

Workplace Literacy

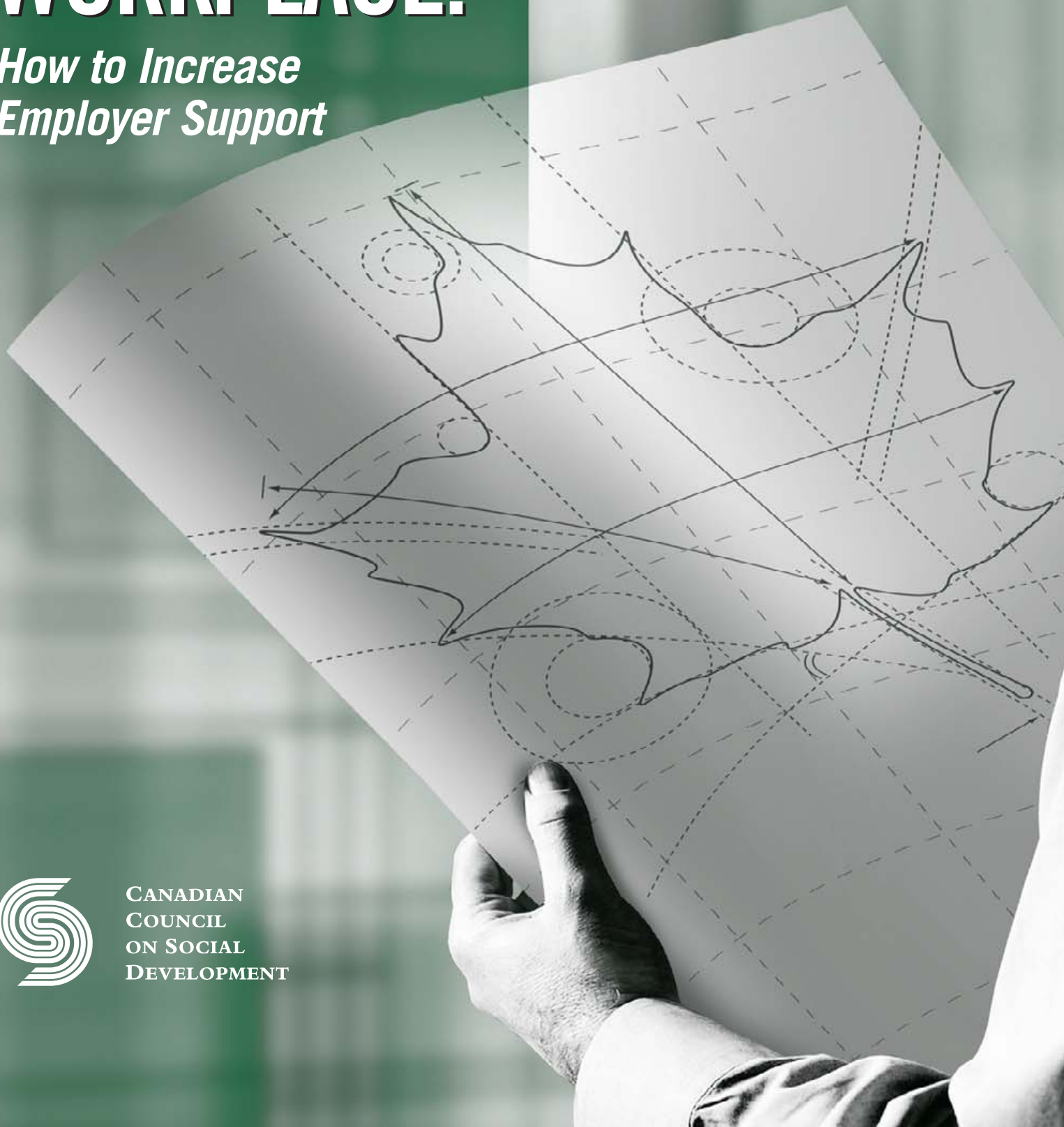
BY LYNETTE PLETT

PROGRAMS IN THE WORKPLACE:

*How to Increase
Employer Support*



CANADIAN
COUNCIL
ON SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT



Workplace Literacy

Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support

Final Report

by Lynette Plett



Canadian Council on Social Development

190 O'Connor Street, Suite 100

Ottawa, ON K2P 2R3

Tel: (613) 236-8977; fax: (613) 236-2750

www.ccsd.ca

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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 (ALLESF) 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.

Acknowledgements

As with most projects of this size, the work and the reports are the result of many people's efforts. We are grateful to them all.

The CCSD's project on Literacy Programs in the Workplace would not have been possible without the generous support of our many partners. A number of current and former CCSD staff also lent their considerable expertise to this project. Paul Roberts was the project lead from 2004 to 2006. He and Rebecca Gowan conducted the extensive literature and program review that appears as one of the Working Papers, available on the CCSD website, as well as the Ontario and Quebec background policy studies. Other researchers also assisted with the task of assembling information on workplace literacy programs here in Canada and abroad. Emily Watkins compiled the inventory of provincial and territorial programs in Canada, and Anna Torgeson provided valuable research assistance in completing the study of international programs. Julie Marquis undertook the collection of primary data in the province of Quebec.

Lynette Plett was senior researcher on the Literacy Project from 2006 to 2007. She conducted the primary research for the project and prepared this final report and recommendations for action – all the while completing her PhD in the Department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Lynette brought the project together with great skill and insight into the working of literacy programs in Canada.

This workplace literacy project also benefited from the considerable energies and expertise of a wonderful Advisory Committee: Professor Nancy Jackson from the Department of Adult Education at the OISE/UT; Brigid Hayes, Labour Director from the former Canadian Labour Business Centre; Nayda Veeman, the former Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Literacy Network; and Tamara Levine, national representative from the Department of Labour Education at the Canadian Labour Congress. All members of the Advisory Committee gave unstintingly of their time, and the project has benefited tremendously from their participation.

Our partners in the Workplace Partnerships Directorate at Human Resources and Social Development Canada provided funding that helped support the research and production of the working papers and reports for this project on Literacy Programs in the Workplace.

Section I: Introduction

In Canada and internationally, since the release of two adult literacy surveys between 1994 and 2003, there has been increased attention to adult literacy in the workplace. However, workplace literacy in Canada is still a largely invisible issue for both the public and for politicians. There is no national strategy. Few provinces and territories have education and training strategies that include workplace literacy as a component – those that do have significantly varied approaches. Neither employers nor labour leaders rank “inadequate literacy skills among current workers” as a serious problem. These same employers rate “upgrading the skills of current employees” as their highest priority, but they do not link low worker literacy as a potential barrier to that upgrading.¹ Recent international literacy survey results suggest that the Canadian public and politicians, labour leaders and employers should take the issue of workplace literacy much more seriously.

Results from the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) for Canada indicate that approximately 38% of employed respondents are at Level 2 or below in both document and prose literacy proficiency. Approximately 45% of employed respondents are at Level 2 or below in numeracy proficiency.² Proficiency levels for all three domains are below Level 3, the benchmark set by the IALSS study as the minimum level “for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex, advanced society.”³

We also know, based on the IALSS data, that Canadian respondents (aged 16 to 65) with lower proficiency levels are less likely to participate in adult education and training than respondents with higher proficiency levels.⁴ Furthermore, a 2006 Canadian Policy Research Network’s report suggests that in Canada, job-related training is lower than in other countries, and that “when employers do provide training, they are more likely to provide it to higher skilled workers than to lower-skilled workers.”⁵ The IALSS results also tell us, not surprisingly, that workers with lower literacy proficiency levels are more likely to be working in lower-skilled occupations.⁶

The Statistics Canada report on IALSS suggests that “proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem solving provides the foundation for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.”⁷ Based on the IALSS data, and on studies like that of the Canadian Policy Research Networks, we know that over one-third of employed Canadian workers may experience difficulties with literacy and numeracy, and that these workers are less likely to participate in adult education and training. We also know that workers who experience difficulties with literacy and numeracy are more likely to be in low skilled occupations, and that they are less likely to be recipients of employer sponsored training. The Statistics Canada report on IALSS concludes, “The demand for high literacy and numeracy proficiency is likely to increase further as Canada moves more and more towards a knowledge-based economy....Continuous learning assists in maintaining competencies and acquiring new ones.”⁸

In 2003, the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities released its report, *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*. According to the Committee, based on the results of IALSS and on information from witness presentations to the Committee, low literacy levels are a national problem “requiring a nation-wide response that is more coordinated and effective than our current efforts, and that

entails more resources to enhance our capacity to address this very important problem.”⁹ The Committee identified increasing workers’ literacy levels as a priority and stated that “. . . a more highly skilled and literate workforce is one of the keys to improving productivity and the economic well-being of Canadians.”¹⁰ The Committee was “somewhat mystified” by the low incidence of workplace literacy programs when there are so many workers with low literacy skills and when the economic gains related to increasing literacy levels would be great.¹¹

The CCSD Workplace Literacy Project

The Canadian Council on Social Development’s (CCSD) project, “Literacy Programs in the Workplace: How to Increase Employer Support” follows on the results of the international literacy surveys and follow-up reports regarding the low literacy levels of many Canadian workers. Our study helps to identify the types of approaches to workplace literacy training, internationally and across Canada, that appeal to employers. Our interviews with select employers in Canada indicate areas where employers agree about the types of approaches, incentives, and programs that work best in a range of employment environments. There were three major components to our project: three working papers; three case studies; and a final report.

The Working Papers

We conducted research for three working papers on workplace literacy:

- “Workplace Literacy: A Literature Review and Bibliography” 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.
- “Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Programs” looks at the conditions for adult education and training, including workplace literacy, in eight OECD countries.
- “Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Provincial and Territorial Workplace Literacy Policies and Programs” provides an overview of current adult education and workplace literacy policies and programs across Canada.

These three working papers are available on our website. The research for these working papers looked at workplace literacy practices between 2004 and 2006. Much has changed in international and Canadian contexts since this time. In Canada, for example, in April 2006, the federal government created the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP) which integrated the National Literacy Program, the Office of Learning Technologies, and the Learning Initiatives Program.¹² It is beyond the scope of our current study to explore the implications for more recent changes in government policies and programs.

The Case Studies

We conducted research for case studies of workplace literacy in three provinces: Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario. These case studies provide an in depth examination of the various provincial approaches to workplace literacy in Canada. We look at provincial adult education and training policies, including workplace literacy training, for each of the provinces. We also conducted interviews with employers or employer representatives in each of the three provinces.

These interviews provide us with valuable information about the types of approaches, incentives, and programs that work best for employers, based on their own experiences with workplace literacy training. We summarized the employers' suggestions from all the provinces for the types of government policies and programs that would increase their support for workplace literacy training. We invited all our respondents to provide us with feedback on these suggestions and incorporated the feedback into the case studies. These three case studies are presented in their entirety in Section IV of this report.

The Report

This report, primarily descriptive in nature, provides a summary of our entire project. There are five sections to this report:

- Section I: introduces our project and this report.
- Section II: International Conditions for Workplace Literacy – is a brief overview of some of the international conditions for workplace literacy. We draw out lessons learned from the international context because understanding how other countries provide funding and incentives for workplace literacy training helps to inform how and what type of policies and incentives could be developed in Canada.
- Section III: Workplace Literacy in Canada – is an overview of the roles various stakeholders play with respect to workplace literacy training across Canada. It is also an overview of the approaches of different provinces and territories to workplace literacy training. We draw out lessons learned from the various approaches to workplace literacy across Canada.
- Section IV: Case Studies – is a detailed study of the adult education and training policies and programs in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario. These case studies include summaries of interviews conducted with select employers in each province. We draw out employer suggestions for policies and programs that would help to increase their support of workplace literacy training.
- Section V: Discussion and Recommendations – compiles the lessons learned about how to increase employer support for workplace literacy training from our research of international and Canadian conditions, and our case studies.

Definition of Terms

Workplace literacy, in this report, refers to literacy training for people who are currently employed. We described such training as including, but not being limited to: upgrading reading, writing or mathematics skills; enhancing essential skills; GED preparation; upgrading skills for professional certification or recertification; developing communication, computer, decision making, and critical thinking skills.¹³ While some of the programs we reviewed included an English or French Second Language component, we did not focus on that aspect of workplace education. What we term as “workplace literacy” training may also be referred to as “basic skills,” “essential skills,” or “foundational skills” training. In Canada there has been a recent move federally, followed by several provinces, employers, education and training organizations, to providing Essential Skills training. It is outside the scope of this study to review this shift and its implications.¹⁴ When we refer to “essential skills” in our report, it is a synonym for workplace literacy.

Summary

Our study reveals that there are many workplace literacy initiatives and programs across Canada, and many workers who have participated in these programs. Yet, we believe much more needs to be done by federal, provincial and territorial governments to encourage employers, labour leaders, and education and training providers to increase their support for literacy programs in the workplace.

Endnotes for Section I

¹ Brigid Hayes, "Presentation," in *Measuring success: International comparisons and bottom lines* (Calgary, Alberta: WWestnet, 2003), 5. Hayes is referring to a 2002 survey conducted by the former Canadian Labour and Business Centre of private and public sector managers and labour leaders. See (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, "Viewpoints 2002: The Perspective of Business Labour and Public Sector Leaders, Spring 2002 – Skills and Skill Shortages," (Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2002).).

² "Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2003), 16-62.

³ "International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS)," (ABC CANADA, 2005), 2. The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) measured the proficiency levels of the Canadian population in four domains: prose and document literacy, numeracy, and problem solving. The survey measured literacy and numeracy along a continuum of proficiency where Level 1 is the lowest proficiency level and Level 4/5 is the highest. The study set Level 3 proficiency as the benchmark ("Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," 12-14.).

⁴ See "Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," 183.

⁵ Karen Myers and Patrice de Broucker, "Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System," (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2006), 46.

⁶ "Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," 189.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸ Myers and de Broucker, "Too Many Left Behind: Canada's Adult Education and Training System," 73.

⁹ Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, "Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response," (Ottawa: House of Commons, 2003), 12. as quoted in Canadian Council on Social Development, "Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography)," (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006), 26.

¹⁰ Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, "Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response," 65. as quoted in Canadian Council on Social Development, "Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography)," 27.

¹¹ Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, "Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response," 65. as quote in Canadian Council on Social Development, "Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography)," 27.

¹² See *Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLES)* (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2007 [cited 9 May 2007]); available from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/lld/olt/ADULTLES.html>). We conducted the policy reviews for our study prior to this change.

¹³ Our study does not review "workforce" literacy policies and programs. "Workforce" programs and courses are generally for people who are not currently employed. For a study of how different stakeholders distinguish between "workplace literacy" and "workforce literacy" see (Sue Folinsbee, "The Ontario Literacy Coalition's Workplace/Workforce Literacy Symposium," (Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2005), 29-33.).

¹⁴ For a labour perspective on Essential Skills, see (Canadian Labour Congress, "Essential Skills and the Labour Movement," (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2005).).

Section II: International Conditions for Workplace Literacy

In this section of our report we identify various international approaches to workplace literacy. Understanding how other countries provide funding and incentives for workplace literacy training helps to inform the development of policies and incentives in Canada.

It became clear to us that no one individual or organization was in a position to provide a complete list of workplace programmes, either across the whole country or within a particular region. Even small geographical pockets of the country are hard to map as they encompass a range of localized projects, funded through a variety of routes and providers.¹

This quotation from a report on workplace basic skill strategies in the United Kingdom applies to each of the countries reviewed in our working paper, “Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Programs.” It is difficult to obtain a comprehensive list of workplace literacy programs and policies. “Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Programs,” examines the policy contexts for adult education, adult literacy, workplace literacy, and workplace training of selected OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries: Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, Ireland, France, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark. Several themes about the funding and support of workplace literacy training emerged from our review of international conditions and this section of the report will draw out those themes. The full working paper is available on our website.

Role of National Governments

Direct Funding for Workplace Literacy

Several countries provide direct federal funding to employers and other providers for workplace literacy training. Australia’s Workplace English Language and Literacy program, for example is co-funded by government and employers. It funds approximately 300 programs (18,000 workers) annually. New Zealand supports workplace literacy training through its Tertiary Education Commission. The Commission funds a range of program providers including employers and industry training organizations through its Workplace Literacy Funds. In the United Kingdom, workplace basic skills initiatives are funded primarily by the Department for Education and Skills, Learning and Skills Council, and Local Learning and Skills Councils. In general, basic skills training is provided free to employers. In Ireland, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment established a Workplace Basic Education Fund in 2005. Its goal is to offer opportunities for employers to “improve their literacy and numeracy skills, on a 100% grant aided basis.”² Sweden and Denmark have strong commitments to publicly funded educational programs and institutions including adult education and training in the workplace.

Incentives for Employers

Several of the countries reviewed offer incentives for employers who offer training, including workplace literacy training. The Australian government offers profit tax deductions to employers who offer training. It applies only to non-wage training in order to encourage training for low-skilled workers. New Zealand introduced the Industry Training Fund as an incentive for

employers to invest in training. The federal government contributes to the cost of developing and delivery on-and off-site training. In 2002, the UK introduced Employer Training Pilots to increase workplace learning for low-skilled workers in small and medium companies. Through these pilot projects, the federal government helped to fund and provide training. Employees were paid to take time off for training (between 35-70 hours) and employers were offered wage compensation. France requires employers to spend a certain percentage of their gross annual payroll on training. The amount is determined by the size of the employer with larger employers being required to spend a greater percentage. The employer can spend the required amount on public or private training providers. To encourage employers to fund their own training programs, Denmark provides a tax exemption for the training cost.

Incentives for Workers

The United Kingdom is one of several countries to offer incentives for individuals to participate in education and training. The UK, through Adult Learning Grants, encourages individuals to participate in full time studies to achieve level 2 qualification. In France and Sweden, individual workers have the right to training leave. The 2003 national agreement in France secured 20 training hours annually for workers. In Sweden, legislation passed in the 1970s and 1980s gave employees who have worked a total of twelve months over two years or for six consecutive months “the right to leave of absence from work for studies and to participate in education during paid working hours.”³ The employee is guaranteed the same position and pay upon return. Germany also offers incentives for individuals to increase their qualifications. The government offers “means-tested subsidies to cover the cost of formal courses” as well as living expenses.⁴

Comprehensive Public Education System

Sweden and Denmark both scored high on the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), and not surprisingly, both countries have a strong commitment to publicly funded educational programs and institutions with universal access. In Sweden, the national government provides public funds for a wide array of formal and non-formal adult education: 1) basic adult education (to upper secondary school level), 2) adult education (at the post-secondary level), for example, Advanced Vocational Training, 3) popular adult education (e.g. folk high schools and study circles), 4) Labour Market Training (through the Ministry of Education), and 5) in-company or workplace training. Workplace education and training is offered through “in-service training” which is widely available. Approximately 50% of all employees participate in in-service training for an average of five to seven days a year.

Denmark has one of the highest rankings of OECD countries for public funding of education. Two main branches of the government allocate public funds for education: The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. Adult education and training falls into three categories: 1) adult liberal education, 2) general adult education, and 3) adult vocationally oriented education. Because general adult education is organized around the daily lives of participants, some of the learning activities take place in workplaces. Adult vocationally oriented education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour. There are 150 providers of vocationally oriented education in Denmark.

National Adult Education and Training Strategies

Many of the countries reviewed for the CCSD Working Paper have national adult education and training strategies. Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom are three examples.

Australia, like Canada, is a federation made up of states and territories that have authority for education. In Australia, state, territorial, and federal ministers have reached agreement on various strategies and objectives for vocational and work training. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was established in 1993. It coordinates the Vocational Educational and Training sector (VET). VET is coordinated by state, territorial and federal governments. ANTA also sponsors the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). AQTF governs the provision of vocational training and worker education, type of training required, and how training organizations will apply the training. The AQTF requires training organizations to include language, literacy, and numeracy skills in their training. The standards for how this is implemented are set by the state or territory.

