. Provincial and territorial ministers of education committed to work together in five key areas — policy, practice, evidence, awareness, and



engagement — in their own jurisdictions and collectively through CMEC to increase the literacy levels of Canadians.

Through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), the Government of Canada complements provincial and territorial literacy and essential-skills efforts by working with partners across Canada to help employers, practitioners, and trainers build literacy and essential skills into their training programs. These efforts help Canadians and their families develop the skills necessary to evolve with their jobs and adapt to change. For example, OLES is collaborating with Industry Canada's Canada Business Network to build on their existing infrastructure to encourage and help small-business owners and entrepreneurs to invest in skills development in the workplace.

2.1.1. Recognition of informal adult learning

Several provinces and territories have developed policies to recognize, validate, and accredit non-formal learning. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is a process that helps adults demonstrate and gain recognition for learning they have acquired outside of formal education settings.

Nova Scotia's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy Framework (November 2009) takes into account the skills and knowledge that people acquire informally and experientially through their life and work.

Saskatchewan and Manitoba also have policies on prior learning that allow for credit to be given in their adult-learning and basic education programs for formal, non-formal, and informal learning experiences.

Northwest Territories recently began piloting an Adult Recognition Model that allows residents to receive credit for prior learning.

In Quebec, recognition of prior learning and skills is grounded in the Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training, released in 2002. Adults can also access a number of tools to facilitate recognition of their prior learning and skills.

Ontario's policy provides a formal evaluation and accreditation process known as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for Mature Students, established in 2003, which enables students 18 years of age and older who have been out



of school for at least a year to earn up to 26 of 30 credits toward high-school graduation. Prior learning includes the knowledge and skills a student has acquired, in both formal and informal ways, outside of Ontario secondary-school classrooms.

In British Columbia, students can earn credit through equivalency, challenge, external credentials, postsecondary credit, and independent directed studies. In addition, a number of postsecondary institutions in BC have PLAR.

While New Brunswick does not have an official policy statement on recognizing informal learning, the province supports the New Brunswick PLAR Action Group, which consists of a variety of stakeholders. Prior learning is incorporated into the activities of programs such as Community Adult Learning Network classes, Workplace Essential Skills, and Digital Literacy.

In 2008, Alberta Advanced Education and Technology released *Advancing PLAR in Alberta: An Action Plan*. The overarching goals of the action plan are to: support a quality, learner-centred system; foster a culture in support of all learning; facilitate and enhance learning and work transitions; and increase participation and access to continuous education, particularly for under-represented groups.

More information on prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada is available at <http://www.cicic.ca/412/prior-learning-assessment-and-recognition-in-canada.canada>.

2.1.2. Language policies

Some jurisdictions have policies on language of instruction reflecting the demographic and cultural dimensions of the populations they serve. Languages include English, French, Braille and sign language, and Aboriginal languages. New Brunswick and Quebec have legislation spelling out their language policies.

2.1.3. Involving adult learners in policy development

Governments have made great efforts to directly involve adult learners in discussions about policy and plans for adult-learning and skills-development programs. Most often, adult learners are asked for input, through consultation, surveys, or focus groups, to provide feedback on various aspects of adult learning, from program evaluation to policies and quality frameworks.



In Saskatchewan, adult learners have participated in focus groups and surveys and have been represented on the Saskatchewan Literacy Network board and other committees. In Nova Scotia, adult learners have been involved through consultation and focus-group discussion. In Ontario, adult learners were consulted during a third-party evaluation of the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program in 2011 and the piloting of the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework. Ontario's Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA) is a major stakeholder often consulted on policy and program changes in adult secondary-school programming.

Adult learners in Prince Edward Island were involved in the development of that province's first strategy, released in 1996, and will be involved with the development of its new strategy.

In British Columbia, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador, adult learners have also been part of consultation processes. In New Brunswick, adult learners have participated in learner focus groups as part of the development of a quality framework initiative. Additionally, as part of the quality framework, learner consultation is considered a best practice and is monitored by the delivery teams. In British Columbia, the Ministry of Advanced Education collaborated with Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Partners to develop an Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education and Training Policy Framework and Action Plan. The ministry also used social media (Twitter and Facebook) as part of its engagement with citizens. Quebec has called upon learners to provide input on requirements for the secondary-school diploma.

2.2. Governance

In Canada, provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education plan, implement, and evaluate policies for adult learning and skills development. This is often done through consultation and/or in partnership with organizations from other government sectors, nongovernmental organizations, or the private sector. The range of organizations involved in various jurisdictions includes those from the education, health, culture, social services, employment, immigration, and other sectors.

The provision of adult learning and training in Canada is achieved through a wide spectrum of agencies, organizations, and institutions. School boards, colleges, cégeps, vocational centres, adult-learning centres, Aboriginal-owned



and -operated postsecondary institutions, community groups, non-profit and volunteer groups, employers, unions, associations, private companies, special groups serving Aboriginal learners, immigrants, women, prisoners, the disadvantaged, and the unemployed — all provide programs and services.

Provincial and territorial governments, often in cooperation with the federal government, provide much of the funding for these programs. The structures, funding models, providers, and programs vary among jurisdictions, but each provides a wide range of learning opportunities for adults.

In all of Canada's 13 jurisdictions, the ministry (or ministries) responsible for education are responsible for ensuring the coordination of adult-learning and skills-development activities among these stakeholders.

2.2.1. Capacity building

Each provincial and territorial government supports capacity building to ensure that different stakeholders are able to participate in policy and program development, implementation and evaluation of adult-learning and skills-development initiatives.

Jurisdictions have various methods of supporting capacity building. For example, British Columbia co-constructs policy with adult-education teachers and administrators and funds a non-profit literacy organization that facilitates capacity building for community-based literacy providers. Through the development of District Literacy Plans, communities are given the tools to identify their own literacy needs, opportunities, and programs. This engagement in planning supports community-based capacity development throughout the province.

Alberta supported a Workplace Essential Skills Training Program for workplace essential-skills training through the development of partnerships designed to foster a confident, innovative, and highly literate workforce. These partnerships will help employed Albertans to gain the essential skills necessary to fully participate at work and contribute to a highly productive workplace.

Saskatchewan funds communities to develop capacity and create innovative ways to address their literacy needs through community literacy planning involving business and community partners. It has also undertaken a pilot project to increase community capacity to respond to potential workers who, with assistance, could increase their literacy levels and employability skills.



In Northwest Territories, the territorial government supports capacity building by providing annual in-service training for delivery-agent instructors and adult educators. Similarly, Nova Scotia supports capacity building by funding professional-development activities.

Employer and community capacity are areas of emphasis in Manitoba's labour-market agreements and plans. In addition, the province's cross-government adult-literacy table supports coordination and collaboration among relevant provincial government departments.

Funding for 28 literacy-support organizations which reflect the service providers' cultural, linguistic, and delivery-mode diversity is Ontario's key capacity-building tool. In addition, the Adult Education Policy Unit works in partnership with CESBA and other stakeholders to develop and distribute tools and resources to support professional development for adult-credit-program practitioners.

