

Workplace Literacy

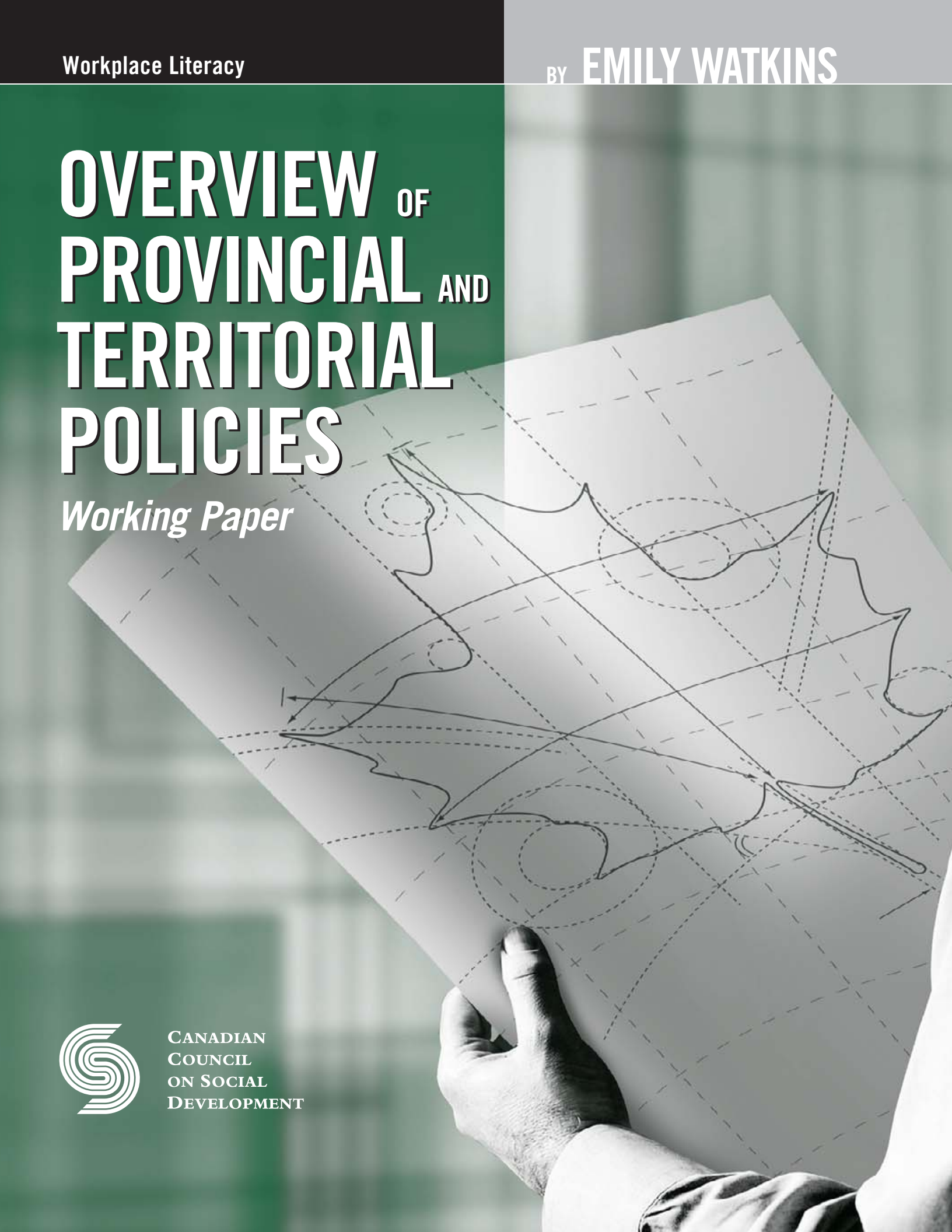
BY EMILY WATKINS

OVERVIEW OF PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL POLICIES

Working Paper



CANADIAN
COUNCIL
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DEVELOPMENT



Workplace Literacy

Overview of Provincial and Territorial Policies and Programs

Working Paper
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Table of Contents

Foreword.....	iii
Introduction.....	1
British Columbia.....	1
Alberta.....	3
Saskatchewan.....	5
Manitoba.....	7
Western Region.....	8
New Brunswick.....	9
Prince Edward Island.....	10
Newfoundland and Labrador.....	11
Yukon.....	12
Northwest Territories.....	13
Nunavut.....	14
Combined NWT and Nunavut Initiative.....	14
Conclusion.....	15

Foreword

In Canada and internationally, there has been increased attention paid to adult literacy in the workplace since the release of two surveys done between 1994 and 2003. However, workplace literacy in Canada is still a largely invisible issue, both for the public and politicians. There is no national strategy. Few provinces and territories have education and training strategies that include workplace literacy as a component – and those that do have significantly varied approaches.

The Canadian Council on Social Development’s project, “Literacy Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support” examined what might be done to strengthen the infrastructure of literacy programs in Canada, specifically in the area of workplace literacy. The project, launched in 2004, sought to identify the types of approaches to workplace literacy training – internationally and across Canada – that have proven to be effective in engaging employers in workplace literacy initiatives.