In the 1990s, New Zealand developed a nationally recognized skills and educational qualification and credential system. Along with the qualifications system, the New Zealand government also instituted a national industry training strategy. It created the Industry Training fund and instituted industry wide training organizations. These organizations contract out the training to tertiary educational institutes or private training facilities.

The United Kingdom has one of the most comprehensive adult literacy systems and learning infrastructures of OECD countries.⁵ The UK Department of Education's Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit manages the national strategy with nine regional coordinators. *Skills Strategy*, the most recent adult education policy, involves partnerships between government departments and agencies as well as with unions and employers.

Role of Employers

Information about the role of employers in providing workplace literacy training is sketchy. For countries like Sweden and Denmark that allocate large amounts of public funding to adult education and training, there is little information about employers' role. OECD reports suggest that employers in these countries should take on more of the cost for providing training. In the United States where there are no federal incentives for employers, many employers voluntarily offer basic skills education as part of their training. In many countries, employers partner with governments and/or labour to share the cost of workplace literacy training.

However, CCSD conclusions for individual countries apply more broadly. In the United States, "employers view the cost of workplace literacy programs too prohibitive."⁶ In New Zealand, "industries and private sector firms are attracted to provide training when there is joint funding approach between government and private firms or organizations" but "obtaining generalized support from employers remains difficult. Many employers are unaware of workplace literacy initiatives, or if aware they are unwilling to provide such programs since they do not perceive a need for such programs for their employees."⁷

Role of Labour

In the United Kingdom, the federal government provides direct funding to trade union sector groups for workplace literacy training. Unions also play a significant role by negotiating with employers for release time for workers to attend training. Unions play a similar role in the United States where there are no federal supports and programs for workplace literacy. In New York City, programs for transit and garment workers were a direct result of union recognition that workplace changes required programs for members. The union and its membership identified the objects and areas of concern for the programs. In Sweden, the Trade Union Affiliate ran a day school. Workers were given time off work and paid the equivalent of strike pay by the union. The program ran one day a week for thirty weeks. Workers studied Swedish, English, computers, and mathematics. In France and Germany, collective agreements typically require employers to provide training. In Germany, collective agreements govern workers' right to training (through financial support and unpaid leave) as well as the content of that training. Our working paper, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Programs" describes several examples of such collective agreements: for example, the Volkswagen (Auto 5000), Baden-Wurttemberg (2001), and Daimler Chrysler (2002).

Summary

Our study of international conditions for workplace literacy training points to a range of possibilities for program and policy development in Canada. There is a constant tension between public and private provision of workplace literacy training. Sweden and Denmark are examples of strong public spending and the United States is an example of relying on private sector funding. France has implemented an employee levy for training and collective agreements negotiated by labour ensure that employers spend more on training than the amount required by the government levy. Collective agreements in Germany also ensure that employers spend significant amounts of money on training.

Lessons Learned

Employer support for workplace literacy is evident in countries where:

National governments take a strong leadership role on workplace literacy training by:

- Directly funding workplace literacy training,
- Providing incentives to employers who offer workplace literacy training,
- Providing incentives to workers to participate in education and training, and by
- Investing in a public education system that includes an adult learning system.
- Developing national adult education and training strategies.

Employers take on greater responsibility and cover more of the costs for providing training, including workplace literacy training.

Labour plays a significant role by:

- Providing workplace literacy training,
- Negotiating with employers for release time members to attend training, and by

- Negotiating workers' right to training, including a workplace literacy component, in their collective agreements with employers.

Endnotes for Section II

¹ Katerina Ananiadou et al., *Identifying Effective Workplace Basic Skills Strategies for Enhancing Employee Productivity and Development* (London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy, 2004 [cited 13 Dec. 2004]); available from <<http://www.nrdc.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryID=424>>. quoted in Paul Roberts and Anna Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006), 10.

² FÁS, *Workplace Basic Education Fund (WBEF): Skills for Work Conditions of Application* (2005 [cited]); available from http://www.fas.ie/pdf_files/Guidelines_for_WBE_fund.pdf. as quoted by Roberts and Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," 51.

³ OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), *Sweden Country Note: Thematic Review on Adult Learning* (2001 [cited]); available from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/23/2/2697896.pdf>. as quoted by Roberts and Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," 65.

⁴ OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), *Germany Country Note: Thematic Review on Adult Learning* (2005 [cited]); available from <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/5/3641143.pdf>. as quoted by Roberts and Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," 54.

⁵ Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, "Building Sustainable Adult Literacy Provision: A Review of International Trends in Adult Literacy Policy and Programs [Research Overview]," (Adelaide, South Australia: NCVER, Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), 2. as cited by Roberts and Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," 42.

⁶ Roberts and Torgerson, "Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Selected International Conditions," 49.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

Section III: Workplace Literacy in Canada

This section of our report outlines various approaches to workplace literacy in Canada. We explore the roles of the federal, provincial, and territorial governments in developing policies and programs and providing incentives that support workplace literacy training. We also look at the role of labour and non-profit organizations in supporting workplace literacy in Canada. Finally, we draw out implications for increasing employer support for workplace literacy from these various approaches.

Federal Government Role

In their report on different countries' approaches to adult education, Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick describe Canada as having "the least elaborated national system."¹ Canada does not have a national system for adult basic education. Provinces and territories have the responsibility for supporting and funding adult education. However, the federal government has played an important role in workplace literacy by developing policy directions and providing some funds, largely through federal transfer payments, for workplace literacy initiatives.

Historical Role

Richard Darville, in *Adult Literacy Work in Canada*, suggests that the federal government was responsible for "the oldest large-scale government effort to address literacy and basic education." In the 1960s, Canada Manpower through its Basic Training for Skill Development (BTSD) program provided funding for adult education up to a secondary education equivalency certificate. They offered a system of "seat purchases" through BTSD in community colleges, vocational schools, or school boards. BTSD programs were not designed as literacy programs. However, because many of the students who came for upgrading required a foundation in basic education, many programs offered a literacy component rather than focusing only on training. Darville explains that during the early 1970s, the BTSD program came under attack, especially its basic education character. Canada Manpower came to see that literacy training "did not serve the federal mandate for job training."² Thereafter, BTSD became tied more closely with vocational training and seat purchases for participants with a below the grade 8 level education were discontinued after 1981.³

Although there were calls for the federal government to renew its attention to literacy between 1979 and 1984, it wasn't until 1985 that literacy began to be more prominent in public policy.⁴ Darville argues that public discourse of literacy developed through an intensification of advocacy and public awareness efforts. For example, the Movement for Canadian Literacy led a coalition of non-governmental organizations. In 1987 the coalition prepared a document that became the basic for "Call to Action on Literacy" that was printed in *Macleans* and *The Globe and Mail*. This document, argues Darville, "significantly influenced early thinking within the federal Department of the Secretary of State."⁵

The National Literacy Secretariat

In 1986 the federal government pledged to "work with provinces, the private sector, and voluntary organizations to develop resources to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the pre-requisite for participation in our advanced economy."⁶ In 1988, the

government committed \$1 million to literacy funding and created the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). The NLS received \$21 million in funding per year until 1997 when its budget was increased by 30%.⁷ The NLS had two objectives: 1) “to increase literacy opportunities and take-up, so that people improve their reading and writings skills,” and 2) “to work towards making Canada’s social, economic and political life more accessible to those with weak literacy skills.”⁸ The NLS worked with partners – provinces, territories, non-profit groups, and business and labour organizations – “to help create a more literacy Canada.”⁹ The NLS was never involved in direct program delivery. Workplace literacy was only one of several areas focused on by the NLS. In 2006, the NLS was disbanded and a new Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP) was launched with reduced funding from previous levels.

Business and Labour Partnership Program

When the NLS was created in 1988, it started the Business and Labour Partnership Program. This program aimed to “develop and sustain partnerships between business, labour, education, and government sectors that would support adult work-related literacy.”¹⁰ Between 1988 and 2006, the Business and Labour Partnership Program provided financial support and advice to projects across Canada with a range of activities:

- Development of assessment and evaluation tools (e.g. Organizational Needs Assessments, Literacy Task Analysis, Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES))
- Creation of delivery models (e.g. Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee; Ontario Federation of Labour’s Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST))
- Support for conferences, training events, and policy consultations (e.g. WWestnet conferences)
- Compilation of best practices (e.g. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters’ *Business Results through Literacy*; Sector Council manuals; national Research-in-Practice workshops; Practitioner conferences in various provinces; clear language training).¹¹

In addition, throughout this period, the NLS played a strong leadership role in workplace literacy by:

- Advocating for business and labour projects that were rooted in local needs
- Providing information to stakeholders about national workplace literacy activities
- Bringing people together from across Canada to provide them with a bigger picture of workplace literacy
- Forming alliances with provincial and territorial governments
- Supporting connections among new partners
- NLS staff giving advice and helping potential partners to prepare and revise proposals and budgets.¹²

Evaluations of the NLS

The federal government undertook two evaluations of the National Literacy Secretariat, the first in 1995 and the second in 2004. The 1995 evaluation concluded that “the NLS was working in areas not dealt with by the provinces, had made a significant contribution to literacy in Canada (e.g. by encouraging many sectors become involved in literacy, reducing barriers to literacy training for some groups), and was highly rated by program sponsors.”¹³

The second evaluation covered a five-year period from 1997/98 to 2001/02. The 2004 evaluation report summarized findings around four themes. First, the report stated that “NLS funding had improved literacy opportunities for a range of groups,” and that NLS funding “had an important impact in areas such as family and workplace literacy.”¹⁴ Second, the evaluation concluded that the NLS had been a “catalyst to increase awareness of literacy issues, bring people together and advance literacy.” Third, the partnership model had been working well, and fourth, during this five year period, NLS had funded 2,853 projects with half of all projects funded receiving less than \$25,000.

Summary

Between 1988 and 2006, even when “literacy’s long arm reaches the mandates of many federal departments,” the NLS was the primary federal government program for addressing workplace literacy issues.¹⁵ The National Literacy Secretariat played an important and effective leadership role in promoting literacy, including workplace literacy, in Canada. However, workplace literacy was only one of the areas focused on by the NLS, and overall, NLS expenditures on grants and contributions were seen to be “woefully inadequate” by many, including members of the 2003 Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.¹⁶

Parliamentary Consultations on Literacy and Workplace Literacy

Many stakeholders in the adult literacy field in Canada have recommended that the federal government develop a national approach to adult literacy. This is reflected in the 2004 policy recommendations of the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and The Status of Persons with Disabilities¹⁷ as well as in the 2005 report of the Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills.¹⁸

The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

The Standing Committee’s report, *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, called on the federal government to take leadership in the area of adult literacy. Based on the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey and on information from witness presentations to the Committee, the Committee stated that low literacy levels are a national problem “requiring a nation-wide response that is more coordinated and effective than our current efforts, and that entails more resources to enhance our capacity to address this very important problem.”¹⁹

The Standing Committee asserted that federal government leadership is needed to coordinate and deliver a nation-wide response to the adult literacy issue. The private and social costs of low literacy levels are high, the Committee argued, and these costs are likely to increase if there is not an adequate national approach.²⁰ The Committee’s first recommendation was for the federal government to work with provinces and territories to establish a national accord on literacy and numeracy skill development. If this is not possible, the Committee recommended establishing bilateral literacy accords with interested provinces and territories.²¹ The Committee also called for “a meaningful allocation of federal resources to address this serious problem.”²²

The Committee identified increasing workers' literacy levels as a priority and asserted that "...a more highly skilled and literate workforce is one of the keys to improving productivity and the economic well-being of Canadians."²³ The committee was "somewhat mystified" by the low incidence of workplace literacy programs when there are so many workers with low literacy skills and when the economic gains related to increasing literacy levels would be great.²⁴

Witnesses to the Committee discussed the following barriers to starting workplace literacy programs:

- employers are unaware of the problem and of the economic benefits related to fixing it,
- employers believe that adult education is the responsibility of the public education system, and
- many employers, particularly small ones, feel they do not have the financial resources to fund workplace literacy programs.²⁵

The Committee believed that strong partnerships were important to workplace literacy programs and outlined its related suggestion in Recommendation 19: "The Committee recommends that the National Literacy Secretariat continue to promote and develop partnerships that pool resources and utilize best practices for creating opportunities for workplace literacy."²⁶

The Committee also asserted that incentives to encourage employer investment in literacy training are necessary.²⁷ Recommendation 20 of the Committee's report proposed that the federal government should make changes to existing legislation (e.g. The Employment Insurance Act) and agreements (e.g. Labour Market Agreements) in order to provide literacy and numeracy assistance to all individuals. Legislative changes should be made to current legislation such as the Employment Insurance Act to encourage investment in literacy training.²⁸ Recommendation 21 suggested that the federal government implement a two-year pilot project that would provide small and medium-sized employers with incentives (e.g. Employment Insurance premium rebate and tax credits) to start workplace literacy programs.²⁹

The Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills

In November 2005, the Minister of State for Human Resources and Development Canada appointed a Ministerial Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills. Following on the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the mandate of the Advisory Committee was "to offer the Minister of State advice informing the development of a comprehensive literacy and essential skills strategy."³⁰ One of the essential elements to the Advisory Committee's recommended strategy was to expand workplace literacy.³¹ The Committee noted that the workplace is an important venue for learning: many workers, because of personal and family commitments, do not have time or financial resources for learning outside of the workplace. The committee further suggested that workplace learning should not only be based on workers' needs related to their roles at work, but also should focus on their roles at home, in the union, and in the community.³²

The Committee recommended the federal government co-ordinate with provinces to fund a system that would promote, deliver and support adult learning in the workplace. This learning was to include literacy, English and French as Second Languages, basic skills development, high

school completion or its equivalent.³³ The Committee suggested that the strategy to expand workplace literacy should include:

- Joint governance of programs at both provincial and workplace levels
- Paid time to learn
- Support for all aspects of delivering worker-centred programming
- Programs be built on the foundation of high-quality, well-resourced public education system, non-for-profit community based organizations, and union-based learning organizations.³⁴

To implement these recommendations, the Committee suggested that the federal government consider a training levy similar to that of Quebec (see the Quebec case study for details of the training levy). The Committee also suggested that the government consider adapting existing tools and programs, for example EI Part I funding, to implement these recommendations.

Summary

These two parliamentary committee reports indicate that both committees took seriously the issue of workplace literacy in Canada. The committees both suggested that by the federal government respond to the issue of workplace literacy by 1) taking a leadership role in coordinating a nation-wide response to adult literacy, 2) by allocating meaningful resources to the problem, and 3) creating incentives to encourage employers to invest in workplace literacy training.

Provincial and Territorial Funding and Support for Workplace Literacy Training

Because there is no national system for adult education in Canada, provinces and territories have pursued a variety of approaches to address literacy issues within their jurisdictions. The result has been a patchwork of strategies and initiatives, making it difficult to obtain up-to-date and accurate information about adult education policies and programs for the provinces and territories. Our working paper, “Workplace Literacy: An Overview of Provincial and Territorial Workplace Literacy Policies and Programs” is a preliminary summary of such information. This section of our report is a thematic summary of the information from the working paper. The full working paper is available on our website.

Provincial Workplace Literacy Policies and Programs

Few provincial or territorial governments in Canada have adult education or training policies and programs that specify a workplace literacy training component. There are several exceptions: Manitoba, Prince Edward Island (PEI), Nova Scotia, and Quebec. Workplace literacy policies and programs in Nova Scotia and Quebec will be examined in detail in Section IV of this report.

Manitoba Advanced Education and Training launched a new branch, Industry Training Partnerships (ITP). ITP is responsible for workplace essential skills training in the province. ITP directly funds the delivery of essential skills training programs and provides coordination for Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC). The mandate of WEMSC, a business-labour-government partnership, is to raise awareness, conduct research, develop innovative delivery models, and support trainer development.

On Prince Edward Island, the Literacy Initiatives Secretariat is responsible for the management of the Workplace Education PEI Literacy Initiative. Workplace Education PEI, a partnership with government, employers, unions, and other organizations, was established in 1997. Workplace Education PEI provides a field officer to assess workplace learning needs at the worksite. The field officer makes program recommendations, helps to set up an on site team, and assists with developing customized programs. The field officer helps the employer find funding for the program. Employers and unions contribute to the program costs: instructor, materials, classroom space, and release time for employees.³⁵

Recent Initiatives

In New Brunswick, the Department of Training and Employment Development conducted a workplace learning pilot project aimed at assisting small and medium sized employers with workplace learning programs. The project focused on basic education and workplace essential skills while integrating specific workplace content into the curriculum. In December 2005, the Minister for Training and Employment Development released a policy statement on lifelong learning. The statement outlined a plan for a new workplace essential skills certificate program. The program is to provide assessment, training and certificate recognition of nine basic and essential workplace skills.

In October 2003, the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education hosted the fourth Atlantic Region Workplace/Workforce Institute. Following the Institute, a Newfoundland and Labrador Workplace/Workforce Learning Committee was established with representation from various stakeholder groups.

The Northwest Territories launched a four-year literacy strategy in 2001 that included a workplace literacy component. A Workplace Literacy Fund was established to build literacy partnerships with large and small businesses, unions and community-based employers and to provide opportunities for employees to participate in basic skills development. Eligible projects or activities may 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 with technical skill development and workplace needs assessments.

Nunavut released an adult learning strategy in 2005. It proposed to develop workplace and workforce literacy as well as to develop ways to provide employers with financial incentives and programming support. The strategy also outlines plans to introduce workplace labour-market programs and provide incentives such as literacy on the job or “buy-out” time that would allow participants to take training during working hours.

The Northwest Territories Literacy Council has recently teamed up with the Nunavut Literacy Council to work on a workplace and workforce literacy project. The project is to include research component and the building of a consortium.³⁶

Summary

Only two of the provincial or territorial governments looked at in this section of the report, Manitoba and Prince Edward Island, currently have an adult education and training policy that

includes a workplace literacy component. (We will describe the workplace literacy contexts for Nova Scotia and Quebec in Section IV of this report.) Only in these two provinces do employers receive support and / or funding to develop and delivery workplace literacy training. While other provinces are obviously aware of the importance of workplace literacy training, they have only developed pilot projects, joint committees, and short-term strategies (often with National Literacy Secretariat project funding). Most provinces and territories have not developed long-term, sustaining strategies for workplace literacy training nor have they created incentives to encourage employers to invest in workplace literacy training.

Non-profit Organizations

There are several organizations that support workplace literacy training in their province or region. The Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES) society is dedicated to promoting and coordinating support for essential skills training. AWES' mission is to help employers, labour organizations, and individual workers find educational solutions. More recently, AWES has also developed relationships with industry councils.

The Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB) is a non-profit organization made up of representatives from business, labour, education and training providers, different community groups and agriculture. The SLFDB is a vehicle in Saskatchewan for workplace literacy and basic skills training initiatives. The SLFDB has designated funding for Community Enhancement Projects that provide communities and industry with opportunities to plan and deliver essential workplace skills to employed adults.

SkillPlan, established as a not-for-profit society in 1991, is a joint labour/management initiative that promotes workplace learning. SkillPlan's mission is to develop strategies to improve the essential skills of people working in the unionized construction industry in British Columbia and the Yukon Territory. SkillPlan provides direct programming to its members including tutoring, study groups and classroom delivery. SkillPlan also offers professional support for course development, test making, and clear language.

Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Network (WWESTNET), a group of educators, labour leaders, government representatives and business people, from the four western provinces and the Northwest Territories, is interested in workplace basic skills education. Its purpose is to inform interested individuals from business, education, government and labour about key issues and activities in workplace education. The network publishes a yearly newsletter and hosts symposia and conferences on related issues.³⁷

Summary

Without federal or provincial leadership on workplace literacy issues, much of the responsibility for promoting and supporting workplace literacy training has been taken on by non-profit organizations. Governments, at all levels, have become partners in many of these multiple-sector organizations. These organizations often rely on project funding (e.g. all have received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat) to develop initiatives. While employers are often members of these organizations and can help to set priorities, the organizations are not in a position to provide incentives to encourage employers to invest in workplace literacy training.

Labour

In Canada, large labour bodies like the Canadian Labour Congress, the provincial federations of labour, and national affiliates have long been active in the area of workplace literacy. Many labour organizations have been raising awareness about and promoting workplace literacy with their affiliates, labour councils, and locals.³⁸ Numerous public and private sector unions have been involved with workplace literacy programs at the local level – initiating workplace literacy training, participating on project teams, and providing resources (financial, materials, and/or classroom space).³⁹

Summary

This section of the report provides an overview of various approaches – by different levels of government and other stakeholders – that have implications for increasing employer support for workplace literacy training. Under the leadership of the National Literacy Secretariat, most of the approaches to workplace literacy in Canada, by all provinces and territories as well as non-profit organizations involve a multiple sector partnership approach to plan, promote, and support workplace literacy training.

More research is needed for a clearer picture of the extent of workplace literacy activities at local, regional, and provincial levels. *Section IV: Case Studies* provides a more comprehensive examination of approaches to workplace literacy training in three Canadian provinces: Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario. These case studies highlight the different approaches to workplace literacy in Canada and suggest areas where employers agree about the types of policies and initiatives that would encourage them to increase their support for workplace literacy.

Lessons Learned

- In the absence of a national adult literacy strategy, provinces and territories have developed a patchwork of approaches resulting in an inability for them to integrate workplace literacy training into coherent, long-term adult education and training strategies and programs.
- Without federal or provincial programs or incentives for workplace literacy training, few employers have invested in workplace literacy training.

The programs and initiatives that have been introduced by employers and non-profit organizations have tended to be only short-term in nature, reflecting the modest level of resources available (at the provincial and federal levels of government) and the nature of available funding (e.g. project as opposed to core funding).

Endnotes for Section III

¹ Rosa McKenna and Lynne Fitzpatrick, “Building Sustainable Adult Literacy Provision: A Review of International Trends in Adult Literacy Policy and Programs,” (Adelaide, South Australia: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), Commonwealth of Australia, 2004), 20.

² Richard Darville, *Adult Literacy Work in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education and Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia, 1992).

³ Ibid. For more information about federal funding of training and literacy, see (Carol MacLeod, “Highlights of Federal Government Training & Literacy Initiatives (1966-1994),” (Toronto: ABC Canada, 1994).).

⁴ Darville names the following reports and commissions as advocating renewed attention to literacy by the federal government: 1979 report for Labour Canada; 1981 Parliamentary Commission on Employment; 1983 Skill Development Leave Task Force, and 1984 Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (Darville, *Adult Literacy Work in Canada*).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Partnerships in Learning, *An Historical Chronology of the National Literacy Secretariat* ([cited 25 May 2007]); available from http://www.partnershipslearning.ca/doc/03FPD_Chronology.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.([cited).

⁸ *Summative Evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat* (2004 [cited 30 May 2007]); available from http://www11.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/pls/edd/SP_AH_672_09_04.lhtml.

⁹ Ibid.([cited).

¹⁰ Partnerships in Learning, *An Overview of the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnership* ([cited 25 May 2007]); available from <http://www.partnershipslearning.ca/doc/PolicyDigest.pdf>.

¹¹ Ibid.([cited). Many of the workplace literacy projects and initiatives we refer to in this section of our report have received NLS funding and we have footnoted them as they are mentioned.

¹² Ibid.([cited).

¹³ *Summative Evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat* ([cited).

¹⁴ Ibid.([cited).

¹⁵ Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, “Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response,” (Ottawa: House of Commons, 2003), 16.

¹⁶ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ The Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills, “Towards a Fully Literate Canada: Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy,” (Ottawa: Minister of State for Human Resources Development, 2005).

¹⁹ Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, “Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response,” 12.

²⁰ Ibid., 14.

²¹ Ibid., 15.

²² Ibid., 3.

²³ Ibid., 65.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 67.

²⁶ Ibid., 71.

²⁷ Ibid., 68.

²⁸ Ibid., 71-72.

²⁹ Ibid., 72.

³⁰ The Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills, “Towards a Fully Literate Canada: Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy,” 3.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

³² Ibid., 34.

³³ Ibid., 35.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Both the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee and Workplace Education PEI have received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat.

³⁶ The following initiatives received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat, Business and Labour Partnership program: Newfoundland and Labrador Workplace/Workforce Learning Committee, Northwest Territories Literacy Council and Nunavut Literacy Council.

³⁷ All of these organizations received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat for their workplace literacy activities.

³⁸ For information about labour's involvement in workplace literacy, see (Canadian Labour and Business Centre, "Workplace Literacy: Funding Sources and Partnership Opportunities for Labour," (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2005).).

³⁹ For the most recent and comprehensive list of NLS funding to labour organizations, see (Canadian Labour Congress, "Essential Skills and the Labour Movement," (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2005).). The Canadian Labour Congress, several provincial federations of labour, as well as several national affiliates have received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat for their workplace literacy activities.

Section IV: Case Studies

In Section III we found that because there is no national system for adult education in Canada, provinces and territories have pursued a variety of approaches to address literacy issues within their jurisdictions. The result has been a patchwork of strategies and initiatives, making it difficult to obtain up-to-date and accurate information about adult education policies and programs for the provinces and territories. It is difficult, therefore, to determine which approaches to workplace literacy are most effective in increasing employer support for workplace literacy training.

The following provincial case studies provide us with the opportunity to examine in depth the approaches to workplace literacy taken by three provinces. We describe the provincial contexts for adult education and training policies and different the types of programs and incentives that exist to encourage and support employers to engage in workplace literacy training. These case studies also provide us with the opportunity to discuss with employers, based on their experiences with offering workplace literacy training, how well these policies and programs work for them, and whether or not, they influenced their decision to offer, or not offer, workplace literacy training. While policy studies are necessary to determining how to increase employer support for workplace literacy training, employers' own perspectives are invaluable to our study.

Why these provinces?

We selected three Canadian provinces: Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario for our in depth case studies. We chose these provinces because they are representative of the range of workplace literacy policies and programs available in Canada.

Nova Scotia, like Manitoba, has a provincial training and education policy that includes a workplace literacy component. Like Manitoba and Prince Edward Island, the Nova Scotia government provides funding and support for the delivery of workplace literacy training.

While the Ontario government supported workplace literacy training from 1988 to 1998, it no longer does. Now the Ontario government, like most other provincial and territorial governments, does not provide direct funding or support for workplace literacy programming. Employers in Ontario who offer workplace literacy training do so entirely with their own financial and human resources.

The Quebec government's support for workplace literacy training is unique in Canada. It levies an employer tax, similar to that of France, to promote general workplace training that can include literacy training. Furthermore, a fund has been created (employers who do not reach their required amount for training pay the difference into this fund) that focuses on funding for literacy and French language training as one of its goals.

A Note on Methodology

In each of the provinces, we contacted key informants (from labour, education and training organizations, provincial and regional literacy coalitions, researchers, government, sector councils, and employer groups) to gather information about particular workplace literacy

initiatives and programs. Based on referrals from these key informants, we contacted employers (or employer representatives) and invited them to participate in our study.

Because there is no national workplace literacy infrastructure, and no provincial system in Ontario, it was very challenging to interview the number of employers we had hoped. Therefore, the information we gathered from employers is not fully representative. However, their experiences with workplace literacy training provides us with useful insights into what incentives and programs employers find helpful when offering workplace literacy training.

We conducted approximately one-hour interviews (in-person, telephone, and email) with employers who volunteered to participate in our study. The interview questions are attached as an appendix to this report.

We summarized the employers' suggestions for government policies and programs for all the provinces and asked them to provide us with feedback. We incorporated this feedback into our final report.

The Case Studies

The case studies begin with a discussion about:

- provincial adult education policies and programs
- provincial training policies and programs, and
- provincial results for the 1994 and 2003 international literacy surveys.

The case studies conclude with a summary of employer experiences of workplace literacy based on our interviews with employers.

Nova Scotia

In his 1992 overview of adult literacy work in Canada, Richard Darville reports that literacy work in Nova Scotia was traditionally sponsored by two sources: Laubach Literacy and school boards. By the mid-1980s community literacy programs, sponsored by community centres, libraries, or other organizations, had also developed.¹

According to a 1996 report commissioned by the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Nova Scotia established a Literacy Section within the Department of Advanced Education and Training in 1988.² At the time, community colleges were assigned the major responsibility for literacy activities. Literacy coordinator positions were created for seven community college regions. The coordinators were responsible for training tutors, developing materials, promoting programs, aiding local networks, and establishing new programs. Among these new programs were ten workplace programs.³ In his 2000 report on Nova Scotia's workplace literacy activities, Shannon Kelly suggests that these adult literacy actions were Nova Scotia's response to the 1987 Southam Literacy Survey that indicated 38% of Canadian adults had problems with reading and writing.⁴

In 1995 the Department of Advanced Education and Training was restructured and the Literacy Section became the Adult Education Section within the Department of Education and Culture, Learning and Innovation Division. The Adult Education Section worked with community organizations, institutions, labour, business, industry, and other levels of government to offer academic upgrading for adults from beginning to post-secondary education and training. The Adult Education Section was responsible for coordinating and financing agencies to develop and delivery adult literacy and academic upgrading including workplace literacy programming.

In 2002, the Nova Scotia government announced a new framework and action plan, Skills Nova Scotia. The government created the Skills and Learning Branch within the Department of Education. The Branch would be responsible for workplace education (essential skills programming in the workplace), as well as programs and policy elements for Apprenticeship Training, adult literacy and basic education, Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning, High School Graduation Diploma for Adults, workforce adjustment and attachment initiatives, labour market information, policy and research.⁵ Skills Nova Scotia publishes an action plan and progress report annually.

Workplace Education Initiative

At the time of the departmental restructure in 1995, the Department of Education and Culture had already been working with business and labour since 1989 to coordinate the Workplace Education Initiative. The Initiative had been set up to provide accessible learning opportunities for Nova Scotia workers.⁶

The Workplace Education Initiative is a partnership between the provincial government (the Department of Education is the primary government partner), business and labour. The government's role is to coordinate the Initiative by:

- promoting workplace education to employers and labour

- helping to design, implement, and evaluate programs at worksites
- providing adult education expertise through Education Field Officers

Employers' roles are to contribute an understanding of how future trends will effect their organizations. Labour unions represent the needs of their members.

These three groups form a project team at each site. The project team, together with the instructor and a few workers and supervisors, promote the program, help to conduct an Organizational Needs Assessment, implement, administer, monitor, and evaluate the courses offered at their site. The courses use curriculum designed from workplace documents.

Shannon Kelly lists four objectives of the Workplace Education Initiative:

1. To create accessible learning opportunities for workers in Nova Scotia's workplaces.
2. To enhance the essential skills of participants in Nova Scotia's workplaces.
3. To influence the economic and social development of Nova Scotia by providing relevant education that impacts individuals where they work and live.
4. To encourage the establishment of a lifelong learning culture in Nova Scotia and its workplaces.⁷

Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education (NSPWE), a multi-stakeholder committee, advises the Nova Scotia Department of Education on its workplace education program. The committee is co-chaired by business and labour and includes an equal number of representatives from business, labour and government. Workplace education instructors are also represented on this committee. NSPWE provides information and advice to the Department and its field officers. A sub-committee reviews requests for funding workplace education programs on a monthly basis. Other sub-committees deal with curriculum development, incorporation of the committee, and a marketing strategy.⁸

The Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch and Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education also partner with the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS). AWENS, created in 1998, is a network of professionals who support workplace education in Nova Scotia. It offers professional development, certification workshops, and networking opportunities. Workplace education instructors are certified by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Certification courses include modules on getting to know the workplace, workplace education programming, and customizing and delivering workplace education programs.⁹

Both the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education and the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia have received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat.

The annual action plan and progress reports published by Skills Nova Scotia indicate that since 2002, over one thousand workers have participated in workplace education programs at approximately fifty different sites each year. See Table 1 for more details.

Table 1: Workplace Education Programs in Nova Scotia, 2002-2005

	Number of Programs	Number of Workplaces / Adjustment Centres	Number of Participants	Amount leveraged by employers and labour
2002-2003 ¹⁰	110	55	1,200	\$380,000
2003-2004 ¹¹	101	48	NA	\$390,000
2004-2005 ¹²	128	50	1,100	\$600,000

Worker Participation in Training

The results from the Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS) conducted by Statistics Canada in 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2003 indicate that there was a steady increase for Nova Scotian workers in job-related training: from 24% in 1991, to 27.1% in 1993, to 30.4% in 1997, to 31% by 2002.¹³ For Canada as a whole, the overall rate of worker participation decreased from 26.7% in 1991 and 26.1% in 1993 to 24.8% in 1997¹⁴ before rising again to 31.0% in 2002.¹⁵

Employers were most likely to be the provider of job-related training to Nova Scotian workers in 2002 (51.3%). This is slightly lower than in New Brunswick (53.4%), which was the highest in the country, but higher than the national average (41.5%). Professional associations were the second highest provider of job-related training to workers in both Canada (17.3%) and Nova Scotia (18.0%). Other organizations providing job-related training to Nova Scotia workers included Universities/University Colleges (4.4%) and Community Colleges (2.7%). A large proportion of workers received training from other organizations (16.2%), but since the data does not specify the exact form of training provided by these organizations, it is unclear how much of the training was related to literacy or workplace literacy activities.¹⁶

Data from the most recent AETS does indicate the level of worker participation in training aimed specifically at basic writing, reading and math skills. In 2002, 13.8% of Nova Scotian workers received basic writing, reading and math skills training. The national average was slightly higher at 14.7%.¹⁷

Results for IALS and IALSS

Results from general worker training indicate that workers in Nova Scotia are gaining some access to employer provided training, including literacy and basic skills training. The results from the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) for Nova Scotia suggest that there is a definite need to continue and increase the focus on literacy and basic skills training for Nova Scotian workers.

Literacy Nova Scotia, the provincial literacy coalition, reported that in 1994, 48% of Atlantic Canadian respondents were at the upper levels of literacy with 15% at the highest levels (4/5).¹⁸

However, as Table 2 indicates, 52% of Atlantic Canadian respondents scored at the lower literacy levels with 25% at Level 1 and 27% at Level 2.

Table 2: IALS Results for Atlantic Provinces, 1994¹⁹

Literacy Level	Prose literacy		Document literacy		Quantitative Literacy	
	Atlantic Provinces	Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Canada	Atlantic Provinces	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	25	22	28	23	23	22
Level 2	26	26	26	24	30	26
Level 3	35	33	32	30	30	32
Levels 4/5	15	20	14	22	16	20

In 2003, there were fewer Canadians at either the highest or lowest levels of literacy. But for Canada overall, from 1994 to 2003, there was little change in literacy profiles.²⁰ The results for the 2003 survey still indicate that a significant number of Nova Scotia’s population have difficulty with literacy skills. For the population of 16 to 65 years, the age of the working population, 38.4% of respondents are at the lower levels for Prose literacy, 40.3% are at the lower levels for Document literacy, and 50.6% are at the lower levels for Quantitative literacy (see Table 3).

Table 3: Nova Scotia Respondents at each Proficiency Level, Aged 16 to 65, 2003²¹

Literacy Level	Prose literacy		Document literacy		Numeracy		Problem Solving	
	Nova Scotia	Canada	Nova Scotia	Canada	Nova Scotia	Canada	Nova Scotia	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	11.9	14.6	13.7	15.6	19.7	19.5	28.7	29.7
Level 2	26.5	27.3	26.6	27.0	30.9	30.3	40.8	38.8
Level 3	42.1	38.6	39.2	36.9	34.5	33.4	25.5	26.2
Levels 4/5	19.5	19.5	20.4	20.5	14.8	16.9	5.0	5.4

The 2003 IALSS results also indicate that a significant number of the respondents in the lower levels of the literacy scale were employed. For example, document literacy proficiency levels for Atlantic Canada indicate that 47.2% of respondents at Level 1 and 60.2% of respondents at Level 2 were employed (see Table 4).

Table 4: Employment Rate by Document Proficiency Levels for Atlantic Canada, Respondents Aged 16 to 65, 2003²²

	Atlantic Canada	Canada	Quebec	Ontario
Literacy Level	%	%	%	%
Level 1	47.2	57.0	53.8	61.5
Level 2	60.2	70.2	68.2	73.0
Level 3	69.5	76.4	75.1	77.3
Levels 4/5	76.1	81.0	81.0	81.9

According to a report on IALSS for Nova Scotia prepared by Satya Brink, over 20% of Nova Scotian workers in Levels 1 and 2 of Prose literacy were concentrated in five industries:

- trade, finance, insurance, real estate and leasing
- manufacturing
- health care and social assistance, and
- accommodation and food services.

Brink concludes that because the public administration and health care and social assistance sectors provide services to other Nova Scotians, the low literacy levels in these sectors are a particular cause for concern.²³ And finally, Brink points out that as proficiency levels increased, so did respondents' participation rates in adult education and training. For example, in Document literacy for Atlantic Canada respondents only 20% of respondents at Level 1 participated in adult education and training the previous year, compared with 65.9% of respondents at Levels 4 and 5 (see Table 5).²⁴

 Table 5: Per cent of population receiving adult education and training by Document Proficiency Levels, Atlantic Canada Population Aged 16 to 65, 2003²⁵

	Atlantic Canada	Canada	Quebec	Ontario
Literacy Level	%	%	%	%
Level 1	20.8	22.1	21.2	22.5
Level 2	37.8	42.4	38.9	44.5
Level 3	56.8	56.3	50.3	57.6
Levels 4/5	65.9	68.6	65.9	65.7

Summary

In partnership with business, labour, and qualified workplace education instructors, the Nova Scotia government has an infrastructure in place to promote and deliver workplace education that is individualized to each site. Workplace Education is an integral part of their overall plan for increasing working Nova Scotians' access to education and training.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education currently provides human and financial resources to support workplace literacy programs. The Workplace Education Initiative, in place since 1989, is a partnership between government (The Department of Education), business and labour. The government role is to coordinate the Initiative by promoting workplace education to employers and labour, helping to design, implement, and evaluate workplace programs, and providing adult education expertise through Education Field Officers. The Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch certifies workplace instructors by partnering with AWENS (Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia). A committee made up of business, labour, and government, Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education, advises the Department of Education on its Workplace Education program and reviews requests for funding on a monthly basis.²⁶ Since 2002, over 1,000 workers have participated in workplace education programs at over 50 different workplaces each year.

Employer Experiences of Workplace Literacy

General Information

We conducted six full and one short interview with employer representatives in Nova Scotia.²⁷ Five of these representatives were managers and two were representatives from training departments. Table 6 provides a summary of general information about the organizations that participated in our study.

Table 6: Summary of Nova Scotia Interviews

Organization Size	Number of Employers	Sector	Number of Employees	Unionized ²⁸
Small (less than 100 employees)	1	Forestry (1)	56	No (1)
Medium (between 100 and 500 employees)	4	Service – Long-term Care (4)	114 – 400	Yes (4)
Large (more than 500 employees)	2	Manufacturing (1) Public (1)	1100 – 3700	Yes (1) No (1)

General Workplace Training

Of the six respondents who answered questions about the training offered by their companies, all offered some form of on-the-job training, on/off site training, and tuition reimbursement. One company only offers tuition reimbursement for permanent full-time employees. Another company reimburses almost any type of education/training if the employee is able to justify its business applicability. The employee pays the fees upfront and the company reimburses the employee is for 50% of the cost. When the employee successfully completes the course, the company reimburses the remaining 50% of the cost.