Quebec offers professional development and support to counsellors, teachers, and administrators in various areas, including the implementation of new adult-general-education curricula.

Prince Edward Island's Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning builds capacity by working in partnership with SkillsPEI and Holland College to develop, administer, and deliver literacy and adult basic education (ABE) programs.

In New Brunswick, the province is working through its Workplace Essential Skills strategic plan to increase reach and capacity through strategic partnerships and shared ownership of workplace essential-skills training. Additionally, the province is exploring alternative service-delivery models and strategies to address barriers to participation for adult learners.

In addition to funding the Yukon Learn Society to provide literacy services to Yukon residents, the territory also engages contractors to help support capacity building in strategic planning, policy development, implementation, and program evaluation.

The Government of Canada provides support to provinces and territories so they can provide innovative skills-development training through Labour Market Agreements (LMAs) and Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs). The Government of Canada has entered into these bilateral agreements with provinces and territories to enable them to design, deliver, and manage skills and employment programs. LMDAs are designed to help Employment Insurance



(EI)-eligible individuals to develop the skills needed to return to work. LMAs assist unemployed persons who are not eligible for EI benefits and employed persons who do not have a high-school diploma or recognized certification, or who have low levels of literacy and essential skills, to succeed in the labour market.

The Government of Canada also supports jurisdictions through Labour Market Agreements for Persons with Disabilities (LMAPDs) and the Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW). Under LMAPDs, the Government of Canada provides support to 10 provinces to enhance the employability of persons with disabilities and increase the employment opportunities available to them. TIOW is a cost-shared (70/30) initiative that assists unemployed older workers (normally aged 55 to 64) in communities of 250,000 or fewer people and affected by significant downsizing or closures, or ongoing high unemployment, through programming aimed at reintegrating them into employment.

The Government of Canada builds capacity in the literacy and essential-skills sector through OLES.

Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

OLES funds a pan-Canadian network of literacy and essential-skills organizations, at both the national and provincial/territorial levels. OLES builds and maintains the capacity of the network that in turn supports and transfers knowledge throughout the Canadian system of LES services and programs. The network also provides OLES with intelligence from the literacy and essential-skills sector in order to inform program policy and program directions.

OLES runs a series of webinars on issues important to the literacy and essential-skills sector. These webinars provide opportunities for learning and capacity building on important literacy and essential-skills issues, while at the same time providing a place for dialogue on program policy and plans.

OLES provides the opportunity for literacy and essential-skills stakeholders to participate in the evaluation of literacy and essential-skills programs through summative and formative evaluations of the OLES Program (OLES' grants and contribution program).

In 2005, HRSDC conducted a stakeholder engagement exercise which included small and medium-sized employers to determine how the Government of Canada could most effectively respond to their literacy and essential-skills capacity-



building needs, both as employers and workers (learners). Stakeholders asked the Government of Canada to develop tools to support them to “take action” on essential skills. In response to the 2005 engagement exercise, OLES developed a variety of free, easy-to-use, and customizable tools and supports to help facilitate essential-skills investments in, or for, the workplace. Currently, 88 tools are available to the public both on-line and in print format.

The Government of Canada is also active in building training capacity among employers through the Roundtable on Workforce Skills (RWS). RWS brings together leaders from industry, labour, and government to examine key labour-market trends and identify innovative ways to facilitate workplace-skills development among adult learners. Membership is composed of senior representatives from the business community and organized labour, along with representation from provincial/territorial governments and relevant federal departments. It supports the government priority of ensuring that Canada has the best-educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world.

2.3. Financing

In line with commitments made under the *Belém Framework for Action*, Canada’s provincial, territorial, and federal governments recognize the value of investing in adult learning and skills development, and their social benefits.

Every province and territory provides significant funding to adult learning and skills development as part of its overall expenditure on education. These expenditures, which include those for elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and adult education, are included in the following table, which shows total public expenditure on education across Canada between 1990-91 and 2008-09.

Total Public expenditure on education, Canada, 1990-91 to 2008-09 (millions of current dollars)							
1990-91	1995-96	2000-01	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
46,524	55,602	63,522	77,140	84,760	87,455	92,722	95,732

Note: Includes expenditure by federal, provincial/territorial, and local orders of government.

Source: Adapted from the Statistics Canada CANSIM database CANSIM Table 385-0001 (current dollars). Version updated August 27, 2009. Updated December 16, 2009.

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/2009003/tbl/b.2.1-eng.htm#n2>



As outlined previously, adult learning and skills development, though coordinated through ministries responsible for education, involve the participation of a number of other sectors. Therefore, costs associated with the provision of and access to adult learning and skills development go beyond the cost of providing learning opportunities and should be considered in the context of other costs for adults, such as income replacement, child care, or other services that remove barriers to adult-learning and skills-development opportunities. In this light, it is not possible to accurately report on all expenditures related to adult learning and skills development.

In all jurisdictions, provincial and territorial governments provide funds for adult learning and skills development, whether through funding of institutional providers, community and voluntary providers, subsidies directly to learners, special project funding, and/or subsidies to and cost-sharing programs with industry and business. As noted above, Canada's 13 adult-learning and skills-development systems vary significantly in organization, delivery, and program offerings to meet the needs of the different populations they serve. As such, no common budget indicators exist at the pan-Canadian level to calculate total expenditures on adult learning and skills development in Canada.

Saskatchewan has provided ongoing legacy funding for adult-literacy programming since 1987, and has increased capacity for adult-literacy services through the SaskSmart Innovations Fund. This initiative was introduced in 2005 to assist communities in developing partnerships to design and implement community literacy plans based on locally identified needs and resources. In 2010-11, Newfoundland and Labrador started providing Labour Market Agreement funds for adult literacy programming. Recognizing the importance of literacy, Ontario has committed to investing an additional \$44 million in its LBS Program from 2010-11 to 2013-14 and has increased funding for school board-delivered adult and continuing education programs by 45 per cent since 2003.

Between 2009 and 2012, British Columbia invested over \$4.4 million in the SkillsPlus initiative to help prepare adults for employment success by providing workplace-based instruction in essential skills. British Columbia also invested more than \$7 million in the Aboriginal Training for Employment Program, which provides Aboriginal people with culturally based job-related training and support services.



Pan-Canadian funding specifically for adult literacy is even more difficult to determine. In addition to the challenges noted above, adult-literacy programming in Canada is often provided in collaboration with other sectors such that literacy learning is embedded in other areas of programming (e.g., workplace safety, public libraries, public health) to ensure widespread action on literacy. Though a total budget amount is not available, the Government of Canada has funded numerous adult-literacy projects which are described below.

The 2012 budget announced \$6 million in additional funding to expand the ThirdQuarter project. ThirdQuarter is an on-line job program (www.ThirdQuarter.ca) led by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce that matches the skills of Canadians aged 50-plus with businesses and organizations. ThirdQuarter has developed an effective approach, permitting employers and workers to make suitable matches based on using a common language for employers to describe the skills they require and for workers to describe the skills they bring, thus putting the focus on matching skill sets rather than job titles.