Research for the project proceeded in four phases: an extensive literature review; a survey of the international program and policy literature; a review of Canadian policies and programs at the provincial level; and three detailed provincial case studies including interviews with employers. Our interviews with select employers in Canada indicated areas where the employers agree about the types of approaches, incentives, and programs that work best in a range of employment environments.

Findings from this project are presented in a series of Working Papers, a Final Report that includes an analysis of the case studies and the findings from employer interviews, and an Executive Summary.

Reports from the Workplace Literacy Project include the following:

- **Overview of Selected International Programs: Working Paper**, by Paul Roberts and Anna Torgeson, looks at the conditions for adult education and training, including workplace literacy, in eight OECD countries;
- **Overview of Provincial and Territorial Policies: Working Paper**, by Emily Watkins, provides an overview of current adult education and workplace literacy policies and programs across Canada;
- **Canadian Literature Review and Bibliography: Working Paper**, by Paul Roberts and Rebecca Gowan, looks at various perspectives and approaches to workplace literacy by different stakeholders. It also examines research on the benefits of workplace literacy programs for employers and workers;
- **Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support**, by Lynette Plett. This report draws together the findings of the working papers and discusses the lessons learned from Canada and elsewhere regarding successful employer involvement in workplace literacy programs. It also includes an analysis of three provincial case studies of workplace literacy programs and interviews with employers in those provinces;
- **Programs in the Workplace: Executive Summary**; and,
- **Programmes en milieu de travail : Sommaire.**

All of the Workplace Literacy reports are available free of charge on the CCSD's website at www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2007/literacy/.

The bulk of research for this project looked at workplace literacy practices between 2004 and 2006. However, much has changed in the international and Canadian contexts since that time. For example, in 2006, the federal government created the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) which integrated the National Literacy Program, the Office of Learning Technologies, and the Learning Initiatives Program, then subsequently announced spending cuts totalling \$17.7 million to literacy programming across the country. It is beyond the scope of our current study to explore the implications of these more recent changes in government policies and programs.

As we look forward, evidence from these reports suggest that employers have an important role to play in building a literacy program infrastructure that responds to local needs. But employers aren't interested in playing this role on their own. They view workplace literacy programming as a partnership endeavour, one that demands leadership and resources from different levels of government. We hope that the findings from this project will support collective efforts to advance the provision of literacy and lifelong learning opportunities for all Canadians.

Introduction

This report provides an overview of workplace literacy and basic skills training policies and programs in all Canadian provinces and territories except Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. The report is based largely on information found on provincial and territorial websites dealing with literacy, basic skills training and workplace education. Most information was gathered from each jurisdiction's Ministry of Education, Advanced Education and/or Department of Human Resources, or wherever the province or territory focused its literacy and basic skills programming. Non-profit literacy organizations and networks, the National Literacy Secretariat, and various business and labour websites were also helpful in amassing the information. All sources, including a number of reports, are noted in links provided in the footnotes.

British Columbia

One of the main focal points of BC's literacy initiative is the "Community Adult Literacy Program of BC," formally the "Adult Literacy Cost-Shared Program." This program provides support through funding community-based program delivery, regional literacy coordination and province-wide services provided by Literacy BC (the provincial literacy organization). All projects must be done in partnership with a public post-secondary institution (college, university, institute or Thompson Rivers University). The program aims to enhance adult literacy activities in BC by encouraging and improving partnerships between community groups, school districts and public PSE institutions. The program encourages the active involvement of various sectors of society, including governments, voluntary organizations, schools, businesses and labour. Although a commitment to encourage the involvement of business and labour is a key priority, there are few references in the "Directory of Projects Funded" to examples of initiatives where business and/or labour have been engaged.¹

According to the Directory, the Adult Literacy Cost-Shared Program funds approximately 64 programs a year. Many of the projects funded are family-based literacy initiatives or programs targeted to specific populations. Based on past reports, only a few could be considered as workplace literacy initiatives. However, in 2002/03, two projects were funded in conjunction with unions or management to deliver literacy skills training. The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) offered training programs to assist displaced workers after a mine closure, and management at the Hastings Race Track in Vancouver, in an effort to promote internal promotions, provided literacy training to its employees.² In addition, although funded by the federal government in BC, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union in Vancouver were working through Douglas College to improve the literacy skills of their members.³

¹ <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/literacy/projects.htm>

² <http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/literacy/projects.pdf> CEP program p. 4 Hastings Race Track p. 18.

³ <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=/en/hip/lld/nls/Funding/2004-05bc.shtml&hs=1xa>

In the Service Plan of the Ministry of Advanced Education for 2006/07-2008/09, five “Great Goals” to be achieved by 2015 are noted. Under the first goal – “Make British Columbia the most educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent” – there are some references to literacy and a reference to workplace literacy:⁴

- *Expanding programs designed to improve adult literacy and basic skills, including English as a second language, adult basic education and adult special education

- *Exploring options for building regional innovation capacity to support partnerships between post-secondary institutions and local industry.

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs in the province are also delivered through the Ministry of Advanced Education to help people complete their high school diploma. ABE courses are provided, which can lead to a high school diploma, “Dogwood Certificate,” and/or prerequisites for post-secondary programs. Courses can be taken through local high schools or post-secondary institutions, and tuition is free for those who have not graduated from Grade 12. The Ministry also provides access to an ABE Student Assistance Program. It is designed to assist with the costs of programs such as academic upgrading, pre-vocational training, English language training, and adult special education. The Ministry of Advanced Education hosted a national forum on adult literacy in 2006, in partnership with the Council of Ministers of Education.