The respondents named the following conditions for offering training:

- certification/recertification
- new technology
- new standards (industry and government legislated)
- Other: Team and/or individual gap analysis; personal development; market changes (changes in international trade agreements)

Five of the respondents' companies used some form of collaborative needs assessment to determine their training needs. In several companies, employees filled out an annual survey. Based on the results, the human resources department developed education and training plans. In another company, the training needs were determined on a department level. One company has just conducted its second round of in-depth one-on-one interviews with each employee. After both interview rounds, they developed five-year training plans based on the results.

Two respondents' companies had input on training from unions. In one company, representatives from union and management formed an Education Committee. Another company has a joint union/management health and safety committee that determines health and safety courses.

Another respondent described the company's leadership certification course. Employees volunteer to participate or a departmental unit designates a potential participant. This company also offers training via the company's intranet. Most of the company's courses are available free to employees (and their spouses) from their homes.

We asked respondents whether the employees in their company had the reading, writing, math and computer skills to fully access and benefit from the training activities and materials. Four of the respondents indicated that most of their company's employees had the skills – some did not. One company has begun to administer a TOWES, designed specifically for a position, with all of the employees in that position.²⁹ The results of these tests indicate that these employees have low document use scores. (The union is resistant to the company using these evaluations.)

Two company representatives said their recruiting standards and procedures have recently changed. One company requires all new employees to have a high school diploma or equivalent when they are hired. Another company administers literacy tests as part of the hiring process. Both of these company representatives suggested that because of these changes in hiring standards, literacy and basic skills issues are not as great in their workplaces as they once had been.

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Programs

All seven the companies that participated in our study in Nova Scotia currently offer, or have in the past, literacy and basic skills training. The courses offered include:

- GED preparation (5 respondents)
- Communications (5)
- Computers – basic and writing with computers (3)
- Academic upgrading (basic reading, writing, math; clear writing; memo writing; writing with computers) (4)
- Team building (1)

Several companies offered literacy and basic skills courses that were designed specifically for their workplace. These included courses on documentation and physical assessment. One company is offering a human resources certification program for their supervisors. This program includes courses on basic accounting, interpreting financial information, communications, and computer skills.

All seven of the companies hire external facilitators, and all except one of the companies use instructors that are members of the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS).³⁰ All of the companies' programs were held in-house. In two companies, the union sometimes provided classroom space. Four of the companies pay employees' wages for 50% of the program and employees contribute 50% of their own time. In two companies, employees attended the program entirely on their own time. Only one company provided the training entirely on company time.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education, Workplace Education Initiative, has provided some funding to all seven companies' literacy and basic skills training programs. The funding typically covers such items as the initial needs assessment (often conducted as a focus or discussion group) and all or a percentage of the facilitator's salary. In one company, the Department covered the cost of employees' GED exams. After the Department has funded a company to begin a workplace education program, they expect the company, if possible, to take on a greater percentage of the instructor's wages in future programs.

In addition to government funding, the companies contributed funding the programs from their own budgets. Companies' costs typically included:

- employees' time for attending needs assessments
- employees' wages
- classroom facilities
- materials
- percentage of instructor salary, and
- completion celebration.

In one company, employees are involved in fundraising events to help cover the costs associated with their workplace education programs.

In three of the companies, the unions contributed financial or in-kind resources for the workplace education programs. In one company, the union purchased the GED textbooks. In two companies, the unions provided classroom space for the programs.

When we asked how they determined whether their company's workplace programs were successful, respondents provided the following qualitative observations about employees who had participated in a workplace education program:

- increased confidence in their work
- increased participation at work (e.g. take on great responsibility, greater involvement in committee work)
- increased computer use
- improved understanding of materials distributed by the company

- improved communication
- improved charting practices, and
- increased self-confidence.

Some companies also had quantitative measures of success. They tracked the number of employees who had participated in workplace education programs and later went on to earn a GED, complete courses in university programs, or earn industry licences.

Two respondents specifically said that they did not have quantitative measures in mind to evaluate their workplace education programs. One respondent observed that participant comments like, “Now I can work with my kids,” and “I’m proud of myself,” cannot be measure as an ROI (Return on Investment).

Employees played an important role in most of these companies’ workplace education programs. Five companies conducted needs assessments with employees (e.g. interviews or focus groups). In three of the companies, the employees requested the workplace education program. In two companies, employees (and/or union representatives) participated on joint employee / management committees. These committees interviewed instructors, provided regular feedback and guidance, and promoted the program with employees.

When we asked respondents what role, if any, the availability of governmental initiatives or programs played in their company’s decision to provide workplace literacy or basic skills training, they were almost unanimous with their answers. The financial resources provided by the Department of Education’s Workplace Education Initiative were very important:

The availability of government initiatives and programs has certainly encouraged us to provide more programs for our workforce. There is only so much money available in a year and the more we can get through government initiatives and fundraising, the better.

[The government program] It’s huge. We couldn’t do it without them. We’re very dependent on government funding.

Government funding was the deciding factor in providing the training. We have a small education budget that gets eaten up quickly.

Not only was the government funding important, other resources that they provided were important as well. The Department of Education’s regional coordinators conducted initial needs assessments and applied for funding. They helped set up project teams and provided companies with lists of trained and experienced instructors. They identified other resources as needed. In one respondent’s words, “the Department of Education played a very important role. They provide a process and structure for the program.”

Conditions for Offering Literacy and Basic Skills Training:

When we analyzed respondents’ answers for what conditions need to exist for employers to offer literacy and basic skills training, four themes emerged.

Senior management support is an essential condition for a company to offer literacy and basic skills training. One respondent said they have to have “the will.” Another respondent talked about the need for senior management’s energy and commitment to the program. A third respondent said employers have to “look at the big picture and see the benefits of having an educated workforce.”

A learning culture, closely related to senior management support, was another important condition named by several respondents. “Do you value lifelong learning? Is it a benefit?” are questions one respondent asked. Another respondent suggested that employees had to be willing and motivated participants in literacy and basic skills programs. One respondent discussed this topic from a different perspective: How does a company offer a literacy and basic skills program when it does not know how to identify the need? When there is a stigma attached to “basic skills?” How does a company connect with employees who need such programs?

Available resources (human, financial, material) are another key condition for a company to offer literacy and basic skills training. One respondent explained how time consuming it is to research, motivate a team, make phone calls, and hire instructors for a program. Senior management has to be willing to dedicate staff to research funding options and write up proposals and reports.

Employer Suggestions for Government Policies and Programs:

The following government programs and initiatives would be helpful to our Nova Scotia respondents to help their organizations set up or continue workplace literacy and basic skills training programs.

Continue funding existing programs and initiatives (e.g. Workplace Education Initiative)

Three of the six respondents who answered our questions about policy recommendations said that the current program “works well” and “meets our needs.” Another respondent explained that the Workplace Education Initiative “allows us to access funding and support to provide training in our facilities.” A third respondent said that the program was “a real good deal” without a lot of time-consuming paperwork.

However, respondents suggested several ways for the Department of Education to improve on their programs and initiatives.

Make the resources and programs available more visible

Four of the six respondents for this set of questions talked about the need for the Nova Scotia Department of Education to make the available resources and support more visible. Two respondents described how they had come across the Workplace Education Program by accident: “I came in contact with this program by pure luck. I didn’t know it existed. So there is a need for more awareness.” Another respondent called the Department of Education to find out how to get GED textbooks. She had no idea that other resources and programs existed.

Disseminate information about the programs more widely

Respondents offered suggestions about how the Department of Education could increase employers' knowledge and participation in workplace education programs.

- Draw on the experience of employers who have used the program successfully to encourage other employers to participate. Go on a road show. Reduce employers' doubts about the benefits. Explain the application process.
- Ensure that information goes to all sectors (e.g. healthcare) and into all regions (e.g. rural)

Provide ongoing support to employers

Several respondents discussed the importance of ongoing support from the Department of Education for employers. One respondent explained that such support was necessary not only at the beginning when the company was developing a program, but later on as well when things got rough. Another respondent talked about the importance of the Department of Education ensuring continuity of knowledge and information when regional coordinators change.

Employer Feedback

We compiled the suggestions for government policies and programs from respondents in all three provinces and invited all respondents to provide us with feedback. Three respondents from Nova Scotia reviewed the suggestions and verified that the suggestions did indeed address the key challenges faced by employers in their province. Although these employers agreed with each other about the challenges employers face, they also exemplified that each employer and each workplace has different needs and perspectives. One respondent suggested that making existing resources and programs more visible needed to be emphasized. Another suggested that marketing workplace literacy programs needed to focus on workers too, not only on employers. The third respondent emphasized that many employers in Nova Scotia do not have the human or financial resources to develop and support workplace literacy training.

The Nova Scotia employers agreed that the suggestions for government policies and programs were practical and achievable. One employer cautioned that while raising awareness of workplace literacy education was important, it was debateable whether the provincial government had adequate funding to meet the demand. Another employer commented that definitions for "basic" and "literacy" are moving targets. Therefore, policy and program definitions for workplace literacy training need to be open enough to fit the needs of different employers and sectors.

Conclusion

The Nova Scotia government has a workplace literacy policy – the Workplace Education Initiative. The Nova Scotia government is a member of the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education, a partnership of government, employers, labour, and workplace educators. The government's role in workplace literacy is to coordinate the Workplace Education Initiative by promoting workplace education to employers and labour, helping to design, implement, and evaluate workplace programs, and providing adult education expertise through its field officers. The Nova Scotia government funds workplace literacy training by covering the cost of initial needs assessments and by paying for all or a percentage of instructors' salaries.

Our interviews with Nova Scotia employers show that governments can and do play a critical role in addressing the challenges of workplace literacy. They consider workplaces a key venue for adult literacy learning. The Nova Scotia employers we interviewed certainly believe that government has a positive role to play.

Endnotes for Nova Scotia Case Study

¹ Richard Darville, *Adult Literacy Work in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education and Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia, 1992), 92?

² Joanne Godin, "Working in Concert: Federal, Provincial and Territorial Actions in Support of Literacy in Canada," (Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat, 1996).

³ Darville, *Adult Literacy Work in Canada*.

⁴ Shannon Kelly, "Workplace Education Works: The Results of an Outcome Evaluation Study of the Nova Scotia Workplace Education Initiative," (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1999).

⁵ "Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-2003 Action Plan," (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning, 2002), 16.

⁶ Kelly, "Workplace Education Works: The Results of an Outcome Evaluation Study of the Nova Scotia Workplace Education Initiative," iii.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸ Canadian Labour and Business Centre, "Workplace Literacy: Funding Sources and Partnership Opportunities for Labour," (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2005), 39-40.

⁹ Information about AWENS was obtained from the following website: <http://www.awens.ca/index.html>.

¹⁰ "Skills Nova Scotia Annual Progress Report 2002-2003," (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch, 2003), 31.

¹¹ "Skills Nova Scotia Annual Progress Report 2003-2004," (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch, 2004), 40.

¹² "Skills Nova Scotia Annual Progress Report 2004-2005," (Nova Scotia Department of Education, Skills and Learning Branch, 2005), 12.

¹³ The reports were published for data collected the year before. For example, 1992 AETS data were collected for 1991.

¹⁴ André Léonard, "Adult Education and Training Survey: Why Did the Participation Rate in Job-Related Training Decline During the 1990s in Canada?," (Ottawa: Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada, 2001), 26.

¹⁵ Peters attributes some of this increase from 1997 to 2002 to a change in how data were collected. See Valerie Peters, "Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey," (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Ministry of Industry, 2004), 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Literacy Nova Scotia, *Facts About Literacy (1)* ([cited 22 November 2006]); available from <http://www.ns.literacy.ca/literacy/Fact1.pdf>. These percentages were obtained by taking the average scores of each literacy scale for each level.

¹⁹ National Literacy Secretariat, "Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada," (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997).

²⁰ "Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2003), 33. Problem solving was a new domain for the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. It is defined as involving "goal-directed thinking and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist. The problem solver has a more or less well defined goal, but it is not immediately obvious how to reach it. The incongruence of goals and admissible operators constitutes a problem. The understanding of the problem situation and its step-by-step transformation, based on planning and reasoning, constitute the process of problem solving" ("Building on Our Competencies: Canadian

Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” 13.). The scale for Problem Solving domain uses only four levels. The desired level has yet to be determined “Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” 17.

²¹ “Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” 118-19.

²² Ibid., 162.

²³ Satya Brink, *Literacy in Nova Scotia: Implications of Findings from IALSS 2003* (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2006), PowerPoint Presentation.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ “Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” 183.

²⁶ A 1996 report published by the National Literacy Secretariat reported that the Department of Education funded each workplace education site an average of \$3,000 (Godin, “Working in Concert: Federal, Provincial and Territorial Actions in Support of Literacy in Canada.”).

²⁷ We conducted the interviews by telephone and email. In some cases, we supplemented information from the interviews with published documentation about the company’s workplace literacy program.

²⁸ Respondents named the following unions: Canadian Autoworkers (CAW), Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP), Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and Nova Scotia Nurses Union (NSNU).

²⁹ TOWES is the Test of Workplace Essential Skills. It measures an individual’s skills and knowledge in three workplace essential skills: reading text, document use, and numeracy. The test uses workplace documents. SkillPlan (a joint labour-management initiative in the British Columbia construction industry) and Bow Valley College in Calgary jointly developed the TOWES in the late 1990s. In 2004, Bow Valley College became the sole owner of TOWES. See Bow Valley College, *TOWES Canada's Essential Credential* (2007 [cited 23 April 2007]); available from www.towes.com. For a labour perspective on TOWES, see Canadian Labour Congress, “Essential Skills and the Labour Movement,” (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2005), 7.

³⁰ The Department of Education supports AWENS and certifies workplace education instructors.

Quebec

An Overview of Government Policies and Programs

Richard Darville provides an overview of literacy work and policies in Quebec from its organization after 1964 to the early 1990s.¹ Since the early 1960s, both schools boards (through their adult education services) and *groupe populaires* (community adult literacy groups) have provided adult literacy programs. The school boards offered upgrading programs, funded by the federal government, and began to work in literacy after the mid-1960s.² The popular education groups, Darville explains, were active in working class and immigrant communities and some of these groups took on literacy work along with their work on tenant, health, and other issues. In the late 1970s popular education groups in Montreal integrated literacy into their work with immigrant orientation and training.

By 1980, according to Darville, the profile of the literacy issue had increased to a level where there was a strong basis for a provincial literacy policy. For example, the 1982 report on the *Commission d'étude sur la formation des adultes*, "called for basic education to be provided at no cost to adults."³ The Quebec government's 1984 continuing education policy made the elimination of illiteracy a priority. It also called for access to education for all groups and stated that basic education should be a right for all.⁴ This policy had manpower training as its specific goal and it shifted literacy work into integration with formal general education and training.

After the 1984 policy, provincial literacy funding for school boards increased substantially: \$13 million in 1985 – 1986 to \$24.1 million in 1990. This constituted 90 per cent of the provincial literacy budget. The popular education groups' funding was essentially frozen: \$1.2 million in 1985 – 1986 to \$1.9 million in 1990. A 1996 report on literacy in Canada for the National Literacy Secretariat reports that financial support for community educational groups increased from \$2.5 million in 1994 – 1995 to \$5 million in 1995 – 1996.⁵

In its 2002 policy on adult education and continuing education, the *Ministère de l'Éducation*, reports there are 130 accredited independent community action groups in literacy training and that its financial support to these groups had increased substantially in 2001.⁶ This policy statement calls for the government to recognize and support community action groups.⁷

Many adults with little schooling prefer to learn through action and through involvement in social action rather than enrol in an educational institution. Over the years, independent community action groups (community-based education) have developed invaluable expertise and original training practices, especially in literacy training.

In keeping with its recent adopted policy of recognizing and supporting community organizations, the government hopes to recognize more explicitly the irreplaceable role these groups play in socioeconomic development in Quebec. This type of noneconomic action in adult education should be officially recognized and the status and situation of community groups should be consolidated.⁸

1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) Results

The 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) evaluated the literacy skill levels of adults in three areas: prose literacy, document literacy and quantitative literacy. (See Appendix A for definitions and descriptions of domains and literacy levels.) Compared with respondents from all of Canada, more Quebec respondents scored at the lower literacy levels and fewer at the higher levels for all three areas.⁹ Twenty per cent of Canadian respondents scored at Level 4/5 on the prose literacy scale compared with only 8% of Quebec respondents. In document use, 22% of Canadian respondents scored at a 4/5 level, while only 13% of Quebec respondents scored at this level. Ten per cent of Quebec respondents scored at level 4/5 on the quantitative scale compared with 20% of Canadians.¹⁰ See Table 7 for details.

Table 7: IALS Results for Quebec, 1994¹¹

Literacy Level	Prose Literacy		Document Literacy		Quantitative Literacy	
	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	28	22	31	23	28	22
Level 2	26	26	27	24	32	26
Level 3	39	33	29	30	30	32
Level 4/5	8	20	13	22	10	20

It is beyond the scope of this case study to investigate the reasons for provincial differences in literacy levels, specifically, the lower results for Quebec’s respondents.¹² However, in his study of the disparate IALS results for Francophone and Anglophone Canadians, Jean-Pierre Corbeil suggests that the existing gap between Anglophone and Francophone literacy levels is “largely a holdover from times past.”¹³ Corbeil points to the gap in educational attainment between people of French and British origin as highlighted in the 1961 Census and the results of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism of the late 1960s. “As a group,” states Corbeil, “Francophones consistently ranked much lower with respect to average income, levels of schooling, occupation scales and ownership of industries.”¹⁴ The 1994 IALS results show a gap between Anglophone and Francophone respondents’ literacy levels; however, according to Corbeil, this gap is decreasing.

An Overview of Government Policies and Programs for Employer Investment in Workforce Training

A discourse valuing investment in workforce training existed in Quebec during the 1980s. Various Quebec government reports, ministries, and special commissions highlighted the importance of investing in workforce training.¹⁵ During this period, one of the policy options that emerged was for mandatory employer investment in employee training. A commission on free trade and adaptability proposed a policy requiring employers to invest one per cent of their payroll in employee training.¹⁶ The policy was not adopted at that time. Instead, in 1990, the Quebec government adopted the *Crédit d’impôt remboursable pour la formation*, a reimbursable tax credit for training programs, intended to encourage employer investment in training.

According to the Quebec government, the program's goal was to address workforce adaptability and qualifications through employer investment in training.¹⁷ The initiative did not achieve the desired results. Only 2.5% of employers participated in the initiative in the mid-1990s (less than 6,000 of 230,000 possible employers). The Quebec government reports that the complexity of the tax credit program and its administrative requirements frustrated employers.¹⁸

During the 1990s, the results of surveys measuring training participation and literacy levels in Quebec undoubtedly reinforced the perceived need for increased investment in workplace training. The Adult Education and Training Survey results from 1991, 1993, and 1997 indicate decreased participation in job-related employer-sponsored training in Quebec during the 1990s. The participation rate decreased from about 23% in 1991 to 17% in 1997 (for adults aged 25 to 54 year olds). Quebec had the lowest participation rates in job-related employer-sponsored training of all the provinces in both 1993 and 1997.¹⁹ In addition to low employer sponsored training participation rates, the general participation rates in formal job-related training in Quebec were also low. In 1997, Quebec had the lowest rate of participation in Canada. Only about 22% of the adult work force had participated in formal job-related training.²⁰

The Act to Foster the Development of the Manpower Training

(la Loi favorisant le développement de la formation de la main-d'oeuvre)

Within this context – survey results indicating Quebeckers' low literacy levels and low participation rates in workplace training – the Quebec government adopted the *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training* in 1995. While the earlier approach to workplace training encouraged employer investment in workplace literacy through reimbursable tax credits, the 1995 policy made employer investment in training mandatory. The law requires employers to invest one per cent of their total payout in salaries in training.