The Government of Canada also transfers approximately \$2.5 billion every year to provincial and territorial governments through LMAs and LMDAs. LMA/LMDA funding gives provinces and territories the flexibility to target skills-development programs according to local needs. Many of the recipients of this funding obtain their training at one of Canada's community colleges.

The Government of Canada also transfers \$218M annually through LMAPDs to 10 provinces to improve the employment situation for Canadians with disabilities. In addition, between 2006 and 2014, the Government of Canada will have invested \$270 million in TIOW to assist unemployed workers aged 55 to 64 with their return to work.

The Government of Canada has taken significant steps to support apprentices and recognizes the important contributions tradespeople make to Canada's economy. The Government of Canada supports apprenticeships through a combination of grants and tax supports.

In Budget 2006, the Government of Canada introduced the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant (AIG) — a \$100 million annual investment. Through Canada's



Economic Action Plan in Budget 2009, the federal government announced the Apprenticeship Completion Grant (ACG) — an \$80 million investment over two years (in fiscal 2009-10 and 2010-11).

In addition to AIG and ACG, the Government of Canada also offers tax credits to support apprentices and apprenticeships. The Deduction for Tradespeople's Tool Expenses allows tradespeople to deduct up to \$500 of the total cost of eligible tools acquired in a taxation year that exceeds the amount of the Canada Employment Credit (\$1,095 in 2012). In addition to grants and tax supports, the Government of Canada supports approximately 60,000 apprentices every year for the technical or school-based portions of their apprenticeship through EI.

In addition to these investments, the Government of Canada has recently committed to a long-term agenda that will make tangible improvements to the quality of life of Northerners. To ensure that more Northerners can benefit from local employment opportunities, the Government of Canada has committed \$27 million over five years to expand adult basic education in the territories. This initiative is expanding territorial colleges' literacy and numeracy programs, particularly in remote communities, to target working-age Northerners and assist them in getting the basic skills they need to join the workforce and take advantage of emerging economic opportunities.

2.4. Programs and participation

Adult Canadians have a diversity of learning and skills-development opportunities. In recent years, more Canadians than ever before have engaged in some form of organized learning offered by either employers, professional associations and labour unions, governments, or other organizations offering training for particular groups such as Aboriginal people, immigrants, persons with disabilities, and older Canadians.

2.4.1. Adult-learning and skills-development programming

The nature of adult-learning and skills-development opportunities varies across provinces and territories, sectors, and communities to meet the specific needs of the populations they serve. Though program names and delivery methods differ across adult-learning and skills-development systems, the programs listed below offer examples of the types of programming offered. For a more comprehensive list of adult-learning and skills-development programs available in Canada, please consult the provincial and territorial Web sites listed in Appendix A.



Basic skills and learning programs for adults

All provinces and territories offer adult-basic-skills programming to meet the literacy and upgrading needs of adult learners. Provincial and territorial curricula and monitoring ensure quality, equity, and outcomes for adult learners.

English or French as a second/additional language

English and French are the two official languages of Canada. Language-training programs designed to meet the needs of newcomers to Canada are offered in a variety of settings and formats.

Community and volunteer-tutor adult-literacy programs

These programs offer community-based or one-to-one sessions, which may be in the form of tutoring, for adult-literacy learners.

Vocational education and training

Vocational education refers to a multi-year program or series of courses providing specialized instruction in a skill or a trade intended to lead the student directly into a career or program based on that skill or trade. It is offered in secondary schools and at the postsecondary level in public colleges and institutes; private for-profit colleges; and in the workplace, through apprenticeship programs. At the secondary level, vocational programs may be offered at separate, specialized schools or as optional programs in schools offering both academic and vocational streams.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship programs in Canada have generally been geared toward adults, with youth becoming increasingly involved in some jurisdictions. The related industry is responsible for practical training delivered in the workplace, and educational institutions provide the theoretical components. Since the late 1990s, apprenticeship registrations have shown a steady increase, reaching almost 327,500 in 2010.

The Government of Canada works closely with provincial and territorial governments and industry stakeholders. Through CCDA, both orders of government strengthen and promote apprenticeship systems and manage and deliver the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program. The program, which currently covers 53 trades, encourages the harmonization of provincial and



territorial apprenticeship training and certification programs and promotes labour mobility across the country.

Workplace and workforce learning

Programming is often developed in partnership with employers to provide adult-learning and skills-development opportunities.

The following types of programs are just a few of the adult-learning and skills-development programs offered in most provinces and territories of Canada:

- literacy (reading, writing, numeracy)
- vocational (technical, income-generation-related)
- life skills and/or health issues
- use of information and communication technologies
- official/local languages

In addition, several provinces and territories have programs that include:

- foreign languages
- human rights/civic education
- liberal education/personal growth (e.g., artistic, cultural)

In almost all provinces and territories, information and communication technologies are used in the delivery of at least some of these programs. More than half of all provinces and territories provide these programs in both of Canada's official languages, with the others providing them in English only. Northwest Territories also provides programs in Aboriginal languages, which is a challenge, given that the territory has 11 official languages.

In addition, Ontario and New Brunswick provide literacy programs in American Sign Language as the language of instruction, and both provinces provide them in Braille as well. In all cases, learning materials are provided in the language of instruction.

Most — but not all — provinces and territories work with forecasts for the supply of and demand for adult-learning and skills-development programs, although these are sometimes limited to informal measures such as the length of waiting lists.



2.4.2. Participation

Adult learning and skills development are increasingly recognized as essential in a knowledge-based economy in which the skills required for a success are constantly evolving. Productivity, competitiveness, economic development, and the well-being of individuals, families, and communities are closely linked to a well-trained and adaptive workforce.

Most provinces and territories have targeted specific learner groups in their adult-learning and skills-development policies. All include a focus on youth, Aboriginal learners, the unemployed, and persons with disabilities. Most focus on immigrants. Several also focus on older adults, rural residents, and/or prisoners.

In recognition of the importance of a lifelong approach to learning, an Access and Support to Education and Training Survey was conducted by Statistics Canada between June and October 2008.

The survey revealed that between July 2007 and July 2008, an estimated 10 million Canadians aged 18 to 64 had participated in some type of formal education credit program or training (including courses, workshops, private lessons, and on-the-job training that do not lead to a formal educational credential), whether for personal interest, career, or job reasons. This is 47 per cent of the Canadian population aged 18 to 64. Among the significant characteristics of those engaged in training were:

- The percentage engaged in training (34 per cent) was almost double that of those engaged in formal education credit programs (18 per cent).
- Participation in training generally increased with age, with 35–44-year-olds being the most engaged at 41 per cent.
- The percentages of men and women participating in training were very close, with men at 33 per cent and women at 35 per cent.
- Level of previous education had a strong influence on participation in training. Just over 14 per cent of those with less than a high-school education participated in training; the percentage rose to 24 per cent high-school graduates; it rose significantly to over 42 per cent for those with postsecondary education.
- The average duration of the training received in 2009 was 50 hours.