In the area of Aboriginal Policy in BC, training for the workforce is an action area. The Olympic First Nations Training Economic Measures Project helps facilitate training and employment initiatives for First Nations people, including basic employment skills and literacy, linked to the 2010 Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games. Key project partners are the Squamish Nation, Mount Currie Indian Band, Musqueam Indian Band, and the Ministry of Advanced Education.⁵

In 2005, the provincial government announced more than \$40 million in literacy spending, including \$5 million for literacy innovation grants, \$1.4 million for adult literacy, \$10 million for textbooks, \$3 million for Ready, Set Learn (a program for preschoolers), and \$5 million for Literacy Now.⁶ Literacy Now is a community-based planning process designed to address local literacy needs.⁷ Its focus is a community development strategy designed to stimulate new literacy initiatives, alliances, programs and collaborative planning within communities. Literacy Now also provides a “tool kit” of sorts, which allows communities to assess their literacy needs and create networks to address them.

The BC Workforce Literacy Initiative is spearheaded by Literacy BC and funded in part by the National Literacy Secretariat. It is a voluntary coalition of representatives from

⁴<http://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2006/sp/ae/Goals,Objectives,StrategiesandResults8.htm>

⁵<http://www.ceaace.ca/foo.cfm?subsection=lit&page=pol&subpage=lan&subsubpage=pro&topic=bri>

⁶ Government of BC press release - http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2005EDU0074-000797.htm

⁷ Literacy Now website:

<http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/Content/LiteracyNow/LiteracyNow%20Home.asp?langid=1>

business, labour, education and the government to assist Literacy BC in promoting workforce literacy among various stakeholder groups. In its 2000-2001 Annual Report, Literacy BC describes the Initiative as designed to promote active partnerships and demonstrate to partners their direct role in workforce literacy initiatives. The Annual Report also refers to a newsletter produced under the Initiative entitled, “Learning Curves,” a twice-yearly bulletin to keep partners up-to-date about workforce literacy initiatives.⁸ More recent annual reports make no reference to the Initiative or the newsletter, and there are few direct links to it on the Literacy BC website.

A presentation by the Business Council of BC in 2004 refers to workforce literacy projects and attempts to promote the sharing of best practices. A handful of workplace literacy projects in the province are highlighted but the information about the projects is not very detailed.⁹

The BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council, SkillPlan, is an interesting example of a joint labour-management initiative to promote learning in the workforce. The mission of SkillPlan, established as a not-for-profit society in 1991, is to develop strategies to improve the essential skills of people working in the unionized construction industry in British Columbia and the Yukon. SkillPlan provides direct assistance to members including tutoring, study groups and classroom delivery. They also work in partnership with a network of training plan administrators and instructors to support apprentices in fulfilling their skills upgrading needs. SkillPlan offers professional support for course development, test making and clear language. The society also undertakes work funded by federal and provincial governments when the scope of the work contributes to their objectives. Their consulting services include the development of essential skills curricula, plain language development, professional development workshops, and mentoring.¹⁰

Alberta

The Alberta Ministry of Advanced Education funds community programs such as literacy, ESL programs, and immigrant bridging programs. In general, its focus can be characterized as a community or family approach to literacy.

The Ministry of Advanced Education supports 73 Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs to recruit and train volunteer literacy tutors, and match them with adult learners. The Ministry’s Parent-Child Literacy Strategy also funds family literacy programs that integrate adult literacy instruction and early oral language development for children from birth to age six for “economically and socially disadvantaged families.” Included in the Strategy are 83 Community Adult Learning Councils located across the province. These Councils provide non-credit learning opportunities for adults in English or French as a Second Language, literacy, employability enhancement, and community

⁸ <http://www2.literacy.bc.ca/anreport/ar00-01/annrep01.htm>

⁹ http://www.bcbc.com/download.asp?file=NorthernLightsCollege_WFL_June%207-8&type=pdf

¹⁰ <http://www.skillplan.ca/English/about.htm>

issues. Councils respond to their communities' unique learning needs and are places to find information on local learning opportunities.¹¹

The Ministry of Advanced Education is also involved in a number of cross-government efforts. The only references to literacy or basic skills pertain to initiatives involving First Nations people. A reference to a workplace strategy is to encourage employment of First Nations individuals through an Industry Training Program. Alberta Learning is collaborating with stakeholders to develop Aboriginal initiatives leading to increased employment opportunities. For example, the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) has partnered with Maskwachees Cultural College to deliver a Petroleum Industry Training program.¹²

A focus on basic skills training in the workplace or as a strategy to promote employability is predominately found under the Department of Human Resources and Employment. In October 2003, the department released a policy framework entitled, "Skills Investment Strategy: Supporting the Development of a Skilled Workforce in Alberta."¹³ The Strategy has four components, one of which is "Workplace Partnerships," and under it is the Labour Market Partnerships (LMP) Program. These programs are intended to support human resource development in the workplace and labour market adjustment strategies through community partnerships. The LMP Program is designed to develop and support projects with groups, organizations, industry sectors and communities with common labour market needs.