The Act regulates the types of activities and projects that can be included in training. It also stipulates that government has to approve all trainers and training organizations. The Labour Market Partners Commission, established in 1997, oversees the Act.²¹ The Quebec government names representatives from employer groups, labour, education, and community organizations to the commission for a three-year term.²² The commission participates in defining policy, programs, and services related to the workplace training legislation. Employers who do not invest a full one per cent of the total salary payout in training must pay the difference into Quebec's national training fund: *le Fond national de formation de la main d'oeuvre*.

The *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training*, more commonly known as the *1% Law*, was scheduled to come into effect in January 1996, but concern for smaller employers' ability to prepare for the law led to its staggered application over a three-year period. The law applied to employers with salaries of over \$1,000,000 in 1996. In 1997, it applied to employers with salaries of \$500,000 and over. And in 1998, the law applied to employers with salaries of \$250,000 and over.

By 1999 the *1% Law* applied to all employer groups:

- Large employers: those with payrolls of 1,000,000
- Medium-sized employers: payrolls of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, and
- Small employers: payrolls of \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Data from 2000 and 2003 reveal general trends in Quebec employers' investment in training.²³ In 2000, the number of small employers subject to the *1% Law* far exceeded the number of medium-sized or large employers (see Table 8). However, as a group, small employers paid the least amount in training in 2000 (1.07% of their total salary payout in training compared with 1.21% for medium sized employers and 1.64% for large employers). This trend held for 2003 as well, although small and medium sized employers increased the percentage that they invested in training. In 2000, 68% of small employers invested at least one per cent of their salary payout in training, compared to 78% of medium sized employers and 87% of large employers (see Table 8). In 2003, this pattern of investment remained about the same with each employer group slightly increasing their investment in employee training (see Table 8).

There are considerable differences between employers groups' payment into Quebec's national training fund. Only employers who do not meet their obligation to invest one per cent of their salary payout in employee training are required to invest money into the fund. In both 2000 and 2003, a greater percentage of small and medium-sized employers invested in the training fund than did large employers. In 2003, for example, 30% of small employers invested in the training fund compared to 20% of medium-sized employers and 12% of large employers.

Table 8: Employer Investment in Training, 2000 & 2003²⁴

	2000			
	Number of employers	Percentage of total salary invested in training	Employers investing 1% in training (%)	Employers investing in the national training fund (%)
Large	10,317	1.64	87.6	12.6
Medium	9,149	1.21	78.3	21.8
Small	14,777	1.07	67.9	32.3
	2003			
	Number of employers	Percentage of total salary invested in training	Employers investing 1% in training (%)	Employers investing in the national training fund (%)
Large	11,068	1.51	88.2	12
Medium	10,205	1.24	80.1	20
Small	16,073	1.15	69.8	30

This data demonstrates that it is easier for larger employers to invest in training than it is for small employers. In the 2003-2004 activity report on the *1% Law*, the Quebec government points out that between 1998 and 2001 almost 3 out of 10 small businesses did not declare having spent at least the required one per cent of their total salary.²⁵ During this same period, small employers invested nearly \$68 million into the Quebec national training fund, a little more than half the total \$134 million invested by all employers.

The Quebec government eventually loosened the administrative demands for small and medium-sized businesses affected by the law. As a result, the *1% Law* no longer applies to businesses with salary payouts between \$250,000 and \$1,000,000. As of January 2004, the law requires only employers with an annual payroll of \$1,000,000 or more to invest the equivalent of one per cent of their total payout in salaries in training.²⁶

The National Training Fund

(le fond national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre)

The Quebec government's 2002 *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing and Education and Training* highlights several areas of the *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training* that need improvement:

Administrative formalities pose problems for small and medium-sized businesses....they do not always have the expertise to define training needs of their personnel, their economies of scale are less than those of larger businesses, and the demands of production restrict the possibilities for training during working hours.²⁷

The national training fund is created from the money paid by employers who did not invest the equivalent of one per cent of their total salary payout in employee training. The mandate of the national training fund is to promote and provide financial and technical support for training activities and initiatives.²⁸ The fund is overseen by the Labour Market Partners Commission.²⁹ The commission determines how the funds will be allocated each year. For 2006 to 2007, for example, the Commission has allocated \$3.5 million of a total of \$30 million to literacy, basic education, and French language training.³⁰

All employers with total salary payouts of over \$250,000 are eligible to submit a proposal for literacy, basic education, and French language training activities.³¹ Employers with a total salary payout between \$250,000 and \$5 million are eligible to submit proposals for all approved training activities. And all employers with a total salary payout over \$250,000 are eligible to participate in training activities developed by sectoral committees or delivered by training institutions. However, only employers with total salary payouts between \$250,000 and \$5 million are entitled to refunds for approved expenditures. The maximum amount that an employer can receive from the national training fund is 5% of their total salary payout to a maximum of \$100,000. Companies with a total salary payout between \$250,000 and \$1 million are eligible to be reimbursed for 50% of eligible program costs.

Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training, 2002

In 2002, the Quebec Ministry of Education and Employment and the Ministry of Employment collaborated on a policy for adult education, continuing education, and training.³² The policy prioritizes four areas for action:

- “to provide basic education for adults
- to maintain and continually upgrade adults’ competencies
- to acknowledge prior learning and competencies through official recognition
- to remove obstacles to access and retention”³³

The first two areas most directly relate to workplace literacy in Quebec.

Providing Basic Education for Adults

The policy on basic education for adults is based on data about education attainment levels for Quebec. For example, 1996 Statistics Canada data indicated that 1.5 million people in Quebec,

aged 15 to 64, did not have a diploma. However, adult enrolment in general and vocational education in school boards in 2000-2001 only totalled 80,000. That same year, only 18,000 adults were enrolled in literacy training (12,000 adults in school board literacy and 6,000 adults in community-based literacy). The ministries conclude, “despite their best efforts, school boards and independent community action groups have been able to reach only a small percentage of the population with literacy needs.”³⁴ Based on such data, one of the major components of this policy statement is that: “every citizen of Quebec who has the ability should have basic education that meets social standards.”³⁵

The ministries identify a Secondary School Diploma (SSD) or a Diploma of Vocational Studies (DVS) as the benchmark for basic adult education.³⁶ The components of basic education include: “**core competencies that normally require nine years of schooling and that include, but go beyond, literacy learning. This is followed by diversified general education equivalent to two further years of schooling.**”³⁷ (emphasis in the original) The policy redefines literacy to account for the current context of a knowledge-based society, globalizations, technological change, and the increased complexity of social and working life. Basic education, according to the ministries, should enable people to:

- “understand and use written information in a range of contexts to meet their goals and broaden their knowledge and abilities
- communicate effectively with varied audiences
- use information and communications technologies for many purposes
- participate actively filling their roles as citizens”³⁸

The policy states the importance of working collaboratively with the *Ministère de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale* and other ministries, as well as school boards and community-based education groups to achieve the goal of a basic education for all Quebec adults.

Establishing a Culture of Lifelong Learning

The *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* focuses on updating and improving adults’ competencies, made possible by basic education, as a second priority for action. The policy states, “the implementation of the *Act to foster the development of manpower training* is one of the most notable advances in the development of a culture of lifelong learning in Québec.”³⁹ The Act aims to raise the qualifications of the Quebec labour force. In 1999, for example, although less than the 2% spent by employers in the European Union, Quebec employers spent 1.56% (more than \$1 billion) on personnel training. The policy maintains that employer sponsored training is “one of the cornerstones of lifelong learning in Québec.”⁴⁰ The ministries suggest that although the Act makes tools available to employers to support the development of a culture of lifelong learning, “there should be more concern for ensuring equal access to this employment-related education and training, because some categories of workers do not receive the training they need.”⁴¹

Conclusion

Recent survey results indicate mixed results from Quebec’s efforts to improve literacy levels and increase participation in job-related training. According to the most recent Adult Education and Training survey, participation in formal, job-related training in Quebec between 1997 and 2002 increased from 20% to 32%.⁴² Employer-supported training increased from 15% in 1997 to 24%

in 2002.⁴³ In her analysis of these results, Valerie Peters suggests that the increased participation in employer-supported training could be linked to the 1995 adoption of *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training in Quebec*.

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) tested Canadians’ literacy proficiency in four areas: prose, document, numeracy, and problem solving. (See Appendix A for definitions and descriptions of domains and literacy levels.) Overall, the survey found that there was little change in Canadian’s literacy proficiency since 1994.⁴⁴ With the exception of Quebec, provincially there were no changes in average literacy performance. Between 1994 and 2003, for adults over the age of 16, Quebec respondents’ proficiency increased in prose literacy.⁴⁵

Table 9: International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey Results for Quebec, 2003⁴⁶

Literacy Level	Prose		Document		Numeracy		Problem Solving	
	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada	Quebec	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	22.3	19.9	25.1	21.5	27.6	25.5	39.8	35.9
Level 2	32.3	27.8	31.5	27.1	31.3	29.6	36.4	36.3
Level 3	32.8	35.4	30.4	33.5	28.6	30.1	19.8	23.1
Level 4/5	12.6	17	12.9	17.9	12.5	14.7	4.0	4.6

Although Quebec respondents’ average proficiency in prose literacy increased, their proficiency in both prose and document literacy remained below the national average.⁴⁷ Quebec respondents scored at the national average in numeracy and problem solving.⁴⁸

Employer Experiences of Workplace Literacy

General Information

We conducted eleven interviews with employer representatives in Quebec. The majority of our respondents (8) were representatives from Human Resources and/or training departments. The other three respondents were from Health and Safety, Accounting, and a Director of Operations. Table 10 provides a general summary about the organizations that participated in our study.

Table 10: Summary of Quebec Interviews

Organization Size	Number of Employers	Sector	Number of Employees	Unionized ⁴⁹
Small (less than 100 employees)	3	Manufacturing (3)	15 to 70	No (3)
Medium (between 100 and 500 employees)	7	Manufacturing (4) Forestry (1) Research (1) Construction (1)	125 to 165	Yes (4) No (3)
Large (more than 500 employees)	1	Manufacturing (1)	500 – 600	Yes (1)

General Workplace Training

All of the organizations we interviewed offered on-the-job training as well as on- and off-site training. All except two of the organizations also provided employees with some type of tuition reimbursement. For example, one organization reimburses employees for 80% of the cost of the course and materials if the course is relevant to the employee's work. Another organization reimburses employee's tuition and pays for mileage.

The respondents offered the following conditions for offering training:

- to comply with industry standards and regulations
- to comply with government legislation
- trades certification
- new technology
- increase quality and productivity
- increase safety

Of the eight respondents who answered questions about the employees' role in providing training, six of the organizations involved employees or unions in decisions to provide training. This involvement ranged from consulting employees and or unions, responding to employees' and union representatives' requests for training, to meeting regularly (annually and weekly) with employees individually or in teams to jointly determine training needs. One organization responded that employees did not play a role in determining training and another responded that their training sessions were obligatory.

When we asked respondents to describe their employees' readiness to access and benefit from training activities, only two replied that their employees had the basic levels of education necessary to access training. One of these organizations provided English-speaking employees with translation during training. A third respondent said the employees' skills were average and they especially had difficulty with writing. This organization adapted their training format to accommodate these employees. Two other respondents also talked about adapting their training formats to accommodate employees' educational needs. One company, for example, provided more training orally and used coloured pictograms to train employees about health and safety systems.

Two respondents said that only some of their employees had difficulty with reading, writing, or math skills. In one case, the respondent identified production workers as having the most difficulty and in the other case, employees over the age of forty had the most difficulty.

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Training:

Small Business

Two of the three small businesses that took part in our study had participated in some form of workplace literacy program. In one company, three employees took a French second language course. The course, paid for by *Emploi Québec*, took place two days a week for three hours a day over the course of one year. It was offered on site and during work hours. The respondent for this company suggested that funding from *Emploi Québec* made it more likely for the president to allocated funding for education.

Another company worked with a sector committee on a professional certification and training program. First, the sector committee established industry standards and then it developed a training program. The training involved participants taking assessments in French and mathematics. Based on their assessment results, participants entered either the training program (on-the-job mentoring) or an upgrading course. When participants successfully completed the training program, they received the certification. A *CEGEP* delivered the training program and the school commission offered the upgrading program.⁵⁰

Employees in this company could sign up for the program on a voluntary basis. Thirty-five per cent of the employees had to complete the upgrading course first, because many of them had been out of school for over twenty years and did not have a high school diploma. Approximately one year after the program started, 60% of the company's employees are now licensed. *Emploi Québec* reimbursed the company for employee wages during the training. The respondent for this company suggested that although they accessed funding from *Emploi Québec*, they would have participated in the certification program without it.

This same sector council approached another small company in our study to participate in the certification program. This company decided not to participate for several reasons. It was not feasible to send employees on training because of the work schedule. They needed employees to be available twenty-four hours a day. Also, the standards, especially the academic requirements, appeared to be too high for this company. It would have been too difficult to close the gap. Furthermore, the standards were not appropriate to this company. The respondent suggested that if a program was more specific to the work of the company, and if employees could take the courses on their own time, the company might consider participating in a certification program.

Medium Businesses

All seven of the medium businesses participating in our study had offered, or are currently offering, some type of workplace literacy and basic skills training. One of the companies worked in partnership with a *CEGEP* and the others all worked with their local school commission. Two of the respondents worked with the *Centre de ressources éducatives et pédagogiques (CREP)*, one of the Montreal School Commission's adult education centres.⁵¹ These seven companies offered a range of programs:

- specialized certification (1)
- reading, writing, and numeracy (2)
- GED (3), and
- French Second Language (1).

Two of the programs delivered by the local school commissions were held off site; the others all took place at the workplace. Six of the seven medium businesses that took part in our study paid 100% of employees' wages during training. These six companies scheduled the training outside of regular work hours. *Emploi Québec* reimbursed or subsidized these companies for employees' wages.⁵²

One of the medium businesses that participated in our study provided on site training for two hours one, two or three times a week. One hour was on employees' lunch hour and the other on the employees' scheduled work time.

When we asked the respondents how they determined whether their workplace literacy and basic skills programs were successful, they offered the following observations about workers who had taken the training:

- Greater awareness of health and safety and take greater responsibility for health and safety; taking more initiative – no longer afraid to ask questions; increased capacity to express themselves and share information with others; increased self-satisfaction
- Greater interest in their work and other training sessions, increased confidence
- Increased work satisfaction, decreased disciplinary measures; greater understanding of work and machines
- Improved communication, increased language comprehension, greater pride in their work.

Another indicator of success mentioned by three respondents was that the participants themselves considered the program successful.

However, several respondents expressed disappointment with their programs. In a company that offered a GED program, only eight of the 18 participants enrolled in the course took the final exam, and only two of them passed it. Another respondent said that those workers who most needed the course didn't participate. In this program, also offering GED training, only half of the 40 people who started the course finished it, and only half of them wrote the exams successfully. One respondent remarked that although participants were satisfied, the literacy and basic skills training had not had an impact on the company itself.

We asked respondents what the role of government initiatives and programs had been in their decision to offer workplace literacy and basic skills training. Only one of the seven respondents in this category said they would have offered the training without government financing. For that respondent, the financial resources helped but support from the company leadership was the key. Three respondents said that without government subsidies, they doubted their companies would have offered this programming.

Large Business

The one large business in our study was not currently offering workplace literacy and basic skills training. It had done so in the past and the respondent was exploring ways to revive the program. The company, in partnership with the local school commission, offered an on site program over a period of ten years. Many employees participated successfully in the program. Recently the company assessed all the employees in one of its departments with an aptitude test. Several people had difficulty with the test because of their limited reading and writing skills. These individuals will not be eligible for promotion without test results. The union requested a program to help people improve their skills. The company has already approved the training, but if there is financing available, they will be able to implement it more quickly.

Conditions for Offering Literacy and Basic Skills Training

Four themes arose from respondents' replies about what conditions are necessary for employers to offer literacy and basic skills training.

Support from company management was a condition named by five respondents. Management included most importantly the company president, but respondents also named company directors and human resources personnel. And, for one respondent, the person in the company responsible for filling out the paperwork needed to support the program as well. In one example, a company president supported education and training and would have offered the workplace literacy program without financial support from the government. In another example, a company president generally did not support education and training; and therefore, only financial support from the government persuaded him to approve a workplace literacy program.

Financial support from government was a condition named by four respondents. Subsidies from *Emploi Québec* made it possible for companies to offer literacy training. It offset company costs and encouraged workers to participate in the training.

A direct benefit to company was a condition named by three respondents. One respondent named increased effectiveness and productivity as a condition. Another gave an example of how a literacy program could help the company meet health and safety regulations set by the government. A third respondent suggested that literacy programs benefited employees only. There was not link between the literacy program and an increase in production.

Flexible programs was a condition named by two respondents. The programs needed to take place outside of work hours and should be of short duration and uncomplicated.

Community partnerships was a condition named by one respondent. The school commissions, for example, provide necessary resources (assessments, program planning and organization, and instructors).

Employer Suggestions for Government Policies and Programs

The following government programs and support would be helpful for our Quebec respondents to help their organizations set up or continue literacy and basic skills training programs.

Increase Financial Support: Six respondents discussed the importance of financial support for workplace literacy and basic skills programs. The financial support facilitates acceptance of a program. Specific suggestions included:

- Increase financial support for small and medium companies
- Reimburse and/or subsidize employers for employee wages, and
- Keep program costs low.

Reduce Bureaucracy: Four respondents suggested that government programs and policies needed to reduce the bureaucracy of applying for subsidies and providing other required documents. They discussed the need for an easier, more accessible format. Other suggestions included:

- Provide assistance to companies for planning programs
- Reduce paperwork and make forms clearer, and
- Develop and deliver ready-made programs that are specific to different types of companies.

Encourage Partnerships: Four respondents discussed the importance of supporting partnerships with organizations such as school boards, the Centre de ressources éducatives et pédagogiques, and sector councils.⁵³

Market Programs to Employers: Two respondents discussed the importance of marketing and promoting workplace literacy and basic skills programs to employers many of whom are not aware of these types of programs. One respondent suggested that it was important to show how successful these programs can be.

- Promote and market the availability of programs, and
- Tell success stories.

Continue Current Programs and Subsidies: One respondent stated that the programs and subsidies currently available meet the company's needs.

Employer Feedback

We compiled the suggestions for government policies and programs from respondents in all three provinces and invited all respondents to provide us with feedback. Six respondents from Quebec reviewed the suggestions and verified that the suggestions did indeed address the key challenges faced by employers in their province. Most of the Quebec employers agreed that the suggestions for government policies and programs were practical and achievable. One employer questioned whether it was possible for the Quebec government to increase funding and decrease bureaucracy in the immediate future. When asked whether they would like to include additional information in these suggestions, one employer explained that there are so many kinds of training that can be included under the *1% Law* that it is more feasible to utilize funding from *le fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre* for workplace literacy programs, even though the application process is very discouraging.

Conclusion

The Quebec government's *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training* mandates employers to spend a certain percentage on training, which can include workplace literacy. Furthermore, *le fond national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre* specifically earmarks funds for

literacy and French language training. Organizations including education and training bodies, labour, and employers can apply to this fund and use the money for delivering workplace literacy programs. Funding contributes to such costs as instructor salaries and employee wages.