The survey showed that the vast majority (89 per cent) of training activities undertaken by employed Canadians were supported by an employer. This support was higher for activities undertaken by workers older than 35, and slightly higher for men. The proportion of training activities that were employer-supported was similar for the three levels of educational attainment.

Comparing the survey results to a similar study undertaken in 2002 shows some encouraging changes in terms of access to training:

- In 2008, 30.6 per cent of working-age adult Canadians participated in job-related training, a six per cent increase from 2002.
- Participation was highest for those aged 35–44 at 36 per cent, with 25–34-year-olds at 32 per cent and 45–64-year-olds at 27 per cent. All of these groups increased their participation rates from 2002.
- Those with less than a high-school education had the largest rate of increase (5.2 per cent) but still had the lowest rate of participation in training at 11.7 per cent.
- The proportion of job-related training activities sponsored by employers increased slightly, from 88 per cent in 2002 to 90 per cent in 2008.
- The increase was most significant for workers aged 35–44 and 45–64 and for those with a high-school diploma or equivalent.

Some provinces and territories have identified differences between men and women in their participation in adult-learning and skills-development programs. For example, from 2009 to 2011, Canada's investment assisted over 1.5 million Canadians through provincial and territorial programs and services funded by LMDAs. In the same period of time, approximately 425,000 Canadians were assisted through LMAs. In addition, LMAPDs support roughly 300,000 interventions each year through over 100 programs that are funded in part by the Government of Canada and designed and delivered by jurisdictions.

In 2009-2010, federal programs assisted over 60,000 Aboriginal adult learners; over 17,000 older workers received the skills-development training needed to succeed in the labour market; and close to 70,000 apprentices received skills-development support through the EI program.



2.4.3. Learning materials

Learning materials for adult education are developed in various ways by different provinces and territories.

For example, in New Brunswick, the Community Adult Learning Services Branch includes a Program Development and Operations section, which consists of two curriculum developers (one for each official language) and several consultants. These staff members develop curriculum and learning materials. They also evaluate curriculum and learning materials from external sources. Additionally, teachers and/or trainers from all programs develop highly customized learning activities and materials, which are mostly stored in an electronic repository.

In Yukon, materials are developed by the literacy organization; the Yukon government does not develop literacy-learning materials. In Ontario, literacy learning materials are developed by service providers, including colleges and school boards, and adult secondary credit materials are developed by school boards and the Independent Learning Centre. In Quebec, course materials for the various adult-general-education curricula are produced by publishers, the *Société de formation à distance des commissions scolaires du Québec* (Quebec school boards' distance education corporation), and individual school boards. Some materials are posted to the [Alexandrie on-line library](#). Member organizations of the *Réseau d'action communautaire autonome en éducation* (Autonomous education community action network) also design some materials.

Learning materials for literacy programs in British Columbia are developed by college instructors, educators certified by the Teacher Regulation Branch of the Ministry of Education, Decoda Literacy Solutions (a nongovernmental organization), and government. Learning materials for adult English language development are created by stakeholders with expertise, such as public postsecondary institutions and professional organizations, generally under contract to the provincial government.

The provincial curriculum in Prince Edward Island is approved by government for use in the education system.

In Northwest Territories, materials are developed at all levels up to management in the Advanced Education and Careers Branch of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, as well as at the college and NGO levels.

In Nova Scotia, the provincial government leads, with two curriculum consultants on staff and input from partners.



Curriculum for the provincial Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program in Newfoundland and Labrador is the responsibility of the Adult Learning and Literacy Division, Department of Advanced Education and Skills. Some literacy resource materials are developed at the community level.

In Saskatchewan, curriculum for secondary-level completion is developed by the Ministry of Education. This curriculum for secondary-level completion is also used by postsecondary institutions offering high-school completion programs for adult learners. The Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration has developed and implemented curriculum for ABE Level 3 (Adult 10), while the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, with the ministries of Education and of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration have developed literacy benchmarks for ABE Levels 1 and 2.

Ontario funds support organizations to develop learning materials that align with the new Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework standards and reflect both the goal-oriented nature of the LBS Program and its diverse learner needs.

The Government of Canada, through OLES, provides funding through its grants and contributions to develop literacy and essential-skills tools, models, and assessments. OLES also acts as the steward for the Essential Skills Research Project framework and methodology and the Essential Skills Profiles, and develops, publishes, and disseminates a suite of literacy and essential-skills resources to stakeholders across Canada.

Through the “Working in Canada” Web site, the Government of Canada provides customized reports that combine job postings, occupational profiles, labour-market information and forecasts, certification and skills requirements, and training and education information.

2.4.4. Monitoring participation

Almost all provinces and territories track learner-level information and data on learning outcomes. For example, Quebec, British Columbia, and New Brunswick collect learner-level information on enrolment, attendance, and program completion. The latter two provinces also collect data on learning outcomes from teachers/facilitators, standardized tests for certification purposes, and standardized tests for statistical purposes.



Most other provinces and territories collect at least some of this same information. Through province-wide information management systems, Ontario collects a wide range of learner data, including both standardized and non-standardized learner outcomes. These outcomes are aligned with the Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework, adult secondary-school course and diploma completions. In New Brunswick, the Workplace Essential Skills Program has developed new guidelines for the minimum number of hours that adult learners need to attend training based on the essential skill(s) targeted. This is intended to ensure a minimum standard for workplace training. The province is also working to identify key performance indicators and measures of success. Through this process, a standard for what is considered a “successful completion” has been identified. It is anticipated that in the near future, it will be possible to analyze the hours a learner attended training against the key performance indicators and/or successful completions specifically.

There is currently learner-level information at the pan-Canadian level.

2.5. Quality assurance

Quality assurance has become increasingly important as Canada’s landscape of education and training providers becomes more diverse. Quality assurance refers to the criteria and processes employed in reviews of institutions and/or programs to determine whether standards set for quality and outcomes are being met and maintained and whether they encourage continuous improvement in the quality of adult learning and skills development.

Each province and territory has its own approach to quality assurance and quality criteria in the following areas of their adult-learning and skills-development programs:

- curricula
- learning materials
- facilitators’ training

More information about these quality criteria is available on the provincial and territorial Web sites available in Appendix A.



Most provinces and territories also have quality criteria for teaching/learning methods and the assessment of learning outcomes.

To ensure quality programs, all provinces and territories offer training for potential adult educators/teachers through postsecondary institutions such as universities or colleges. Several provinces and territories provide such training through their ministries of education or local school boards. A few provide such training through nongovernmental organizations, and in Manitoba, training is available through private-sector providers.

Ongoing professional development is also available in all provinces and territories through postsecondary institutions. Most also provide professional development through their ministry of education or school boards and through nongovernmental organizations. In New Brunswick, Quebec, and Manitoba, professional development is also available through private-sector providers.

2.6. Measuring progress

In Canada, provinces and territories use a variety of indicators to monitor and evaluate adult-learning and skills-development programs.