Also in the policy framework of the Skills Investment Strategy is a reference to basic skills and literacy training within the Work Foundations Program. It is primarily for low-income Albertans who lack the basic skills to get a job and become "self-sufficient" (p.5). It involves a classroom-based training program, which includes ESL, Adult Basic Education, and academic upgrading or high school equivalency training.

Among non-profit organizations, the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES) Society is dedicated to promoting and coordinating support for essential skills training projects and raising awareness about the importance of essential skills training for workers.¹⁴ Its mission is not only to raise awareness of issues involving essential skills, but also to help employers, labour organizations and individual workers find appropriate educational solutions. In collaboration with industry and labour organizations, AWES provides comprehensive needs assessments to help identify training requirements. It then "facilitates and encourages" the development and evaluation of pilot and demonstration training programs.

In the late 1990s, AWES moved towards a sectoral approach to encourage basic skills trainings in the workplace.¹⁵ They have forged working relationships with industry

¹¹ <http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca/other/>

¹² <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/nativeed/nativepolicy/pdfs/FNMIProgRep.pdf> p.6

¹³ http://www3.gov.ab.ca/hre/si/pdf/si_framework.pdf

¹⁴ <http://www.nald.ca/awes/>

¹⁵ <http://www.nald.ca/awes/history/history.htm>

sectors such as oil and gas, construction, food processing, and tourism and hospitality. The Alberta provincial government and the National Literacy Secretariat jointly fund many of the projects taken on by AWES. Among the projects is a preparatory program for Aboriginal people hoping to enter apprenticeships and instructional materials for low literacy learners that integrate workplace essential skills in the curricula.¹⁶ AWES practitioner/consultants also are involved in research, development and marketing activities to improve and extend workplace literacy trainings. For example, an AWES practitioner worked at a warehouse in Edmonton providing one-on-one training for workers who needed essential skills to adapt to new technology in the workplace.

Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan has developed SaskSmart, a provincial government initiative designed to provide basic literacy and essential skills in English, mathematics, and science and technology.¹⁷ The aim of SaskSmart is to provide a strong coordinated approach to improving literacy levels in the province. SaskSmart developed out of an initiative of the provincial government in 1999, when an evaluation of basic education recommended the province develop a provincial literacy strategy. From this strategy, a Provincial Literacy Steering Committee was established, and SaskSmart was officially launched in September 2005.

The Literacy Commission in Saskatchewan attempts to bring together a wide range of individuals involved in literacy programming.¹⁸ Representatives from business and industry are listed as members of the Commission's Advisory Board. One of the central goals of the Commission is to coordinate human and financial resources dedicated to literacy and provide synergy across educational, economic and community sectors.

The Innovations Fund is the funding mechanism for SaskSmart and the Commission. The Fund provides financial assistance to develop or implement a community literacy plan. Two types of funding are available to communities – an Expression of Interest and Community Literacy Plan. The Expression of Interest funds provide communities with resources while they develop a coordinated literacy plan. In effect, it provides funding so that communities can design a proposal for funding under the Community Literacy Plan.¹⁹

Successful community plans must involve more than one organization and work to build on existing community capacity. There are three different components of a plan – community, family and workplace. No fixed amount of funding is set, but communities are encouraged to consider projects that requiring a maximum of \$50,000 to \$75,000 in support. SaskSmart also provides workshops to assist interested communities in preparing a request for funding. In terms of workplace literacy projects, the Innovation Fund will support strategies to assist businesses in addressing the literacy needs of their

¹⁶ <http://www.nald.ca/awes/inaction/action.htm>

¹⁷ <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/sasksmart/>

¹⁸ <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/sasksmart/commission/board.htm>

¹⁹ <http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/sasksmart/fund/innovation.htm>

workforce, in part by making literacy resources available to the businesses in a more cost-effective way than if they had to develop the materials independently.²⁰

The Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB) also acts as a vehicle for provincial initiatives on literacy and basic skills training in the workplace. The overall goal is to promote and coordinate, through partnerships and equity, the effective development of the Saskatchewan labour force.²¹ The Board attempts to provide effective avenues for workplace training that meet the needs of both industry and individuals. The Board also provides “leadership” in the following areas: career education, promotion of training partnerships for Aboriginal people, workplace literacy, and prior learning assessment and recognition. The emphasis is on achieving an equal partnership between industry and labour as one of its “Guiding Principles.”²² Founded in 1998 to promote workplace literacy, the Board is funded and supported by the National Literacy Secretariat and Saskatchewan Learning.

The Board’s focus on essential workplace skills includes the effective and functional use of reading, writing, numeracy, oral communications, computers, decision-making, critical thinking, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. The SLFDB has designed funding for Community Enhancement Projects, which provide communities and industry with the opportunity to plan and deliver essential workplace skills to currently employed people. In the Board’s 2002/03 report, it indicates that 10 such Community Enhancement Projects had been funded.²³ Many of the projects funded do not specifically list literacy or basic skills training; they involve more “advanced” skills training such as industry certification training (tourism) and computer skills specific to occupations (teachers’ assistants). Other project descriptions are too vague to determine whether literacy and basic skills are components of those projects.²⁴ Unfortunately, the website only lists projects on essential workplace skills up until 2003. More recent postings on the site seem to promote literacy awards, but do not include direct references to funding.