Our interviews with Quebec employers shows that governments can and do play a critical role in addressing the challenges of workplace literacy. They consider workplaces a key venue for adult literacy learning. The Quebec employers we interviewed certainly believe that government has a positive role to play.

Endnotes for Quebec Case Study

¹ Richard Darville, *Adult Literacy Work in Canada* (Toronto: Canadian Association for Adult Education and Centre for Policy Studies in Education, University of British Columbia, 1992), 38-41.

² This federal funding was provided under the Canada Manpower Training Program from the 1960s to the 1970s. For more information on this program, see *Ibid.*, 13-14..

³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴ In the 1989 Education Action, the Quebec government legislated the right of all Quebecers to a secondary education (*Ibid.*, 40).

⁵ Joanne Godin, "Working in Concert: Federal, Provincial and Territorial Actions in Support of Literacy in Canada," (Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat, 1996).

⁶ "Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training," (Québec: Government of Quebec, Ministère de l'Éducation, 2002), 39.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁹ Respondents were given the choice of taking the test in English or French. Of Quebec respondents who identified their mother tongue as French, 85% chose to be tested in French (National Literacy Secretariat, "Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada," (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997), 5.).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² For a more detailed discussion of Quebec's performance on the 1994 IALS and how Francophones in Quebec and in other areas of Canada performed in comparison to Anglophones, see Jean-Pierre Corbeil, "Literacy in Canada: Disparity between Francophones and Anglophones. A Data Analysis from the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey," (Statistics Canada, Demography Division, 2000).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Emploi Québec et Ministère de l'Emploi et la Solidarité Sociale, *Loi Favorisant Le Développement De La Formation De La Main-D'œuvre* (Gouvernement du Québec, [cited 1 juillet 2005]); available from <<http://emploi.quebec.net/francais/entreprises/loiformation/index.htm>>.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* ([cited]).

¹⁷ In the Quebec government's words, to address « le problème d'adaptation et de qualification de la main d'œuvre » *Ibid.* ([cited]).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* ([cited]).

¹⁹ André Léonard, "Adult Education and Training Survey: Why Did the Participation Rate in Job-Related Training Decline During the 1990s in Canada?," (Ottawa: Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada, 2001), Appendix A, Valerie Peters, "Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey," (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Ministry of Industry, 2004), 28.

²⁰ Léonard, "Adult Education and Training Survey: Why Did the Participation Rate in Job-Related Training Decline During the 1990s in Canada?," Appendix A, Peters, "Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey," 28.. British Columbia had the highest rate of adult participation in job-related training. In 1997, 32% of the adult work force participated in job-related training.

²¹ The Quebec Federation of Labour (Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (FTQ)) is a partner on this commission.

²² For more information about the Labour Market Partners Commission see the *Emploi Québec* website: <http://emploi.quebec.net/francais/organisation/commpartenaires/index.htm>.

²³ The data regarding employer investment in training is based on employer declared investment in training. The Quebec government cautions that this could represent an underestimation of investment in training because employers are not required to report on training that exceeds the required 1% of salary payout investment. The data could also overestimate investment in training because organizations are allowed to carry over training that exceeds the required 1% for credit the following year (“Bilan quantitatif sur la participation des employeurs à la loi favorisant le développement de la formation de la main d'oeuvre en vertu de l'article 3. Année Civile 2002..” (Gouvernement du Québec, *Emploi Québec*, Direction du Fonds national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre, 2004).).

²⁴ The information for this table is based on data from “Fonds National De Formation De La Main D'oeuvre, Rapport D'activité 2003-2004,” (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Emploi Québec* produces annual reports and evaluations every five years on the 1% Law. These reports, available primarily in the French language, provide a wealth of information regarding the law, including who offers training, which sectors are involved in training, and the type of training that is offered. These documents also offer perspectives regarding the limitations of the law and areas in need improvement.

²⁷ “Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training,” 14.

²⁸ *Emploi Québec, Plan D'affectation Des Ressources 2006-2007 Du Fonds National De Formation De La Main-D'oeuvre* (2006 [cited 16 April 2007]); available from http://emploi.quebec.net/publications/Pages-statistiques/00_fnfmo_plan20062007.pdf.

²⁹ The FTQ, a partner on the commission, assists its affiliates with preparing funding proposals, developing courses, and negotiating with employers. They work with instructors who come from community groups and school boards to select and design curriculum. Some of the eligible expenditures include the salary of the person on training, costs of the training provider, costs related to developing and holding the training, and some travel and childcare costs.

³⁰ Basic education is defined as reading, writing, mathematics, and French communication up to a secondary school diploma level. These training activities must be delivered in French. French language training is for employees born outside of the province of Quebec who do not speak French. Other types of eligible training activities include any activities within the general framework for the development and recognition of competencies, teacher training, training agreed on by a joint training committee and the adaptation of materials and curriculum for employees with disabilities. (*Emploi Québec, Entreprises* (2007 [cited 18 April 2007]); available from <http://emploi.quebec.net/francais/entreprises/loiformation/interventindiv.htm>).

³¹ {Québec, 20006 #219}

³² “Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training.”

³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁶ Quebec’s education system has four levels: Elementary, Secondary, College, and University. Education is free at the first three levels. Elementary education has six levels. Secondary education has five levels and upon completion results in either a Diploma of Vocational Studies (VDS) or a Secondary School Diploma (SSD). College education focuses on either technical training (three year program) or pre-university education (two year program) (du Loisir et du Sport Ministère de l’Éducation, “Education in Quebec: An Overview,” (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2006), 4.

³⁷ “Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training,” 8-9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁹ Ministère de l’Éducation, *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuing Education and Training* (Ministère de l’Éducation, 2002 [cited 8 December 2004]); available from www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/REFORME/formation_con/annexe1.htm.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* ([cited]).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* ([cited]).

⁴² Peters, “Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey,” 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁴ *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003* (The Daily, Statistics Canada, 9 November 2005 [cited 19 April 2007]); available from <http://www.literacyalberta.ca/facts/statscan/pdf/StatsCanNov9.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.([cited).

⁴⁶ “Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2003), 112-13.

⁴⁷ *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey 2003* ([cited).

⁴⁸ Ibid.([cited).

⁴⁹ Employees in the organizations that participated in our study were represented by the following unions: Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD); Confédération des syndicats nationaux (CSN); Syndicat canadien des communications, de l'énergie et du papier (SCEP); Union internationale des travailleurs du verre, mouleurs, poterie, plastique et autres (VMP).

⁵⁰ *CEGEP* is the acronym for *Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel* (College of General and Professional Education). In Quebec, these colleges are one of three free levels of education. See note 36.

⁵¹ *Centre de ressources éducatives et pédagogiques* is one of the Montreal School Commission's fifteen adult education centres. One of the services CREP provides is the development and delivery of customized workplace education programs. For more information see the CREP website: www.csdm.qc.ca/crep/. ABC Canada lists CREP its “Non-Profit Workplace Education Providers” web page: www.abc-canada.org/workplace_education/quebec_02.asp.

⁵² One company received a tax credit. Employee wages were reimbursed to a maximum of fifteen or twenty dollars an hour.

⁵³ *Centre de ressources éducatives et pédagogiques* (CREP) is the Montreal school board's adult education centre. It offers education in the community as well as in institutional and workplace contexts. It also provides consultation for developing workplace education projects.

Ontario

The Role of the Provincial Government in Literacy and Training

Beginning with the *Common School Act* in 1816, which allowed adults to use schools, to the 1850s when school boards offered evening classes for adults, governments in Ontario have been involved in providing opportunities for adults to participate in literacy programs since the early 19th Century.¹ Community agencies like the Mechanic's Institute, established in 1831, and Frontier College, established in 1899 as the Reading Camp Association, also have a long history of providing adult literacy programs. In the mid-20th Century, colleges and community agencies have become more prominent in offering adult literacy programs. "These individual programs," argues John Stanley, "constituted Ontario's literacy movement."²

In 1981, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Colleges and Universities "formally recognized the importance of literacy" and issued a policy statement on continuing education.³ And in 1986, the Ontario government developed a specific literacy strategy that, John Stanley argues, "intended ... to transform the literacy movement into a literacy system."⁴ The 1986 *Government Plan for Adult Basic Literacy* set principles for literacy service and provided funding to literacy providers and programs. This strategy included distinct streams to provide literacy services for Aboriginal Ontarians, for Franco-Ontarians, for persons with disabilities, and for immigrants.

Departmental responsibility for the literacy strategy shifted many times in the next ten years. Initially, when the strategy was implemented in 1986, the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture was responsible for the literacy strategy. Within a year, the responsibility shifted to the Ministry of Skills Development. Responsibility for the College literacy programs, the Ontario Basic Skills program, came under the same unit as community and labour union literacy activities as a result of this move. In 1990, responsibility for literacy was moved to the Ministry of Education. In 1993, a new Crown agency, the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB), took over responsibility for adult literacy. In 1996, adult literacy once again became the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Training. Each move reduced the effectiveness of the literacy strategy. Programs and staff had to adjust to new ministerial cultures and procedures. Every initiative had to be justified anew within each new ministry and thus its implementation was often delayed.

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Training

Sue Folinsbee provides a brief overview of workplace literacy in Ontario.⁵ As early as the 1970s, she writes, community groups as well as the Toronto District Labour Council offered workplace education that focused on health and safety issues, English Second Language, literacy needs, and working conditions. The Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture introduced the Multicultural Workplace Program in 1985. This program aimed to improve workplace communications and included literacy and language programs, intercultural communication training for managers, anti-racism education, and employment equity.

The Ontario government introduced Ontario Basic Skills in the Workplace (OBSW) in 1988. It was a funding program for both employers and labour organizations and it assisted them with offering literacy, numeracy, and other basic skills training in the workplace. More than 2,100 participants per year registered for workplace programs under OBSW.⁶ In 1988, under the labour stream of this program, the Ontario Federation of labour initiated the Basic Education for Skills Training (BEST). This program, based on a co-worker instructor model, offered training for ten years until the Ontario government ended funding for workplace literacy in 1998.⁷

In 1995, the Ontario government brought together various programs under the Workplace/Workforce Equity and Basic Skills (WWEBS) program. The labour stream of the OBSW program was left intact. WWEBS funded organizational needs assessments, development of training plans, and worker upgrading. The funding for this program also ended in 1998. At that time, Folinsbee concludes, “the Ontario government adopted a general policy of not supporting public funding aimed at employed workers, on the basis that this would be seen as a ‘subsidy to business.’”⁸

In 2000, the Ontario government released the Workforce Literacy Strategy. Its mandate was to assist the Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program with “building the capacity of the LBS system to respond to workforce and workplace literacy needs, promoting literacy to workforce stakeholders, encouraging investment in literacy and basic skills development, supporting partnerships, and evaluating the impact of the initiative.”⁹

The Ontario government has not directly funded the delivery of workplace literacy programs since 1998. Workers who want to upgrade their literacy skills are eligible to attend Literacy Basic Skills (LBS) programs at no cost but on their own time. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funded LBS programs are offered at community colleges, school boards, and in community literacy programs. Through the Ontario Literacy Coalition, several Regional Literacy Networks promote workplace literacy and encourage employers to enter into partnerships with community organizations to support employees with literacy needs. Employers who offer in-house literacy programs do so at their own expense.

Training and Labour Market Policy

Changing economic circumstances during the 1970s and 1980s led to a reconsideration of training and labour market policy in Canada.¹⁰ Both federal and provincial governmental officials were interested in addressing the effects of higher levels of unemployment, greater demands on state income-maintenance programs, and increased global competition. This led to a shift from what has been characterized as passive labour market policies to active labour market policies.¹¹ Rather than react to economic changes in the form of unemployment insurance, an active labour market policy emphasized that the government and representative organizations from business and labour, “shift from reactive to preventative, human capital and market-oriented measures that foster the adaptation of the labour force to structural change and hence contribute to securing the competitiveness [sic] of firms and national economies.”¹²

Within this environment, the Ontario government reconsidered how it was providing training to workers, including literacy training. The Premier’s Council report, *People and Skills in the New*

Global Economy, authored by a panel of business, labour and social organisation representatives, asserted that the existing provision of training was unsuitable to meet the economic challenges faced by the province.¹³ Ontario needed new training programs and organizational arrangements to create a highly skilled workforce, to meet and compete with the changes wrought by globalization and the new economy. The Council recommended that a new provincial training body, composed of business, labour and governmental representatives, provide joint training initiatives:

Our examination of the experience in other countries suggests that training proves most effective when it is based upon a strong commitment by firms and workers....The sectoral level may be the most effective way to approach joint labour-management training initiatives. It is at this level that most of the restructuring, training and adjustment issues must be confronted.¹⁴

However, three years elapsed between Premier's Council's recommendation for a tripartite body, to be known as the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB), and the actual creation of the board.¹⁵

The Ontario Training Adjustment Board (OTAB)

The proposal to create OTAB marked a shift in the policy landscape for training provision in Ontario. A similar shift occurred at the federal level with the introduction of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB).¹⁶ The provincial government's objective was that the new board and policy would ensure that training funds be used to provide training for the new jobs and occupations and thus develop a more highly skilled workforce.¹⁷

The act to create the Ontario Training Adjustment Board was passed in July of 1993.¹⁸ But the original plan to have an organization constituted primarily by labour and business representatives had changed. The Board had been enlarged to include representatives from five other social equity groups: women, racial minorities, people with disabilities, francophones, and aboriginal people.¹⁹ This enlarged representation signified the larger role that OTAB would play in the training policy envisioned by the government.

OTAB was intended to be an arms-length organization with representatives on the Board of Directors from labour, business and the other five labour market partner groups.²⁰ It would draw together a series of training and literacy programs from across four different ministries. Programs from the Ministry of Education and Training were transferred including apprenticeship, skills development, basic skills training, Ontario Community Literacy, and Literacy Field Development and Support (to name a few). Programs from the Ministry of Labour (Adjustment Advisory programs and TRANSITIONS), the Ministry of Citizenship (Multicultural Workplace Program), and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (Social Service Employment Program, and the Summer and Part-time Employment Experience Program) also became the responsibility of OTAB. The aim was to have a seamless connection between the disparate programs that existed across a number of agencies and ministries.

Workplace literacy programs were placed under the Foundation Skills Training Section of OTAB.²¹ In 1994, this section represented approximately 12% of OTAB's overall expenditures, and included adult basic literacy and numeracy, Ontario community literacy, and literacy field

development programs. OTAB's new training delivery system was noteworthy in that local boards and councils would be set up to determine training priorities in consultation with OTAB's Board of Directors.²² Training programs would not be provided directly by OTAB, instead it would disperse funds to other organizations to provide training and adjustment services and programs.²³

Local boards had responsibility for seven areas. These included, collecting labour market information, providing three-year strategic plans, analysing and advising on existing training and adjustment programs, purchasing or directing the purchasing of training on behalf of OTAB, promoting and advocating life-long learning in their communities, promoting access and equity in local training and adjustment programs, and ensuring that the training met governmental standards.²⁴ The role of the boards within the overall OTAB structure, emphasized decision-making at the local and community level, and signified a departure from the previous policy context within Ontario. Furthermore, representation from diverse social groups on the various boards and councils meant that previously ignored voices would have to be considered.

Training in the late 1990s

After Ontarians elected a new governing party in 1996, the new government changed the structure for training and workplace literacy.²⁵ The new policy agenda emphasized market-oriented approaches to training and the withdrawal of government involvement in what it considered a private matter for employers.²⁶ The government disbanded OTAB in 1996 and it repealed the 1993 Act in 2000.²⁷ It reduced the training budget by 17% and cut a number of training programs. The government placed the responsibility for the remaining training programs within a reconstructed Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.²⁸

Changes to apprenticeship programs beginning in 1998, emphasized a greater role for employers in setting programs standards.²⁹ However, there was provision for equal participation of employers and workers on workplace committees that oversee apprenticeships. There was funding for the provision of literacy and basic skills, but as with other programs, the government favoured private delivery and control over the programs.

Training and Literacy in the 21st Century

The current training policy environment in Ontario still emphasizes key aspects raised in the Premier's Council report from almost twenty years ago. Training is viewed as crucial for being competitive in a global economy.³⁰ The emphasis is employers' needs and workers' needs are placed within the context of "success in the labour market."³¹ Workers will obtain new skills to adapt to the continually changing technology in the workplace via training. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities provides program and service support. It provides money to support, but not directly fund, training. Employers still have responsibility for direct training, as do other training providers (e.g. colleges, school boards, and community agencies).

The Ontario provincial government currently funds a system of literacy and basic skills services as well as various training and skills programs for employers in the province. Responsibility for literacy and training programs currently falls to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Ministry of Education has responsibility for literacy and numeracy education of children and youth.

Local Training Boards

Local Training Boards are non-profit community agencies, financially supported by provincial and federal governmental funding.³² These agencies are led by business and labour and include representation from other stakeholders (e.g. educators, trainers, women, francophones, persons with disabilities, visible minorities, youth, and aboriginal people, and others). The role of the Local Boards is help improve the conditions of their local labour market by:

- identifying and responding to key trends, opportunities, and priorities,
- facilitating a process to initiate and implement joint actions to address local labour market issues,
- creating opportunities for partnership activities and projects that respond to labour market challenges, and
- organizing events and activities that promote the importance of education, training, and skills upgrading.³³

The provincial government simply assists these boards and does not directly provide the training or programs.³⁴

Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program

One of the main programs funded by the provincial government in support of literacy and essential skills training is the Ontario Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The LBS program has two functions: the first is to deliver LBS services and the second is to aid in the development of LBS services. LBS services include literacy assessment, information and referral assistance, training plan development, and training and program follow-up.³⁵ Developing LBS services includes monetary support to assist literacy agencies to improve their delivery of LBS to learners and to conduct some research and development initiatives.³⁶

The separate literacy streams instituted in the 1980s are still present, with LBS services shaped to assist the diversity of learners in four literacy streams: Anglophone, Francophone, Native, and Deaf learners.³⁷ LBS services are delivered by school boards, colleges and community agencies across the province at no cost to learners.

The LBS program offers services to unemployed persons, especially those who are Ontario Works participants (persons on social assistance in Ontario). A person's eligibility for the LBS program is based on the following criteria: "a learner should be out of school, and in need of the literacy skills necessary to find and keep a job or to meet everyday needs."³⁸ The ministry's role is to support the activity of the agencies that provide adult literacy services (e.g. contracted school boards, colleges, and community agencies).³⁹

The Ontario government provides assistance for employers in the form of apprenticeship training and adjustment programs. Other training is provided to individual employees, as noted above, via the literacy and basic skills program, Ontario Works programs, or a variety of programs for new or recent immigrants related to credential evaluation and recognition.

The Apprenticeship Training Tax Credit program provides tax credits to employers who pay the wages and salaries of unemployed postsecondary graduates or co-op students.⁴⁰ This program also provides the opportunity for current workers to upgrade their skills, including skills associated with the workplace. A second program, the Ontario Cooperative Education Tax Credit, provides an employer with a tax credit for hiring new employees on four-month work placements. An additional program to aid employers is the Ontario Sector Initiatives Fund. The aim of this fund is to help particular industrial organizations and sectors to develop training programs, standards, and materials for their workforces. The objective is to address skills gaps in particular sectors or organizations by encouraging sector-wide research and planning.