The Government of Canada works with the provinces and territories through CMEC to develop standardized sources of information on skills development in Canada. Recent successes include federal-provincial/territorial cooperation in large-scale international surveys such as the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), as well as multilateral collaboration on collecting skills and learning data (e.g., student enrolment and PSE graduation rates). These efforts will strengthen the foundation of information on skill levels and labour-force supply in Canada, facilitate evidence-based decision making, and generate improved matching of skills and course offerings with market demand.

In addition to PIAAC, past international surveys, such as the 2003 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), provide population-based assessment of the skill levels of adults. For example, the 2003 ALL reported that an estimated seven million Canadian adults may lack the functional literacy skills they need to adjust to economic change.



Most provinces and territories use administrative data on enrolments and participation provided by service providers such as school boards, colleges, community groups, adult-learning centres. Some also use national census data and direct testing.

Most provinces and territories report that they face challenges in collecting adult-learning data, ranging from unavailability of data — especially on initiatives not funded by government — to inconsistent reporting and a lack of consistent standards. An additional challenge with data collection is the tendency of people with low-level literacy skills to not self-identify.

2.6.1. Evaluation mechanisms

Most provinces and territories monitor and evaluate adult-learning and skills-development programming.

For example, all school-district programs in British Columbia are part of regular audit processes. Provincial government staff, including contract managers, program developers, and policy analysts, monitor and regularly evaluate English language-development programming. Program evaluations are conducted on a regular basis, assessing both program implementation and outcomes. Data systems and contract reporting capture output and outcome information on clients, and outcome surveys are used to assess impacts of programs on clients.

Community-based adult-literacy programs and workplace-based programs are assessed using an evaluation framework that includes learner assessment against a common benchmark system and/or pre- and post-tests. Postsecondary-based adult-education and literacy programs are articulated, and student-outcomes surveys are conducted annually. Furthermore, enrolment targets exist for these programs to ensure minimum program-delivery levels.

Alberta's community-based literacy programs are implementing a common reading-benchmarks system that will support student evaluation and inform the development of programs. As well, enrolment targets are established and outcomes are monitored.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, sites delivering the provincial ABE program are monitored by provincial consultants. External evaluations regarding the delivery of ABE Level 1 have been conducted. Levels 2/3 of the ABE program have not been externally evaluated. A provincial ABE database tracks ABE data and audits graduation requirements for Level 3.



In addition to a third-party evaluation of literacy and basic-skills service providers that was undertaken in Ontario in 2010-11, that province monitors service providers on an annual basis. Similarly, interim and annual reporting and regular site monitoring are used in Nova Scotia to gather data for the evaluation of adult-learning and skills-development programming. Manitoba also monitors and evaluates programming.

In Quebec, stay-in-school and school-success indicators are built into partnership agreements between school boards and the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport*.

In response to its strategic plans and subsequent action plans, New Brunswick has engaged in a process to identify key performance indicators and performance measures for each of its programs. After ensuring that effective data-collection, storage, and reporting systems are in place, the province will complete the circle of monitoring and evaluation by establishing measures of success at program-development and operational levels. A program-evaluation framework will be developed, and subsequent external evaluation will be undertaken.

Monitoring and evaluation of adult-learning and skills-development programming in Northwest Territories was included in that territory's Adult Literacy and Basic Education Directive (2000).

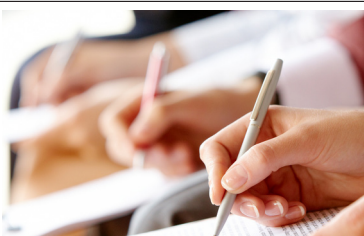
In Prince Edward Island, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms include monthly reports and program-completion reports.

The Government of Canada measures program success against expected outcomes, which are published in departmental performance reports. The reports can be found on-line at http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/publications_resources/dpr/index.shtml.

2.6.2. Studies informing policy and program design

Most governments have commissioned studies in order to inform adult-learning and skills-development policy, program design, and implementation.

The Government of Canada, through HRSDC, is working with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to develop a conceptual map for analyzing adult-learning outcomes. This mapping exercise includes the development of a typology, an analysis of learning activities, and a mechanism for capturing outcomes.



Two further studies, commissioned by OLES, explore digital skills and numeracy. The research on digital skills resulted in:

- a new concept of “digital technology skills” proposed as one of the nine essential skills. This concept is more comprehensive than “computer use” and involves complex cognitive and meta-cognitive skills;
- a Digital Skills Framework for Canadian workers which was developed and validated by a group of key informants representing various economic sectors across Canada;
- an analytical survey of promising tools and procedures for assessing digital skills. Proposals for developing a complexity rating scale of digital technology skills were generated.

Highlights of the numeracy research include:

- A comparative analysis of the definitions and facets of numeracy used by the international assessments, with a view to evaluating their compatibility with the functions and intended uses of the essential skills profiles developed by HRSDC.
- The Essential Skills Research Project (ESRP) definition of numeracy should highlight declarative and procedural mathematical knowledge, emphasize use of knowledge and abilities, describe purposes for numeracy related activities, be context-related, and emphasize critical engagement with numerical information and activities.
- Three complexity scales should be considered for the ESRP methodology: one for declarative knowledge complexity, one for operations/procedures, and one for mathematical representation.

HRSDC has also commissioned research from OECD in order to inform policy and program design and implementation on the matter of upgrading skills in local economies to avert the problem of low-skill equilibrium, where a low-skilled supply of labour is met with a low-skilled demand from employers. These studies resulted in two reports: a synthesis report comparing the situation of three countries, including Canada, and a special report on Canada.



Other studies commissioned from OECD include research on enhancing productivity and return on investment by leveraging training and skills-development in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

2.6.3. Working conditions of adult educators

Only a few provinces and territories have data on estimated remuneration for educators/facilitators in adult-learning and skills-development programs, or those who focus specifically on adult literacy.

Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick have undertaken initiatives concerning the working conditions of adult educators, facilitators, and volunteers. In Quebec, literacy teaching staff in school boards are paid according to collective agreements, teaching-related requirements, and expectations.

The Government of Canada, through an OLES-funded project, has commissioned the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network (CLLN) to undertake a descriptive study of practitioners (anglophone and francophone) in the field of literacy and essential skills in order to understand the overarching human-resources issues that may affect Canada's capacity to achieve better literacy and essential-skills results for Canadians.



3. CANADA'S CONTINUING ENGAGEMENT WITH UNESCO PRIORITIES

3.1. CONFINTEA VI Follow-Up

3.1.1. International Adult Learners' Week

Since 2009, International Adult Learners' Week (IALW) in Canada has been dedicated to the follow-up of CONFINTEA VI with the cooperation of CCU. Partners work together to develop a draft statement of principles that is reviewed annually. Each year, they examine the Belém Framework for Action recommendations that present particular challenges and choose a focus to encourage the sharing and promotion of the action undertaken in Canada that could inspire others to meet those challenges.

Partners include organizations representing Aboriginal peoples, francophones, persons with disabilities, immigrants, people living in geographically remote and isolated communities, and seniors, as well as officials from federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Partner meetings organized by CCU also discussed matters related to the recognition of prior learning in Canada.