Also on the website of the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board is a report entitled “Learning at Work – Phase 3, Final Report” (2002).²⁵ This report describes the goals in Phases 1 and 2 of the project as being to develop an industry vision for workplace literacy and to include workplace literacy within the provincial training system through the Provincial Literacy Strategy. Phase 3 sets out to create a regionally based framework for the delivery of workplace skills training within a provincial mandate or from an industry perspective.

The “Provincial Best Practices Report” from the Council of the Federations indicates that provincial funding for the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) supported the delivery of a Workers’ Education and Skilled Training Program in unionized workplaces.

²⁰ http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/sasksmart/fund/SaskSmart_Call_Proposals.pdf

²¹ <http://www.slfdb.com/>

²² <http://www.slfdb.com/board/>

²³ http://www.slfdb.com/workplace_essential_skills/000137.shtml

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ <http://www.slfdb.com/phase3report.pdf>

According to the report, the SFL is also working with the SLFDB to develop a Workplace Essential Skills Strategy that includes targeted capacity-building for First Nations and Métis people, immigrants, workers in transition, industry sectors facing skills shortages, and community-based organizations working with under-employed individuals.²⁶

Through the Department of Advanced Education and Employment, the province provides funding for workplace-based training for the employed.²⁷ The province will provide support and funding to Saskatchewan employers in the manufacturing, processing and agri-value sectors to help retrain existing permanent employees to maintain or increase the competitive position of the sector. There is no specific mention of workplace literacy or basic skills training. Program objectives include the following:

- Increase training opportunities for current employees of Saskatchewan businesses who need retraining as a result of technological and workplace change;
- Increase industry investment in training to improve competitiveness and support economic growth and job creation;
- Support the portability of skills and the mobility of workers;
- Support worker adjustment through retraining;
- Improve the collaboration and partnership between employers, employees and training deliverers in addressing skills training needs.

Another program under the Department of Advanced Education and Employment is Sectoral Partnership. The aim of this partnership program is to bring industry sectors, community groups and training institutions together to plan and develop human resource strategies to address industry skill shortages. Funding is provided for such activities as: identifying industry sector skill needs; human resource planning; developing occupational standards; planning workplace adjustment; and developing training solutions.²⁸

The Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network Inc. is a provincial literacy body that works with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people to coordinate and promote Aboriginal literacy initiatives.²⁹ The network focuses on family and community-based literacy initiatives with no direct reference to workplace-based literacy training.

Manitoba

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Training directs general adult learning and literacy programs in Manitoba and provides grants to Adult Learning Centres (ALC) and part-time community-based literacy programs.³⁰ In addition, the Ministry provides ongoing support in the development and delivery of adult-focussed programming.

²⁶ http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/cof_practices_e.pdf

²⁷ <http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca/jsfs/wte.shtml>

²⁸ <http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca/jsfs/spp.shtml>

²⁹ <http://www.aboriginal.sk.literacy.ca/profile.htm>

³⁰ <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/all/index.html>

According to the Ministry's website, 47 learning centres have been funded, but only one had an obvious workplace or workforce component. The main policy framework for ALCs is found in the Adult Learning Centres Act. This legislation provides a regulatory framework for the centres by stipulating that only not-for-profit corporations, correctional facilities, First Nations Band Councils, unions or educational institutes can operate regulated ALCs.³¹ The Ministry has also funded, in part, the UFCW Training Centre in Winnipeg which provides literacy training to union members.³²

Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC) is a business-labour-government partnership which the province uses to promote workplace training and education.³³ The WEMSC works with employers to assess the needs for training in essential skills, helps develop and deliver customized workplace training, and offers programming to train-the-trainers.³⁴ Tripartite funding draws on resources from the Manitoba Ministry of Advanced Education and Training, the National Literacy Secretariat, and Human Resources Skills Development Canada.

Industry Training Partnerships – also funded through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training – work with employers and labour to develop “human resource solutions.”³⁵ A core service is essential skills training, which is defined as the ability to read documents to find information, write clearly, measure correctly, communicate effectively, think through problems, and make sound decisions. The Partnerships can help organizations identify their essential skills needs and implement appropriate training plans. This is accomplished through the support of direct delivery programs and the coordination of activities through the WEMSC.³⁶ Another program provided through the Ministry of Advanced Education and Training includes “wage incentives,” which are available to employers and businesses when they provide career-related employment experiences, create new jobs, and/or improve the skills and literacy levels of their employees.³⁷

Western Region

A regional body worth note is the Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Network (WWESTNET). It is described as a group of educators, labour leaders, government representatives and business people from the four western provinces and the Northwest Territories who have an interest in workplace basic skills education. Its purpose is to inform interested individuals in business, education, government and labour about key issues and activities in the field of workplace education. The network publishes a yearly newsletter and hosts symposia and conferences on related issues.³⁸

³¹ <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/a00e.php>

³² http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/all/directory/index_tuv.html

³³ <http://www.wem.mb.ca/>

³⁴ <http://www.wem.mb.ca/whois.php?PHPSESSID=eb95a12dec18438f104bb2d9df57ff06>

³⁵ <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/itp/index.html>

³⁶ http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/itp/fact_sheets/essential.pdf

³⁷ <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet/busemp/index.html>

³⁸ <http://www.nald.ca/wwestnet/index.html>

New Brunswick

In 2002, the province launched “Lifelong Learning: A Quality Adult Learning Opportunities” – a 10-year plan to increase learning opportunities for adults.³⁹ In April 2004, the New Brunswick government consolidated responsibility for adult literacy within the Department of Training and Employment Development. In December 2005, the Department released a policy statement on lifelong learning as a follow-up to the 2002 report.⁴⁰ The statement announced improvements to adult literacy training, the development of workplace essential skills training and certification, and the testing of community-based adult learning centres. A central goal was to raise the number of workplace essential skills certificates that were issued to equal the number of GED certificates granted.