Worker Participation in Training in Ontario

Information on the number of workers participating in workplace literacy training in Ontario is difficult to obtain due to the variety and complexity of the forms of delivery. Recent estimates suggest that over 60,000 adult learners are aided by more than 300 organizations in Ontario.⁴¹ We can obtain further information about overall worker and workplace training, though not whether it included literacy training, using results from the Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS). Statistics Canada conducted this survey in 1992, 1994, 1998 and 2003.⁴² AETS results indicate that the overall rate of worker participation in formal job-related training in Canada decreased from 26.7% in 1991, to 26.1percent in 1993, dropping further in 1997 to 24.8% before rising again in 2002 to 30.1%.⁴³ Over the same period, participation in job-related training in Ontario increased from 26.3% in 1991, to 27.0% in 1993, to 27.7% in 1997, and to 30.3% by 2003. Thus, during a period where many other jurisdictions in the country witnessed a decline in the level of job-related training of workers, workers in Ontario increased their level of participation. Employers were more likely to provide job-related training to Canadian and Ontario workers in 2002 (41.5% and 41.9% respectively) than other training providers.⁴⁴

The 2003 AETS measured the level of worker participation in training aimed specifically at basic writing, reading and math skills.⁴⁵ The results indicate that Ontario workers had the highest involvement in job-related basic writing, reading and math training in the country (19.9%). In comparison, the overall percentage of workers in Canada who received job-related training in basic writing, reading and math was (14.7%).

Results from IALS and IALSS for Ontario

Results from 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey indicate that Ontario respondents scored above the national average at Level 4/5 for each of the three areas of literacy: prose, document and quantitative).⁴⁶ See Table 11 for details. However, for each of the three forms of literacy approximately one-fifth of all respondents in Ontario had literacy abilities at Level 1. These results indicate that a large percentage of adults in Ontario face serious literacy challenges.

Table 11: IALS Results for Ontario, 1994⁴⁷

Literacy Level	Prose Literacy		Document Literacy		Quantitative Literacy	
	Ontario	Canada	Ontario	Canada	Ontario	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	19	22	21	23	20	22
Level 2	28	26	22	24	23	26
Level 3	28	33	31	30	34	32
Level 4/5	25	20	26	22	23	20

The 2003 International Adult Skills Survey (IALSS) measured Canadians' literacy proficiency in the same three areas as the 1994 survey and added a fourth area: problem solving. Results for Ontario indicate that there has been a decline in the percentage of respondents scoring at Level 4/5 for both prose and document literacy as well as numeracy. See Table 12 for details. These results suggest that Ontario has failed to address adequately the literacy challenges faced by a large numbers of Ontarians.

 Table 12: International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey Results for Quebec, 2003⁴⁸

Literacy Level	Prose		Document		Numeracy		Problem Solving	
	Ontario	Canada	Ontario	Canada	Ontario	Canada	Ontario	Canada
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Level 1	21.3	19.9	22.7	21.5	27.0	25.5	37.1	35.9
Level 2	26.7	27.8	25.8	27.1	28.8	29.6	35.4	36.3
Level 3	35.0	35.4	33.5	33.5	29.3	30.1	22.9	23.1
Level 4/5	17.0	17	18.1	17.9	14.8	14.7	4.7	4.6

Conclusion

In summary, Ontario government programs and services available to employers to assist with employee training include: apprenticeship programs, assistance with the development of curriculum and standards for workplace training under the Sector Initiatives Fund, advice from the Adjustment Advisory program when facing plant closures or downsizing, and general labour market skill information. Assistance is provided to individuals who are moving from unemployment to employment and from education and training to the labour force.

Despite the many training and infrastructure initiatives provided by the Ontario government, the government does not directly support employers' workplace literacy training programs. Instead, community colleges, school boards, and community-based agencies provide literacy training. Employers can consult with these agencies, on a fee-for-service basis, to provide training and help with workplace literacy issues. Literacy and basic skills programs are available at no cost to adult learners. However, LBS programs focus on unemployed adults with less than an Ontario

Grade 9 education. LBS programs also provide academic upgrading to adults who wish to enter post-secondary training programs or employment.⁴⁹

Employer Experiences of Workplace Literacy

Given that there is no central body responsible for workplace literacy in the province, it has been difficult to connect with employers who are willing to participate in this study. We contacted labour organizations, community colleges, literacy networks, independent consultants, training programs, Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators, and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, but we were only able to contact seven employers for interviews.⁵⁰ These employers are obviously not representative of all Ontario employers. We cannot generalize from their experiences. However, their insights and recommendations are useful for generating larger discussions between employers in Ontario and between employers in all Canadian provinces.

General Information

We conducted five full-length and two short interviews with employer representatives in Ontario. The majority of the respondents were human resources representatives (4). Two respondents were representatives from skills and development departments and one respondent was a site manager. Table 13 provides a general summary about the organizations that participated in our study.

Table 13: Summary of Ontario Interviews

Organization Size	Number of Businesses	Sector	Number of Employees	Unionized ⁵¹
Small (less than 100 employees)	1	Manufacturing (1)	30	Yes (1)
Medium (between 100 and 500 employees)	2	Manufacturing (2)	200 - 225	No (2)
Large (more than 500 employees)	4	Manufacturing (2) Public (2)	500 – 7000	No (2) Yes (2)

General Workplace Training

All of the organizations we interviewed offered on- and off-site training. Only one of the respondents did not indicate that they offered on-the-job training. Four of the seven respondents offered some form of tuition reimbursement.

One company provided us with their education and training policy. This company encourages training and development that “is of direct benefit to [employees] and the organization either in their present positions or in preparation for future assignments.” This policy delineated three types of training: mandatory, required, and developmental. The company pays for 100% of the cost, including employee wages, for mandatory training. The company also covers 100% of required training (training that is related directly to an employee’s job), however the employee is expected to achieve a grade of 70% or higher. The company covers up to 50% of the cost of the course and materials for developmental training (training that is indirectly related to the employee’s job). Once again, the employee is expected to achieve 70% or higher on the course. This company also pays for employees who wish to obtain their high school diploma. The

company pays employees' regular wages while they are in school; however, the company expects employees to make up 50% of the in-class time through unpaid overtime.

The respondents named the following conditions for offering training:

- Certification and recertification requirements (5) (e.g. welding and electrical trades)
- New technology (5) (e.g. changes in equipment and software)
- New standards (5) (e.g. industry or government legislated)
- Gap or needs analysis (4)
- New procedures, processes, or programs (3) (e.g. lean manufacturing)

Of the five respondents who answered whether employees or union had input into training programs, all identified some form of collaborative process. In some instances, the management designed and developed the training then asked employees for their input. Most of the respondents used performance reviews where supervisors met with employees to identify training needs and develop training plans. The collective agreement in one organization required them to consult with bargaining unit members when making decisions about training.

Of the five respondents who answered questions about employees' readiness (whether they had the necessary literacy and basic skills) to access training activities and materials, four of the respondents said the majority of employees had the necessary skills. Three of the respondents said *some* of their employees had difficulty. One respondent replied that the company's productive staff had the necessary skills and training. Therefore, the company did not currently have a formal training program (including literacy) in place. Two respondents mentioned that their employees had high school or college level education, implying that employees with higher education levels would have the necessary reading, writing, mathematics and computer skills to fully access and benefit from training activities and materials.

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Training

Only three of the seven respondents have offered a formal workplace literacy program. One company offered a computer literacy and clear writing program on-site by an external facilitator. Another company offered basic literacy skills (reading, writing, and computer literacy) on-site also by an external facilitator. This company works closely with the regional literacy network to find appropriate facilitators and assessors for their program. In both of these programs, employees contribute 50% of their time and the company paid employees' wages for 50% of their time. The third company offered a GED program off-site by an external facilitator. The company paid for all the costs associated with the program including the facilitator, lunches, facilities, and the exam. The employee contributed 100% of the time. These companies measure the success of their programs in various ways including, learner and teacher evaluations as well as enrolment and completion numbers. All three companies funded these programs entirely from their company's training budget.

Two other companies were involved in workplace literacy and basic skills training in less formal ways. One company was involved in an Essential Skills pilot project developed by their local workforce development board. The company volunteered to offer an informational workshop on Essential Skills for their joint health and safety committee. The workshop facilitators administered a TOWES and gave participants their results. Then they showed participants how to

access resources on the internet to improve their skills on their own. This project connected the company with the regional literacy network coordinator. Because of the respondent's participation in this project, he has become more aware of literacy concerns for the workplace. Now when he encounters an employee with a "bad attitude" or one who is "not a team" player, he considers whether these are performance issues or literacy issues.

Another company has developed a relationship with their regional literacy network, and they make financial contributions to it. They arranged for the coordinator to hold on-site information sessions about literacy. This presentation includes information about community resources available to adults who want to improve the literacy and basic skills. The company also raises awareness about literacy issues by displaying posters. In this way, employees can self identify if they want to improve their literacy and basic skills. Employees might do so during the annual performance appraisals with their supervisor, for example. This company has not offered workplace literacy and basic skills training on-site. Instead, they have chosen to contribute to and use community resources and not re-invent the wheel.

None of the companies received government funding to deliver their programs. However, three companies worked closely with and relied strongly on expertise and resources at government funded literacy networks.

Conditions for Offering Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Training

Often it is when an organization is moving up the learning curve – introducing new technologies, new conditions, new communications – that they see a need for literacy and basic skills training. This is especially so when workers who have been manual labourers are required to take on more technical jobs. "As we push for change," observed one respondent, "we may find that many people don't have the basic skills." In another respondent's company, this scenario had already become a reality. In the past, they hired "strong backs" and not necessarily "strong minds." But changes in technology now require employees to have increased levels of comprehension. Now the company needs to ensure that their employees have the basic skills necessary for them to learn outside of company settings, in community college programs, for example.

Five out of seven respondents answered our questions about what conditions are necessary for employers to offer literacy and basic skills training. We have categorized their responses into several themes.

Commitment from senior management was a condition named by four respondents. They suggested that a company has to have a corporate culture that believes in lifelong learning and views literacy and basic skills programs as a long-term investment. Furthermore, senior management cannot be interested only in the bottom line, for, as one respondent stated, it is hard to argue that a literacy and basic skills program will immediately affect the bottom line.

Financial resources within the company's training budget to cover all the costs of providing a literacy and basic skills training program.

Human resources within the company to develop and promote the program. When companies run a lean organization, there may be fewer people to handle the additional pressures of developing and implementing a literacy and basic skills training program.

Community partnerships to support the efforts of the company. Respondents named partnerships that included regional literacy networks, local schools and colleges, sector councils, and initiatives such as the CAMA-CUPE (Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators and Canadian Union of Public Employers) and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters literacy projects. These partners can assist the company by raising awareness within the company about literacy issues and providing expertise and resources to program organizers within the company.

Support from employees for workplace literacy and basic skills programs. Employees who have literacy challenges need to feel safe enough to admit there is a problem. They have to commit to attending programs, often at least partially on their own time. Employees need their co-workers' support when they leave their shift to attend classes. There has to be a commitment from all levels of the company. For example, supervisors need to arrange for shift coverage for people to attend classes and meetings.

Employer Suggestions for Government Policies and Programs:

The following government programs and support would be helpful for our Ontario respondents to help their organizations set up or continue literacy and basic skills training programs. Their responses are listed in order of frequency.

Fund Regional Literacy Networks

Three respondents discussed the importance for the government to fund regional literacy networks. These networks already have the expertise and resources in place to provide employers with workplace literacy and basic skills resources. Their consultation services to employers are free. Several respondents described how working with their regional literacy network saved them from the time consuming task of seeking out appropriate resources themselves. In the words of one respondent, "They know stuff I don't know – they do a lot of the legwork. It really accelerates things." One respondent specified that government should fund regional literacy networks to develop relationships with the employers in their region.

Focus on literacy as an issue for employers

Several respondents discussed the need for government to focus on the importance of literacy as an issue for employers. According to one respondent, employers lack knowledge that there is problem and how pervasive the problem is. They think the problem will go away if they hire new employees with a college level education.

- Encourage other organizations to take on literacy as an issue (e.g. local training and adjustment boards and sector councils)
- Encourage union and employees to cost share workplace literacy and basic skills programs (e.g. negotiate a percentage of union dues to be spend on programs)
- Provide services to match employers with appropriate literacy and basic skills training providers.

- Market more aggressively to let employers and other organizations know what resources are available for literacy and basic skills training.

Develop an accessible funding program

Several respondents suggested that the government develop an accessible funding program, similar to the apprenticeship program, for example. The program should be easy to access and involve little paperwork. It should be a simple process. One respondent described the ease of working with the local community college on apprenticeship training. The community college informs the employer about what types of training qualifies for funding. They do all the work, including the paperwork that is required for the government to reimburse the employer.

Provide incentives for employers to offer literacy and basic skills training

Respondents' suggestions ranged from providing tax credits for employers who offered workplace literacy and basic skills training to requiring employers to contribute a percentage of the total payroll for training (including literacy and basic skills training) in a model similar to that of Quebec.

Employer Feedback

We compiled the suggestions for government policies and programs from respondents in all three provinces and invited all respondents to provide us with feedback. Four respondents from Ontario reviewed the suggestions and verified that the suggestions did indeed address the key challenges faced by employers in their province. One of the areas respondents wondered who would take the lead in Ontario to implement employers' suggestions.

Conclusion

Although the Ontario government views training as crucial for its competition in the global economy, it has not directly funded any workplace training, including workplace literacy, since the mid 1990s. In Ontario, employers hold the responsibility for direct training costs, including workplace literacy training. The Ontario government provides funding to local training boards and regional literacy networks to support and promote workplace literacy with employers.

Our interviews with Ontario employers show that when governments do not take a leadership role in workplace literacy training, employers often do not have the awareness or support necessary to invest in workplace literacy training. Ontario employers consider workplaces a key venue for adult literacy learning, and they believe that government has a positive role to play in increasing their support for workplace literacy training.

Endnotes for Ontario Case Study

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³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Sue Folinsbee, "The Ontario Literacy Coalition's Workplace/Workforce Literacy Symposium," (Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2005), 4-7.

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⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ See, for example, Keith Banting, "Responding to Social Risk in Ontario - Are We There Yet?" (paper presented at the Panel on the Role of Government, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, June 2003), Stephen McBride, "The Political Economy of Training in Canada," in *Training Matters: Working Paper Series #98-07* (North York, Ontario: Labour Education and Training Research Network, Centre for Research on Work and Society, York University, 1998), Steffen G. Schneider and Thomas R. Klassen, "Decentralization and the Status Quo in Ontario and Bavaria: Variations in Active Labour Market Policy Reform in Subnational Jurisdictions of Canada and Germany" (paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association, Halifax, 1 June 2003).

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¹⁴ Ibid., 137.

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²⁰ "Annual Report," (Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, Queens Printer for Ontario, 1994).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Local Boards in Ontario - Questions and Answers," (Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, Queens Printer for Ontario, 1994).

²⁵ McBride, "The Political Economy of Training in Canada."

²⁶ Schneider and Klassen, "Decentralization and the Status Quo in Ontario and Bavaria: Variations in Active Labour Market Policy Reform in Subnational Jurisdictions of Canada and Germany".

²⁷ *Ontario Training and Adjustment Board Act, 1993* (E-laws, 1993 [cited 11 November 2005]); available from http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/RepealedStatutes/English/93o09_e.htm.

²⁸ Banting, "Responding to Social Risk in Ontario - Are We There Yet?"

²⁹ *Backgrounder* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Education, 1998 [cited 31 October 2005]); available from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/tr/99.04/apprent.html>.

³⁰ *Training Overview* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005 [cited 31 October 2005]); available from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/tr_overview.html.

³¹ Ibid.([cited).

³² *Local Training Boards* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario, 2006 [cited 25 April 2006]); available from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/localbd/localbd.html>.

³³ Ibid.([cited).

³⁴ Since the research for our study was completed, the Ontario government provided one-time funding to Local Training Boards for raising awareness about adult literacy. This resulted in a flurry of promotional activity, including events and materials about workplace literacy for local employers. You can search the Local Boards on Ontario website for specific activities: <http://www.localboards.on.ca/search.asp>.

³⁵ *Literacy in Ontario: The Rewards Are for Life* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario, 2006 [cited 25 April 2006]); available from http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/literacy/ontliteracy/ont_lit.html.

³⁶ *Literacy and Basic Skills* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario, 2006 [cited 24 April 2006]); available from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/literacy/main.html>, *Literacy in Ontario: The Rewards Are for Life* ([cited]).

³⁷ *Literacy and Basic Skills* ([cited]).

³⁸ *Literacy in Ontario: The Rewards Are for Life* ([cited]).

³⁹ *Literacy and Basic Skills* ([cited]), *Literacy in Ontario: The Rewards Are for Life* ([cited]).

⁴⁰ *Sharpening Your Competitive Edge* (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Government of Ontario, 2006 [cited 24 April 2006]); available from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/openingdoors/employers/>.

⁴¹ Ann Semple, "New to Adult Literacy in Ontario? What Literacy Staff Need to Know," (London, Ontario: Literacy Link South Central, 2001), 13.

⁴² The year of release of the AETS and the reference year for which the data apply, differ by one year for each cycle of the AETS. Thus, for example, the 1992 AETS data were collected in the reference year of 1991.

⁴³ André Léonard, "Adult Education and Training Survey: Why Did the Participation Rate in Job-Related Training Decline During the 1990s in Canada?," (Ottawa: Applied Research Branch, Strategic Policy, Human Resources Development Canada, 2001). Valerie Peters notes that differences observed in the AETS data from 1997 compared to 2002 may be smaller than observed due to a methodological difference in the manner by which the questions used to determine whether training was job-related or not changed from the 1998 to the 2003 AETS (Valerie Peters, "Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey," (Ottawa: Culture, Tourism and the Centre for Education Statistics Division, Statistics Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Ministry of Industry, 2004), 7.).

⁴⁴ Professional associations were the second highest providers of job-related training to workers in Canada (17.3%) and Ontario (19.2%). Other organizations providing job-related training included private training institutes / private business schools, universities/university colleges, and community colleges / CEGEP.

⁴⁵ Peters, "Working and Training: First Results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey."

⁴⁶ National Literacy Secretariat, "Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada," (Human Resources Development Canada, 1997), 3.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey," (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2003), 112-13.

⁴⁹ *Literacy and Basic Skills* ([cited]).

⁵⁰ Our difficulty with identifying employers in Ontario for this study is not unique. In 2002, the Ontario Literacy Coalition, for example, carried out a survey with employers to determine the current level of awareness and commitment to workplace / workforce literacy. They were unable to find industry partners for the project and they had a much lower than expected response rate to their questionnaire. They concluded, "This result is consistent with the widely held view that individual businesses are largely indifferent to literacy/numeracy issues, regardless of the occasional enthusiasms of some prominent business associations" Judith Bond, "Building Momentum and Finding Champions for Workplace Literacy in Ontario," (Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2002), 13.

⁵¹ Canadian Union of Public Employees is the only union named by Ontario respondents.

Section V: Discussion and Lessons Learned

This section of our report begins with a discussion of our case studies based on some of the themes that emerged from our working paper, “Workplace Literacy: A Literature Review and Bibliography.” This is followed by a discussion of employers’ suggestions for the types of policies and programs that would help to increase their support of workplace literacy training. Finally we summarize the lessons learned about how to increase employer support for workplace literacy training from our research of international and Canadian conditions, and our case studies.

Literature on Workplace Literacy

The results of two recent international literacy surveys have highlighted the challenges that Canada faces with respect to addressing literacy in the workplace. Within the field of workplace literacy, researchers, stakeholders, and policy makers generally agree about the need for increasing workers’ literacy levels, however, they often disagree about 1) why this is necessary and 2) what the goals of workplace literacy training should be.¹ Our study proves valuable information by investigating the perspectives of employers who are the key partners in any workplace literacy initiative. Below, we summarize our findings about what makes some employers want to invest in workplace literacy training and what keeps other employers from doing so.