Each year more provincial governments and partners cooperate to promote the importance of adult-learning during that week. In Quebec, an Adult Learners' Week has been an annual event since 2002.

3.1.2. Innovations in adult-learning and skills-development since 2009

Since CONFINTEA VI, a number of new initiatives have taken place across Canada. New adult-education and literacy policies have been developed in Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Nova Scotia. Northwest Territories introduced its Aboriginal Languages Plan.

Workplace and workforce training initiatives have been developed in a number of jurisdictions:

- Quebec, in addition to measures adopted in June 2011 to align training and employment, is working on a follow-up to the Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training.



- In Saskatchewan, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration introduced the Adult Basic Education – Essential Skills for the Workplace Program in 2010-11. This is a new program designed specifically for Aboriginal people with low levels of literacy who are preparing for employment opportunities. The program engages postsecondary institutions, employers, and First Nations and other communities in the delivery of programs that develop essential skills through instruction and workplace experiences. Partners are involved in continuous improvement of program delivery and accountability for improving outcomes.
- New Brunswick launched its Workplace Essential Skills Program in 2009. This program fills a gap in literacy and essential-skills training by providing training to employed low-skilled adults, in their workplace, as well as to “traditionally targeted” employable learner groups.
- The SkillsPlus program was introduced as a pilot in 2009 and helped working British Columbians gain the essential skills needed for success in the workplace. The program has since provided workplace-based essential skills training to over 900 employees.

British Columbia’s Aboriginal Training for Employment Program provides culturally based workplace training and supports services that connect Aboriginal people to sustainable employment opportunities.

New programs and resources have been developed in a number of provinces and territories to improve the quality of and access to learning opportunities:

- Quebec has disseminated a number of tools to support school boards and further enhance reception, referral, counselling, and support services that offer assistance to adults in developing a training plan, particularly to those with low educational attainment. Following the revision of the adult general education curriculum, which includes adult literacy and francization programs, mechanisms were put in place to implement the new curriculum. A frame of reference for auxiliary services, i.e., support for adults — both educational and personal — during the training process, has been provided to school boards.
- New Brunswick piloted the Digital Literacy Program in 2011, which provided a new means of supporting adult learners to enhance their digital-literacy skills. The program uses a mobile approach to training delivery, moving



beyond computer access to enhancing basic digital-literacy skills. The program is available in both official languages.

- Northwest Territories introduced an Adult Recognition Model and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition portfolio development course, which is being piloted by Aurora College in the winter of 2012.
- Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education funded the Saskatchewan Literacy Network in 2011 to administer a three-year bursary fund (\$47,000) to enable 20 literacy practitioners in Saskatchewan to gain a Family Literacy Certificate through Vancouver Community College's on-line Family Literacy Certificate program, which includes completion of six course (198 hours of instruction). Bursaries of \$2,000 each go to approved applicants who must demonstrate successful completion and connection to practice. This initiative which will increase the professional capacity of family-literacy practitioners and will foster continual improvement in program development, implementation and practice, and contribute to increasing the quality of family literacy programming in Saskatchewan.
- Alberta's Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology funded the Alberta Reading Benchmarks Project, a multi-year partnership project that will establish literacy benchmarks for adult-literacy and essentials-skills programs in Alberta. A Web site has been established as a resource to enhance capacity of literacy providers.
- New Brunswick launched the Quality Framework for Literacy and Essential Skills Training in 2009 to explore and define what constitutes quality as it relates to adult literacy and essential-skills programs and services in New Brunswick. In January 2011, Quality Framework for Adult Literacy and Essential Skills Service Delivery was published. The framework includes four key elements: quality standards, operational support, internal assessment, and external evaluation.
- British Columbia's Literacy Foundations Curriculum provides standardized, mandated, competency-based prescribed learning outcomes to address the literacy-development needs of graduated or non-graduated adult students in continuing/alternative education centres and in correctional institutions across the province. It enables adults with literacy levels below Grade 11 to develop knowledge and skills in five subject areas (English/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and information and communications technology) in order to be successful in courses required for graduation in either the Adult Graduation Program or the 2004 Graduation Program.



- Ontario has expanded its delivery of literacy through its e-channel strategy that enhances on-line service access to learners who are anglophone, francophone, deaf, or Aboriginal. Ontario has also developed and implemented an on-line system for assessment and recognition of newcomers' first languages for credit toward an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. This service is available across the province in seven languages, including Farsi and Mandarin. Ontario is also exploring the potential of regional partnerships of adult-education, literacy, and language-training providers to increase access to programs and services for all adult learners.

The Government of Canada is currently exploring new and innovative ways of funding projects that address literacy and essential-skills shortages among adult Canadians through:

- *innovation in the delivery method* – innovative ways to forge multi-stakeholder approaches and create a sense of ownership among stakeholders, and creative ways of delivering the innovation by promoting participatory and interactive approaches;
- *innovation in forging new partnerships and networks* for the purpose of sharing knowledge and experience, fostering communication and exchange of experiences; and
- *Innovation in addressing social innovation* with a focus on ensuring a strong interdisciplinary approach in addressing the interrelated social, economic, and environmental dimensions of social innovation.

These initiatives illustrate some of the diversity and innovation taking place in adult learning and skills development across Canada. More information on innovations in adult learning and skills development can be found by consulting the resources listed in Appendix A.

3.2. Activities since the 2006 UNLD mid-term review

Since the United Nations Literacy Decade mid-term review, literally hundreds of activities and initiatives have taken place in Canada to improve the literacy levels of Canadians.



3.2.1. Policies and practice to improve literacy

Most notably, provincial and territorial literacy policies and actions have either been introduced or are in development in all of Canada's 13 provinces and territories.

In 2009, CMEC published [Literacy Initiatives: 2008-2009](#). This compilation provides information about the numerous projects, awards, funding initiatives, documents, and policy and legislative developments related to literacy that were announced or implemented by the provinces and territories and by some of their partners since the April 2008 CMEC [Pan-Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum](#). While some of the listings describe commitments to literacy that were renewed between April 2008 and February 2009, others outline new initiatives that aim to expand and improve services and reach new groups.

3.2.2. Promoting the importance of literacy

Two major events are held annually in Canada to raise awareness and promote the importance of literacy: the presentation of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award and International Literacy Day.

Council of the Federation Literacy Award

Canada's provinces and territories are repositories of innovative principles, practices, and programs that reflect the very highest ideals in literacy best practices and serve the varying needs of many different types of learners. In order to bring recognition to achievements in literacy in every province and territory, Canada's premiers established the Council of the Federation Literacy Award medallion.

Since 2005, the award has recognized outstanding achievement, innovative practice, and excellence in literacy. Thirteen Council of the Federation Literacy medallions are presented annually, one for each province and territory. The Council of the Federation Literacy Award covers the entire spectrum of the field, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace and community literacy and conferred in recognition of the excellence of educators, volunteers, learners, community organizations (including nongovernmental organizations), and businesses in each province and territory. More information about the award and



its recipients is available at <http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/literacyaward/literacy.html>.