The Department has also conducted a pilot project on workplace learning to assist small and medium-sized businesses. The project focuses on basic education and essential workplace skills while integrating specific workplace content into the curriculum. According to the 2002 report, employers were positive about implementing workplace training and learning opportunities and they recognized the benefits for both the employers and the employees (p.41).

The report reiterates the province’s support for increased training and learning initiatives with small and medium-sized businesses. It acknowledges that the majority of New Brunswickers work for small employers and that many lack the resources to support a workplace training or learning program. Specific actions pledged by the province in the area of workplace training include:

- Explore funding for the delivery of workplace skills development initiatives with the federal government;
- Encourage learning partnerships between employers, employer groups, learning institutions and other stakeholders;
- Promote employer-sponsored skills upgrading and encourage small business owners and managers to champion this;
- Recognize new training initiatives of small and medium-sized businesses;
- Work with partners to promote best practices to small and medium-sized businesses (p. 40).

The report also sets out a plan to provide learning and training support services to small and medium-sized business. The action plan includes the following items:

- Identify best practices from the workplace learning pilot project;
- Explore ways to assist small and medium-sized businesses with workplace training assessments, and training resources for literacy and workplace essential skills;
- Support innovative, value-added partnerships to assist small and medium-sized businesses;
- Collaborate with partners to develop customized learning assessment tools and

³⁹ <http://www.gnb.ca/0105/LifelongLearning.pdf>

⁴⁰ <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/pet/2005e1701te.htm>

- approaches to help small and medium-sized businesses identify their training needs;
- Compile training resource information;
 - Encourage partners to expand training resources;
 - Promote learning assessment services and customized training resources;
 - Collaborate with partners to launch an information and learning portal to assist New Brunswick businesses (p. 41).

References were also found to an initiative called “Competitive, Recognized and Educated Workforce” (CREW) for workplace education and literacy programs. According to the website of the Canadian Education Association, CREW has been in place since 1994 and offers fiscal incentives to employers and/or unions to set up workplace education programs.⁴¹ Using a model similar to CASP, the program is meant to be free and offered in both official languages.⁴²

New Brunswick also uses Connect NB – a community access network jointly funded by the provincial government and Industry Canada – to improve access to information technology and training in communities. Through TeleEducation NB and e-learning, Connect NB works with companies to set up workplace literacy initiatives, as well as providing support for community-based and family literacy partnerships.⁴³

Prince Edward Island

In 1996, the province released a literacy strategy entitled, “Tough Challenges, Great Rewards: A Literacy and Adult Education Strategy.”⁴⁴ An implementation committee was established to promote literacy initiatives across the Island while working with community partners, business and labour. Another province-wide program involves government partners and Holland College to serve adult learners based on the criteria of affordability, accessibility, adaptability and accountability. In PEI, the Literacy Initiatives Secretariat is responsible for all literacy projects, including the Literacy/Adult Basic Education Initiative, Family Literacy, the management of Workplace Education PEI Literacy Initiative, the development of policy and standards for adult literacy, the certification process for adult educators, and the Provincial Literacy Initiatives Committee.⁴⁵ The Literacy Initiatives Secretariat, in conjunction with the federal National Literacy Secretariat, funds literacy projects on the Island.

Workplace Education PEI (WEPEI) was established in 1997, shortly after the launch of the adult literacy strategy, to focus exclusively on ensuring workplace-learning opportunities. Previously, the province had funded some workplace education initiatives through Laubach Literacy of PEI. WEDPEI works in partnership with businesses, unions

⁴¹ <http://www.cea-ace.ca/foo.cfm?subsection=lit&page=pol&subpage=lan&subsubpage=pro&topic=new>

⁴² The CASP model sets out to ensure quality with the province-wide use of a uniform model and program standards. Bilingual, province-wide curricula and standardized testing are available. (<http://www.gnb.ca/0005/02e.htm>).

⁴³ <http://www.cnbb.nb.ca/english.htm>

⁴⁴ http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/ed_adulted.pdf

⁴⁵ <http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ/index.php3?number=78501>

and organizations to assess workplace training needs and assist in developing appropriate programs.⁴⁶ WEDPEI sends a field officer, at no cost to the organization, to a worksite to assess the workplace-learning needs, recommend programs, and work with an on-site team to set up customized programs. Once programs are in place, an ongoing partnership monitors and works to improve the programs. The employer or union may contribute to help cover the costs for an instructor, materials and/or supplies. The workplace may also provide classroom space, other in-kind services and release time for employees to attend the classes.