International Literacy Day

Every year, Canadians celebrate International Literacy Day on September 8. With events planned across the country, International Literacy Day provides every Canadian with a chance to reflect on the importance of literacy education for all segments of our population.

3.2.3. Trends in adult literacy in Canada

In line with global trends, Canada's provinces and territories continue to develop system-wide strategies for building and maintaining literacy skills. These strategies recognize that literacy is a complex, lifelong process that brings personal, social, and economic benefits to everyone. They promote adult-skills development and upgrading that can serve to bolster adults' capacity to access further learning, compete for better jobs, and contribute to the social, economic, and cultural development of their communities.

Providing quality learning opportunities

Quality at all levels of education is central to provincial and territorial action on adult literacy. Several jurisdictions are working to improve the quality of adult-literacy programs and their delivery. These programs serve as an important means of upgrading the literacy skills of adults with low educational attainment.

To ensure that learning content is closely linked to socioeconomic and cultural change in industrialized countries, training curricula must be revised regularly. In Quebec, the adult general education curriculum, including literacy, was recently updated. Programs now target the acquisition of a variety of life skills and knowledge that will eventually lead to a first certification or diploma.

A number of jurisdictions have established adult-education standards through province-wide curricula linked to assessment frameworks. Ontario continued to develop its new [Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework](#), which includes an assessment framework designed to ensure quality and program comparability across the system. Similarly, the [Alberta Reading Benchmarks Project](#) provides



learners with meaningful information about their skill levels and an understanding of their own skills development.

In addition to standards and measures, a number of new initiatives have been developed to further enhance learning opportunities by providing learners with the supports to improve access to and engagement in their learning. To this end, Manitoba has released several tools resulting from the [Enhancing Transitions for Adults to Further Education, Employment and Training](#) project, and Northwest Territories' Adult Recognition Model is providing adult learners with opportunities to work toward an NWT Senior Secondary School Diploma. Meanwhile, in Quebec, campaigns to promote literacy, adult education, and continuing education and training are relaunched annually with the cooperation of partner ministries as well as civil society.

Engaging employers

In a globally competitive, knowledge-based economy, having a skilled workforce is necessary to ensure productivity and sustainable growth. Foundation literacy skills are key to these economic benefits and to better lives in the 21st century. They contribute to economic growth both directly, through increased productivity, and indirectly, by improving workers' capacity to adopt new technologies and ways of working and to spur innovation.

Recognizing that the workforce of 10 and even 20 years from now will largely consist of people in the labour market today, much of the demand for new skills must be met by training our existing workforce. Several jurisdictions are engaging with employers and combining education policies with other policies to meet these demands through skills training and upgrading.

Activities across provinces and territories reflect this trend in partnering with employers to provide learning opportunities:

British Columbia's [SkillsPlus](#) initiative has provided essential-skills training to low-skilled, employed individuals in industry sectors identified as having low literacy levels in each of the province's economic development regions.

[Workplace Essential Skills Saskatchewan](#) is a provincial initiative that brings together public training institutions and industries or employers, as well as community-based organizations, to successfully prepare low-skilled job seekers



and marginalized existing workers to gain and retain meaningful, sustainable, long-term employment.

New Brunswick's [Workplace Essential Skills](#) program offers similar models of collaboration between business, industry, community, and labour organizations to introduce training throughout the province.

Ontario's Workplace and Community Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills initiative focused on expanding literacy and essential-skills services to include employers, the workplace, and communities and their particular employment education and training needs.

Quebec has developed an awareness-building and promotional kit on workplace basic training together with stakeholders, including school boards' employer-services offices.

A number of jurisdictions are working with employers to build new pathways that respond to labour-market shortages and evolving labour-market needs:

One example is Nova Scotia's [Continuing Care Assistant Link Program](#), which addresses the province's shortage of continuing-care assistants. The project allows adults to complete their high-school diploma and their Continuing Care Assistant Certificate at the same time, acquiring relevant work experience in the process.

Prince Edward Island's literacy and essential skills assessments for daycare workers assessed more than 200 workers at the province's daycare centres to identify gaps in learning for those needing further training for successful postsecondary education. This initiative was a component of the province's move to full-day Kindergarten and credentialed Kindergarten teachers.

In Quebec, school boards offer labour-market integration services (*services d'intégration socioprofessionnelle* [SIS]) as part of their educational services. SIS programs include on-the-job training toward certification for any one of the 131 semi-skilled occupations recognized by the programs.

Providing flexible and responsive learning opportunities

In order to maximize adult participation in adult literacy, the best results are achieved if education and training systems offer flexibility and responsive learning



opportunities that allow adults to learn what they want, when they want, and how they want. Provinces and territories continued to implement programs and services tailored to meet the learning needs of specific adult learners.

In line with the move toward improving access to 21st-century learning, Newfoundland and Labrador has been piloting on-line delivery of Level 1 of the ABE programs as a complement to traditional classroom-based delivery, with encouraging results.

A variety of programs and initiatives are under way across the country to make the learning process meaningful and relevant for Aboriginal learners. Aboriginal education is a central priority for the *Learn Canada 2020* declaration. The Government of Canada and individual jurisdictions have been keen to create more equitable and targeted programs for adult learners related to work and skills-related training. For example, the Joint Task Force on Improving Education and Employment Outcomes was established through an agreement between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) in 2011 to improve outcomes for First Nation and Métis people.

A number of pan-Canadian consultations have taken place with Aboriginal leaders and their communities to better create or adapt existing adult-learning and skills-development programming for specific community needs. These notably include the 2009 CMEC Summit on Aboriginal Education and the 2011 National Dialogue on What Works in Aboriginal Education. Pan-Canadian consultations have sought new and innovative solutions through private-sector engagement and employment placement (affirmative action). For more examples of Canadian actions to promote equal opportunity, please consult *Promoting Equality of Educational Opportunity – Canada Report for the UNESCO Eighth Consultation of Member States on the Implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education*.

Ontario continues to produce learning materials for Aboriginal learners through the Ningwakwe Learning Press.

In 2007, British Columbia implemented an Aboriginal Post-Secondary Education Strategy to help Aboriginal students to start, remain, and succeed in postsecondary education and training. Initiatives under the strategy included: piloting of three-year Aboriginal Service Plans at 11 public postsecondary institutions with a goal of increasing access, retention, and success for Aboriginal



learners; reducing financial barriers through targeted scholarships for Aboriginal learners; and enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal culture to be reflected within the infrastructure of institutions by funding Aboriginal Gathering Places.

Supporting educational opportunities for Aboriginal (First Nations, Métis, Inuit) peoples is a priority across all sectors of education in Manitoba. Postsecondary education, apprenticeship, and adult learning and literacy all incorporate supports for the success of Aboriginal learners. As an example, the Adult Literacy Strategy has an Aboriginal component focused on programming that is culturally, regionally, and educationally appropriate. In support of this strategy, Manitoba launched the Circle of Aboriginal Adult Educators, a forum to upgrade literacy and other skills of Aboriginal adult learners by enhancing the capacity of Aboriginal educators through sharing successful teaching strategies and program models.