WEDPEI identifies a number of essential keys to success:

- Classes are held at the worksite;
- The atmosphere is comfortable and learning takes place with co-workers;
- Classes are small and learners progress at their own pace;
- Programs and materials are relevant to the workplace;
- Classes are set to suit the learners and their time schedules.

The companies with which WEDPEI has worked are listed on their website, at <http://www.nald.ca/workplaceedpei/awards.htm>. Three of the companies have received awards of excellence from the Conference Board of Canada for their workplace literacy programs.

Newfoundland and Labrador

Most of the province's literacy initiatives stem from the Literacy Office within the Department of Education. The Department offers an Adult Basic Education program which has been revised and updated over the years to reflect changes in high school curricula.⁴⁷ In 2000, the government released a "Strategic Literacy Plan" for the province.⁴⁸ The plan covers literacy for all ages and outlines strategic directions for literacy initiatives including adult education and workplace literacy. One of the plan's objectives is to support workplace literacy programming by sharing best practices with employers and unions and by "encouraging" workplace literacy initiatives (p. 26).

In 2003, the Department of Education hosted the 4th Atlantic Region Workplace/Workforce Institute, with the theme "Innovations in Workplace Literacy."⁴⁹ Following the Institute, a Workplace/Workforce Learning Committee was established with representation from various stakeholder groups. The Committee received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat to carry out research to identify best practices in workplace/workforce literacy.

Other workplace committees have also been active in the province. The Workplace Education Steering Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador has developed a website called "Workplace Education, Newfoundland and Labrador." The site is intended as a

⁴⁶ <http://www.nald.ca/workplaceedpei/about.htm>

⁴⁷ <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/adult/abe.htm>

⁴⁸ <http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/literacy/litplan.pdf>

⁴⁹ <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2003/edu/1016n04.htm>

resource for those in a position to promote workplace education.⁵⁰ The site is a joint initiative of the province's Department of Education, the federal National Literacy Secretariat, and the Literacy Development Council. Background information on the importance of workplace education is provided on the website, and four programs for workplace literacy and/or education are highlighted.⁵¹

In 2004, a Literacy Network Ad-Hoc Group was set up to try to establish a grassroots network that would meet the needs of community-based literacy organizations in the province.⁵² Previously, the province had a Literacy Development Council, a non-profit agency, but following an evaluation and public consultations, it was recommended that the Council be dismantled and replaced with a grassroots literacy network.

The province has also established a Literacy Endowment Fund with contributions from the Department of Education and the National Literacy Secretariat. The province's Literacy Development Council currently manages the endowment fund, with the interest used to support adult literacy initiatives.⁵³

Yukon

Most literacy initiatives in the Yukon are managed through the Department of Education in the Advanced Education Branch. In 2001, the government released a Literacy Strategy which included the objective of raising the number of workplace education initiatives in the territory. It also included the creation of a Literacy Action Committee, comprised of representatives from Yukon College, Yukon Learn, Learning Disabilities Association, Challenge Child Development Centre, First Nations Education Commission, the Yukon Federation of Labour, and businesses.⁵⁴ In 2004, the Literacy Action Committee dispersed its first round of funds to initiatives in the territory. By 2005, the Committee's three rounds of funding totalled about \$200,000.⁵⁵ The Advanced Education Branch also maintains the Yukon Training Strategy and the Yukon Labour Market Development Agreement, which provide frameworks for training and labour force development. The strategy also includes support for workplace and community-based literacy programs.⁵⁶

The Community Training Fund is meant for skills development programs and includes seven community training funds and eight industry-specific funds. In 2004/05, total investments were close to \$2 Million. (A list of the community and industry-specific funds can be found <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/ctf/index.html>.) One program funded partly through the Community Training Fund is a workplace literacy initiative for First Nations government staff. The program is run by Yukon Learn and jointly funded by community training funds through the Department of Education and a

⁵⁰ <http://www.nald.ca/nflabworked/intro.htm>

⁵¹ <http://www.nald.ca/nflabworked/projects.htm>

⁵² <http://www.envision.ca/webs/lnag/>

⁵³ http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/cof_practices_e.pdf p. 11

⁵⁴ http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/pdf/yukon_literacy_strategy.pdf.

⁵⁵ <http://voodoo.gov.yk.ca/news/2006/files/06-001.pdf>

⁵⁶ <http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/index.html>

Community Development Fund from the Department of Economic Development.⁵⁷ Implementation is scheduled over an 18-month period, and the project will deal with basic workplace literacy skills such as communications, mathematics, computers and problem solving. It will also include a social and professional development component dealing with issues such as life skills, self-government and First Nation languages.

In 2005, the Yukon Literacy Coalition, a territory-wide literacy organization, held a Literacy Summit. In community consultations, participants discussed initiatives for family, community and workplace literacy. The coalition established an e-discussion list on workplace literacy to maintain ongoing dialogue.⁵⁸

Northwest Territories

The NWT Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides base funding for Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE). Aurora College then provides much of the training across the territory. From this funding, two community-based literacy programs were established – the Community Literacy Projects Program and the Community Skills for Work Program. The first was established in 1990 to provide funding to community education councils, Band Councils, Friendship Centres and local women’s groups for a wide variety of programs to meet specific community needs. The Community Skills for Work Program assists clients receiving income support to achieve self-sufficiency through education, work experience and support services. Projects are delivered by Aurora College or through community-based organizations, and can include adult literacy and basic education, skills-based training, personal development courses, and work activity projects.⁵⁹

In 2001, the NWT launched a four-year literacy strategy to incorporate the existing programs and fill in some of the gaps in services to reach identified adult target groups. One of these programs established was the Workplace Literacy Fund, to build on literacy partnerships with large and small businesses, unions and community-based employers and provide employees with opportunities for basic skills development. Eligible projects or activities can include training for workers in workplace-related reading, writing, mathematics, oral communications, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Basic skills as a component of training are integrated alongside technical skill development and workplace needs assessments.⁶⁰

According to the Council of the Federations’ “Government Initiatives Promoting Literacy Best Practices” (2004), the NWT government provides needs assessments of workplace education and wage subsidy programs to which employers contribute wages and employees contribute time outside of work.⁶¹ The territorial government also runs essential skills and training programs for youth and adults. The Building Essential Skills

⁵⁷ <http://www.gov.yk.ca/news/2005/06-031.html>

⁵⁸ <http://www.yukonliteracy.ca/activities/Workplace.html>

⁵⁹ http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/adult_literacy/indexAdult.htm

⁶⁰ http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/Divisions/adult_literacy/indexAdult.htm

⁶¹ http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/pdfs/cof_practices_e.pdf p.8.

Program provides short-term training opportunities for unemployed workers, while the Training on the Job Program provides subsidies to employers to train northern residents in the relevant work skills.⁶²

Nunavut

In November 2004, the government of Nunavut and the Nunavut Tunngavik Inc (NTI) – an incorporated organization representing Inuit under the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement – announced that they would work together to produce an Adult Learning Strategy.⁶³ In October 2005, a working draft of the Strategy was released,⁶⁴ with the final report to be tabled late in 2006.

The working draft sets out a number of visions for Nunavut by 2020. References to workplace or workforce literacy include creating a culture of learning at home and in the workplace. The draft also outlines proposed actions to support the development of workplace and workforce literacy, including basic education programs and financial incentives and programming supports for employers. The draft strategy also outlines plans to introduce workplace labour-market programs and provide incentives such as “buy-out” time that would allow participants to take training during working hours.

Adult education in Nunavut is the responsibility of the Department of Education, however, few details are provided on the website. One program listed is called Financial Assistance for Nunavut Students to help students attend post-secondary education; another links to Nunavut Arctic College, which offers basic education and literacy programs in 23 communities; the Nunavut Research Institute is also noted.⁶⁵

Another key goal of the Government of Nunavut is to have Inuktitut as the working language of the territory by 2020. Cultural and linguistic literacy remains central and integral to territorial policy goals. The Department of Culture, Language, Elders and Youth is one of the central vehicles charged with this task.⁶⁶

Combined NWT and Nunavut Initiative

The NWT Literacy Council has teamed up with the Nunavut Literacy Council to work on a workplace and workforce literacy project. A May 2005 newsletter from the NWT Literacy Council describes the two components of the project as including research to identify examples and resources and the building of a consortium. The two Councils met in Yellowknife to strategize around the issue.⁶⁷

⁶² <http://www.cea-ace.ca/foo.cfm?subsection=lit&page=pol&subpage=lan&subsubpage=pro&topic=nwt>

⁶³ <http://www.gov.nu.ca/Nunavut/English/news/2004/nov/als.pdf>

⁶⁴ <http://www.tunngavik.com/publications/education-training/adult-learning-strategy-en.pdf>

⁶⁵ <http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/adult/index.htm>

⁶⁶ <http://www.gov.nu.ca/cley/home/english/index.html>

⁶⁷ <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/resource/newslet/may05/page9.htm>

Conclusion

In all the jurisdictions examined in this report, the central focus of adult education programming is community and family literacy. And although workplace literacy and basic skills training are often identified as priorities, the available documentation provides few examples of well-developed programs or policies. Over the last few years, many of the provinces and territories have released different literacy strategies outlining their key priorities and goals. Many of these reports make references to workplace initiatives and set out objectives to do more in this area. New Brunswick, in particular, outlines specific goals to target small and medium-sized businesses as sites of potential workplace education.

Many of the provinces have made efforts to bring together key stakeholders or created organizations to promote workplace training and education. Workplace Education PEI and Saskatchewan's Labour Force Development Board are examples of these types of initiatives. Where provincial or territorial bodies exist to promote workplace education, there appears to be more activity in the area.

Other provinces – such as Alberta – have Labour Market Partnership programs that have the potential to be vehicles to fund workplace literacy and basic skills training. Many workplace training initiatives could – and should – be used for workplace literacy and basic skills training. There is potential, and initiatives such as the Yukon First Nations Government workplace literacy initiative demonstrate how training funds can be applied in a workplace setting.

An in-depth study would be useful to determine why government training dollars are not being used more regularly for literacy and/or basic skills training. It would also be useful to track the progress of the NWT Workplace Literacy Fund to determine how many employers and labour groups draw on the fund. Overall, workplace literacy and basic skills training are “on the radar” in all these jurisdictions, but the depth of program development in this field is still minimal.