Saskatchewan introduced Adult Basic Education – Essential Skills for the Workplace to help unemployed First Nation and Métis learners acquire basic literacy skills for employment.

Prince Edward Island’s Literacy and Essential Skills Program on Scotchford Reserve had similar aims, resulting in a highly successful 52-week pilot program (see also Trades Transitions Program).

Alberta’s T.R.E.A.T.Y. Model for Literacy and Essential Skills Project has similar goals, working through community enhancement to provide employment-related literacy-skills training to the province’s Aboriginal adults. Alberta supports almost 130 unique adult-learning providers across the province to address locally determined learning needs. Programming focuses include adult basic education, language learning, employment enhancement, and courses to address community issues.

Quebec is experimenting with a *Solidarité avec les Autochtones* [Aboriginal solidarity] project in one school board, with a view to promoting “*inter-intégration*” between Aboriginal adults receiving training and their learning environment. In addition, Quebec’s *Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* continues to fund an adult general education centre located in an Aboriginal community.



Jurisdictions also recognize that new immigrant adults face particular challenges and that literacy services can help this population participate in a more meaningful way by learning about language and workplace skills in a Canadian context. Yukon’s Literacy and Workplace Essential Skills Services for Immigrants initiative delivered English-as-a-second-language training and Canadian Workplace Essentials, among other settlement services, to Yukon nominees and immigrants. British Columbia expanded its English-language and literacy programming for immigrants under WelcomeBC, the province’s strategic framework for immigrant settlement services.

In support of the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, the Government of Canada funds programs to help immigrants obtain occupation-specific language training. The Government of Canada has also invested \$18 million over three years to create the Foreign Credential Recognition Loans pilot to help internationally trained workers pay for tuition and other training costs associated with the foreign credential recognition process.

Work is also under way to enhance learning opportunities for women. In Prince Edward Island, Trade HERizons was developed in collaboration with women’s groups to prepare low-skilled women for employment in trades. British Columbia’s Industry Training Authority Essential Skills initiative has reduced barriers to women’s participation in industry training to address essential skills deficiencies.

Lastly, in Quebec, the *Programme d’action communautaire sur le terrain de l’éducation* (PACTE) [community action on education program] helps support community organizations that work on adult literacy, school cessation prevention, reintegration of dropouts into the school system (street schools), and continuing education through community workers. These actions help enhance the skills of the target population or assist them in acquiring certification and diplomas.

3.3. Remaining challenges

Canada faces various challenges in its efforts to increase adult literacy and essential skills. Provinces and territories have identified a range of these, including:

Assessment, data, and evaluation – Several jurisdictions are concerned by the



lack of consistent data collection and assessment/evaluation tools, including difficulty in tracking learners over multiple years. The result is a dearth of information on learner outcomes to inform policy decisions and determine the return on investment.

Non-formal learning and certification/credentials – Some jurisdictions lack frameworks to recognize and articulate non-formal learning, while many employers still insist on an academic credential. There is a need for a form of certification for successful learners that is accepted by employers and educational institutions.

Coordination of program delivery – For some jurisdictions, a diversity of delivery agencies makes coordination and consistency difficult, particularly as instructional programs change. This is a particular challenge in jurisdictions where small populations are spread over large geographical areas.

Funding – Program costs are a challenge during times of tight public finances.

Lack of capacity – Some nongovernmental organizations lack the capacity to deliver sustainable, quality programming due to limited funding and other resources. Finding and keeping qualified staff and/or volunteers and providing them with sufficient professional development can also be significant challenges.

Learning methods/delivery models/tools and resources – Some jurisdictions see a need for diversified learning methods, alternative delivery models, and on-line resources. It is important to fully utilize quality tools and resources and minimize their duplication.

Partnerships and citizen engagement – There is a strong need to strengthen partnerships between school and community networks and with employers to instill in them with the importance of literacy and essential skills in the workplace. There are also important opportunities for government to reach out and gain a better understanding of the skills that employers need. It is also important to enhance citizen-engagement activities.

Culturally appropriate programming – It can be a challenge to ensure culturally appropriate programming for Aboriginal adults and new Canadians.

Increased access – There is a need to improve access for rural and remote learners and for those who face multiple barriers. There is also a need to



overcome a variety of non-financial barriers faced by adults with low skills (such as stigma and unwillingness to admit literacy issues, inability to navigate the learning, literacy, and essential-skills system, and a lack of access to opportunities).

Learner recruitment – It can be challenging to reach out to those who have been out of education the longest. Also, in areas where the economy is strong and jobs relatively easy to come by, it can be difficult to recruit learners even when they face significant literacy difficulties.

3.4. Future prospects

Canadian jurisdictions are optimistic about the prospects for sustaining efforts in literacy beyond 2013, for the following reasons:

Government commitment – In many jurisdictions, governments have expressed strong commitment to continued support of literacy initiatives.

Promising new strategies – Several jurisdictions are developing or implementing new, comprehensive, strategic adult-literacy plans and frameworks.

Data collection – Some jurisdictions report that they are making progress with standardized data collection.

Improved outreach – Some jurisdictions are developing ways to reach more of those who have been out of education the longest, increase the number of graduates, and improve how the needs of the least-educated are met.

Engaging employers – The Government of Canada is finding new and innovative ways of engaging employers through the Canada Business Network, innovative grants and contributions projects, innovative funding arrangements, and awareness-building activities.



Appendix A — Sources

Canadian Commission for UNESCO

<http://www.unesco.ca/>

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada

<http://www.cmec.ca/>

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml>

Education Web sites

Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education

<http://eae.alberta.ca/>

Alberta Education

<http://education.alberta.ca/>

British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/aved/>

British Columbia Ministry of Education

<http://www.gov.bc.ca/bced/>

Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/>

Manitoba Education

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/>

Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec

<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/>

New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

<http://www.gnb.ca/0000/index-e.asp>



New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
http://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/post-secondary_education_training_and_labour/labour.html

Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Advanced Education and Skills
<http://www.hrle.gov.nl.ca/hrle/>
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education
<http://www.gov.nl.ca/edu/>

Northwest Territories Department of Education, Culture and Employment
<http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/>

Nova Scotia Department of Education
<http://www.ednet.ns.ca>

Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/lwd/>

Nunavut Department of Education
<http://www.edu.gov.nu.ca/>

Ontario Ministry of Education
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/>

Prince Edward Island Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
<http://www.gov.pe.ca/education/>

Prince Edward Island Department of Innovation and Advanced Learning
<http://www.gov.pe.ca/ial/>

Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration
<http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/>



Saskatchewan Ministry of Education
<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/>

Yukon Department of Education
<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca>

Adult Learning and Education

The focus of this report is on progress made in adult education and literacy policies, governance, financing, participation, and quality. It was developed jointly by Canada's provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education, through their intergovernmental body, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC); the Government of Canada, represented by Human Resources and Skills-development Canada (HRSDC); and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCU). This work was led and compiled by CMEC.

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