Approaches to Workplace Literacy Training

Research on workplace literacy training often takes a human capital or individual skills approach and views literacy as “a component of human capital ... an essential skill required of the labour force, upon which production and service effectiveness and efficiency are dependent. Human capital is enhanced through increased literacy function of individuals...”² The individual skills perspective, however, is countered by several other approaches. A social practices approach to workplace literacy, for example, does not view literacy as a “discrete set” of reading and writing skills. Rather, this approach shifts the definition of literacy to “include ways that reading and writing are intimately interwoven with knowledge, activities, intentions, social relationships and cultural meanings.”³ The Canadian labour movement also provides an alternative to the individual skills approach:

Unions have grave concerns when workers get blamed for [the ills of the workplace]. Too often, workplace literacy programs are defined in narrow terms. Sometimes referred to as “competency-based”, the training offered is limited to the skills needed for the job the worker is currently performing or to boost productivity. This kind of training is inferior because it is neither developmental-building a foundation for further education and training – nor portable.

Unions ... get involved [in workplace literacy] to enhance workers’ lives, to strengthen the union and to prove the workplace, believing that successful workplace literacy programs have to be centred around the needs and aspirations of workers.⁴

In practice, concludes Sue Folinsbee, a workplace literacy educator and researcher, the lines between these different approaches to workplace literacy training may be less rigid:

“...experience shows...that different interests can co-exist to develop initiatives that meet the needs of different stakeholders.”⁵

The employers we interviewed exemplify a range of approaches to workplace literacy training. Many employers offered training and workplace literacy programs as part of their commitment to a learning culture. These employers see their support for learning in the workplace as a long-term investment in their employees. Other employers offered workplace literacy training in response to requests from their employees or the union as a way to enhance workers' lives. A third group of employers offered workplace literacy training as a way to increase workers' productivity.

The Benefits of Workplace Literacy Training

Much of the workplace literacy research carried out in Canada has focused on the economic benefits of such training.⁶ ABC Canada and the Conference Board of Canada, both national organizations that support and promote workplace literacy training, each carried out extensive studies about the impact of improving workers' literacy levels. Our working paper, “Workplace Literacy: A Literature Review and Bibliography” provides a detailed summary of these research studies. The full working paper is available on our website.

In our working paper we conclude that the impact and/or economic benefits of workplace literacy programs are difficult to quantify. However, the qualitative benefits of these programs are well documented. Increased worker confidence is one of the main benefits that emerges from this research. Increased worker confidence is also associated with other benefits: increased participation and communication and improved problem-solving and decision making. Another benefit that emerges consistently from the literature is employees' increased ability to take on and apply workplace training as a result of workplace literacy training. Workplace literacy programs are also associated with improved work relationships, increased productivity, better health and safety records, and increased bottom-line performance. Finally, these research studies also associate increased literacy levels for workers with higher income and a greater likelihood of full-time employment.

Our interviews with employers fully support these claims. The benefits of workplace literacy training are hard to quantify. One respondent stated that you cannot measure the ROI (Return on Investment) on workplace literacy education when participants in a workplace education program comment that they are proud of themselves or that they are now able to work with their children. Another respondent remarked that participants in the workplace literacy program were satisfied with their results but that the training had no impact on the company itself. A third respondent concluded that senior management cannot offer workplace literacy training only in the interest of the bottom line because it is hard to argue that such a program will immediately do so.

Our respondents observed many of the same qualitative benefits of workplace literacy training as we found in the literature. Their workers demonstrated:

- Increased confidence in their work.

- Increased participation at work (e.g. they take on more responsibilities, become involved in committee work, greater interest in their work and in other training sessions).
- Increased work satisfaction (e.g. decreased disciplinary measures, greater pride in their work).
- Greater understanding of their work and machines (e.g. increased computer usage, improved charting practices, improved understanding of the materials distributed by the employer, greater awareness of and responsibility for health and safety).
- Improved communication (e.g. take more initiative, less afraid to ask questions, increased capacity to express themselves and share information with others, increased language comprehension).
- Increased self-confidence.
- Increased self-satisfaction.

Many of the employers we interviewed were reluctant to try and measure the economic benefits of workplace literacy training or tie the results too closely to the bottom line. However, the employers observed ways in which the workplace literacy training enhanced workers' lives, personally and at work, and thereby contributed to a culture of lifelong learning in the workplace.

Case Studies

Our research of international and Canadian conditions for workplace literacy training along with our case studies of workplace literacy training in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario provide a wide range of possible approaches for workplace literacy programs and policies in Canada. In the following discussion, we examine and compare the situation of workplace literacy in these three provinces more closely and draw out lessons learned for developing policies and programs that increase employer support for workplace literacy.

Provincial Government Approaches

The provincial governments in the provinces we focused on for our case studies represent a wide range of policies and programs in workplace literacy training:

- Nova Scotia has a workplace literacy policy and provides funding;
- Quebec levies a tax to encourage employers to offer training that can include workplace literacy. A national training fund supports the delivery of workplace literacy and French language training.
- Ontario funds organizations (local training boards, regional literacy networks) to support workplace literacy training but does not provide direct funding or support.

The Nova Scotia government has a workplace literacy policy – the Workplace Education Initiative. The Nova Scotia government is a member of the Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education, a partnership of government, employers, labour, and workplace educators. The government's role in workplace literacy is to coordinate the Workplace Education Initiative by promoting workplace education to employers and labour, helping to design, implement, and evaluate workplace programs, and providing adult education expertise through its field officers.

The Nova Scotia government funds workplace literacy training by covering the cost of initial needs assessments and by paying for all or a percentage of instructors' salaries.

The Quebec government's *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training* mandates employers to spend a certain percentage on training, which can include workplace literacy. Furthermore, *le fond national de formation de la main-d'oeuvre* specifically earmarks funds for literacy and French language training. Organizations including education and training bodies, labour, and employers can apply to this fund and use the money for delivering workplace literacy programs. Funding contributes to such costs as instructor salaries and employee wages.

Although the Ontario government views training as crucial for its competition in the global economy, it has not directly funded any workplace training, including workplace literacy, since the mid 1990s. Employers hold the responsibility for direct training costs. The Ontario government provides funding to local training boards and regional literacy networks to support and promote workplace literacy.

Incentives

Our research on international conditions for workplace literacy training suggests that without government incentives, employers are unlikely to offer workplace literacy programs. Even when there are policies and programs that support workplace literacy, employers are often unaware of them. And, often when employers become aware of government incentives that support workplace literacy training, they do not think their employees need such training.

The employers who participated in our case study, from all three provinces, suggested that government funding was a fundamental condition for employers to offer workplace literacy training. Nova Scotia participants called for the provincial government to continue its funding for the Workplace Education Initiative. Quebec participants called for the provincial government to increase its financial support for workplace literacy training. Ontario participants called for the provincial government to develop accessible funding programs, similar to its apprenticeship program. Furthermore, the Ontario government should provide financial incentives for employers in the form of tax credits or a payroll levy like that of Quebec.

Accessible Programs

The employers we interviewed were concerned that any workplace literacy programs developed by provincial governments be accessible. There should be a minimum of paperwork involved in funding applications and reporting. The forms and instructions need to be clear. One Ontario participant suggested that the apprenticeship program be followed as a model. The education provider, in this case the community college, was able to inform the employer of all the options and filled out all the paper work for the employer.

Support Services

The employers we interviewed, in all three provinces, called for their provincial governments to create services to support employers who are interested in offering workplace literacy training. Our Nova Scotia case study participants who already have provincial government support through regional field officers, called for increased support through the duration of the program

and not only during program start up. Nova Scotia employers also saw they need for the provincial government ensuring the continuing of knowledge and expertise when field officers were assigned to a new region. Our Quebec case study participants called for provincial government assistance with program planning. In Ontario where there is currently no support for workplace literacy training, the participants in our case study called for the provincial government to provide services that matched employers with appropriate workplace literacy providers.

Promotion and Awareness

In all three provinces, the employers who participated in our case studies called for provincial governments to make provincial workplace literacy programs and resources more visible. In Nova Scotia, many employers did not know about the Workplace Education Initiative and came across it purely by accident. These employers also suggested that more could be done by the provincial government to 1) increase employers' knowledge and awareness about workplace literacy, and 2) to ensure that information was disseminated more widely across all sectors and into all regions. Quebec employers also called for the provincial government to market and promote existing workplace literacy programs more aggressively to employers. In Ontario, employers called on the provincial government to focus on workplace literacy as an issue for employers. Employers may not understand how literacy concerns may be affecting their employees or how pervasive the problems may be.

Role of other Organizations/Partnerships

Finally, the employers we interviewed in Quebec and Ontario called on their provincial governments to build and maintain partnerships with organizations that support workplace literacy training. In Quebec, the employers we interviewed worked closely with sector councils, school boards, and adult education centres to develop and deliver workplace literacy training. In Ontario, the employers we interviewed called on the provincial and federal governments to fund regional literacy networks. Many of these networks already have the expertise and resources in place to provide employers with support and resources for developing and delivering workplace literacy training. Furthermore, their consultation services are free to employers. These services save employers a great deal of time from the often time-consuming task of seeking out appropriate resources themselves.

Summary

Our interviews with employers have shown that governments can and do play a critical role in addressing the challenges of workplace literacy. Workplaces are a key venue for adult literacy learning. The employers we interviewed for this study certainly believed that government has a positive role to play. Below we present a summary of what we have learned from our literature and program reviews as well as from employer observations.

Lessons Learned

Our research of international and Canadian conditions for workplace literacy training along with our case studies of workplace literacy training in Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario provide a wide range of possible approaches for workplace literacy programs and policies in Canada. In

the following discussion, we draw out lessons learned for developing policies and programs that increase employer support for workplace literacy.

Role of Governments

Our research into international conditions for workplace literacy revealed that several countries provide national funding for the direct delivery of workplace literacy training: Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Ireland. Other countries like Sweden and Denmark have a strong commitment to publicly funded education, including adult learning. In Canada, because education, including adult education and literacy, are under the sole jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, the federal government does not directly fund workplace literacy training. Furthermore, few provincial and territorial governments have adult education and training policies that specify a workplace literacy component. Manitoba, Prince Edward Island, and Nova Scotia are the exceptions. Both Manitoba and Nova Scotia provide funding for the delivery of workplace literacy training.

Internationally, national governments who support adult learning and workplace literacy take a strong leadership role by:

- Funding workplace literacy training,
- Providing incentives to employers who offer workplace literacy training,
- Providing incentives to workers to participate in education and training, and by
- Developing national adult education and training strategies.
- Investing in a public education system that includes an adult learning system.

In Canada, in the absence of a national adult literacy strategy, provinces and territories have developed a patchwork of approaches resulting in an inability for them to integrate workplace literacy training into coherent, long-term adult education and training strategies and programs. Without federal or provincial programs or incentives for workplace literacy training, few employers have invested in workplace literacy training. The programs and initiatives that have been introduced by employers and non-profit organizations have tended to be only short-term in nature, reflecting the modest level of resources available (at the provincial and federal levels of government) and the nature of available funding (e.g. project as opposed to core funding).

Role of Employers

International information about the role of employers in providing workplace literacy training is sketchy. OECD reports suggest that employers in countries that allocate large amounts of public funding to adult education and training should take on more of the cost for providing training. In many countries, employers voluntarily offer basic skills education as part of their training. Employers also join partnerships with governments and/or labour to share the cost of workplace literacy training.

Internationally, employers who support workplace education and training do so by:

- taking on greater responsibility and covering more of the costs for providing training, including workplace literacy training.

However, our study of international conditions for workplace literacy training indicates that many employers consider the cost of workplace literacy training to be too prohibitive. Employers

are more likely to support and participate in workplace literacy training when there is joint funding by governments and other partners. Even when there is funding available, many employers are still reticent about offering workplace literacy training either because they are unaware of the funding programs or they do not perceive a need for such programs for their employers.

Our case studies of Nova Scotia, Quebec, and Ontario support these observations about employers' commitment to workplace literacy training. Employers from all three provinces suggested that government funding for delivering workplace literacy training was a fundamental condition in their being able to offer workplace literacy training.

Role of Labour

Internationally, labour organizations play a significant role in workplace literacy training. In some countries, the national government provides funding to labour organizations for delivering training. In one country, the employers provided release time and the labour organization paid their members the equivalent of strike pay to attend training. In several countries labour organizations negotiate with employers for release time for their members to attend training. In others, labour negotiates collective agreements that require employers to provide training.

Internationally, labour plays a significant role in workplace literacy by:

- Providing workplace literacy training,
- Negotiating with employers for release time members to attend training, and by
- Negotiating workers' right to training, including a workplace literacy component, in their collective agreements with employers.

In Canada, labour organizations support workplace literacy training by:

- Raising awareness and promoting workplace literacy,
- Initiating projects and programs,
- Participating on joint government-employer-labour committees and project teams, and
- Contributing resources for projects and programs.

Many labour organizations have extensive experience with workplace literacy initiatives. Labour is a key partner in many workplace literacy initiatives.

Role of Non-profit Organizations

In Canada, without federal or provincial leadership on workplace literacy issues, much of the responsibility for promoting and supporting workplace literacy training has been taken on by non-profit organizations and labour organizations as noted above. Governments, at all levels, have become partners in many of these multiple-sector organizations. These organizations continue to work to sustain interest in and support for workplace literacy initiatives.

In Canada, non-profit organizations support workplace literacy training by:

- Promoting awareness for workplace literacy training,
- Supporting employers with planning and delivering training, and
- Providing instructors and tutors for delivery training.

Recommendations:

To increase employer support for workplace literacy training, we recommend that:

The federal government take a leadership role in convening key partners (including representation from provincial and territorial governments, employers, labour, and providers). Together, this group develop a mechanism for a coherent action plan for workplace literacy training, taking into account the needs of different jurisdictions and stakeholders. The action plan should include the following components:

1. Financial incentives for employers to offer workplace literacy training, including a combination of the following:
 - Wages subsidies
 - Tax credits
 - Payroll levy
 - Subsidizing the cost of instructor salaries, needs assessments, materials development, and evaluations.
2. Services that support employers who offer workplace literacy training. These services could include:
 - Referring employers to appropriate workplace literacy resources.
 - Referring employers to appropriate workplace literacy providers.
 - Supporting employers with understanding and filling out required paperwork (e.g. funding and reporting forms).
 - Supporting employers with program development, implementation, and evaluation.
3. Promotion of workplace literacy programs to employers. This would involve gathering information about current funding and resources available to employers and disseminating the information widely across sectors and regions.

Funding of non-profit organizations (national, provincial, and/or regional) and key workplace partners that provide workplace literacy support to employers.

Endnotes for Section V

¹ For a detailed exploration of different stakeholder approaches to workplace literacy, see (Canadian Council on Social Development, “Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography),” (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2006).

² Adrian Blunt, “Workplace Literacy: The Contested Terrains of Policy and Practice,” in *Adult Literacy Now!*, ed. Maurice C. Taylor (Toronto: Culture Concepts Inc., 2001). as quoted in Canadian Council on Social Development, “Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography),” 8.

³ Nancy S. Jackson, “Introduction: Reading Work,” in *Reading Work: Literacies in the New Workplace*, ed. Mary Ellen Belfiore, et al. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2004), 5. as quoted in Canadian

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⁴ Tamara Levine, “Learning in Solidarity: A Union Approach to Worker-Centred Literacy,” in *Workplace Literacy: National and International Perspectives on Research and Practice* (Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition, 2003), 10.

⁵ Susan Folinsbee, “Briefing Paper: Literacy and the Canadian Workforce,” (Ottawa: The Movement for Canadian Literacy, 2001). as quoted in Canadian Council on Social Development, “Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography),” 9.

⁶ Canadian Council on Social Development, “Workplace Literacy in Canada (Working Literature Review and Bibliography),” 6.

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Appendix A: IALS and IALSS Definitions

International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), 1994 Definition of Domains and Description of Literacy Levels¹

Prose literacy the ability to understand and use information from texts such as editorials, news stories, poems and fiction.

Document literacy the ability to locate and use information from documents such as job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and graphs.

Quantitative literacy the ability to perform arithmetic functions such as balancing a chequebook, calculating a tip, or completing an order form.

Level 1 indicates very low literacy skills, where the individual may, for example, have difficulty identifying the correct amount of medicine to give to a child from the information found on the package.

Level 2 respondents can deal only with material that is simple, clearly laid out and in which the tasks involved are not too complex. This is a significant category, because it identifies people who may have adapted their lower literacy skills to everyday of life, but would have difficulty learning new job skills requiring a higher level literacy.

Level 3 is considered as the minimum desirable threshold in many countries but some occupations require higher skills.

Levels 4/5 show increasingly higher literacy skills requiring the ability to integrate several sources of information or solve more complex problems. It appears to be a necessary requirement for some jobs.

International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), 2003 Definitions of Domains and Description of Levels²

Prose literacy – the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures and instruction manuals.

Document literacy – the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information from information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables and charts.

Numeracy – the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

Problem solving – involves goal-directed think and action in situations for which no routine solutions exist.

Level 1 (0 to 250)	}	Individuals at proficiency Levels 1 and 2 typically have not yet mastered the minimum foundation of literacy needed to attain higher levels of performance.
Level 2 (226 to 275)		
Level 3 (276 to 325)	}	Level 3 performance is chosen as a benchmark. Performance above Level 2 is associated with positive outcomes including, increased economic success and independence, and enhanced opportunities for lifelong learning and personal literacy.
Levels 4 and 5 (326 to 500)		

¹ The information for this table was obtained from National Literacy Secretariat, “Backgrounder of the International Adult Literacy Survey,” (1996).

² The information for this table was obtained from “Building on Our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey,” (Ottawa: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada, 2003), 13-17.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) is a national, non-profit, social policy and research organization. The CCSD is conducting research on workplace literacy and basic skills training in Canada. Workplace literacy and basic skills training includes programs and activities such as, but limited to: upgrading reading, writing, and mathematics skills; essential skills; GED preparation; upgrading skills for professional certification or recertification; communication, computer, decision making, and critical thinking skills.

We are interviewing ten to fifteen people in similar positions to your own. Your responses will be reported as a group. We will not link responses or quotations to you or your company without your prior permission. You can refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

The results of this interview will be used to make recommendations to various levels of government about what programs and initiatives should be continued or developed to better support and encourage employers to participate in workplace literacy and basic skills training.

General Information about the Company and Its Operations

1. Please provide your name and the name of your company. Describe your position, including your years of experience in this position.
2. Describe your company's operations.
3. How long has your company been in business (at this location)?
4. Approximately how many people does your company currently employ (if there is more than one location please select a location that has a literacy or other training program)? How many of these employees are unionised and how many are not? Which union/s represent the employees?

General Workplace Training

Describe your company's approach to training.

1. What forms of training does your company provide for its employees?
 - on-the-job
 - on/off site training
 - tuition reimbursement
 - other _____
2. What are some of the conditions (e.g. workplace, industry, legislative etc.) for offering training?
 - for certification or recertification
 - in response to new technology
 - in response to new standards
 - other _____
3. What role, if any, do your employees or their representatives (such as unions and collective agreements) play in your decision to provide training?

4. How would you describe your employees' readiness to access training? For example, do they have the reading, writing, math, computer, and/or communication skills to fully access and benefit from the training activities and materials?

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills Training

This research project is investigating workplace literacy and basic skills training in a number of Canadian companies. Workplace literacy and basic skills may include, for example, any of the following activities: reading, writing, and math upgrading; critical thinking; decision making; oral communication skills; and GED preparation, etc.

1. Has your company offered employees workplace literacy or basic skills training on-site? If no, go to question 2. If yes, please continue:

Please describe:

- The types of programs, courses or activities offered.
- Who participated.
- How is was funded.
- How is was structured.
- Why your company started the workplace literacy or basic skills program/s.
- Who provided the training (e.g. college, in-house instructor, etc.).
- What supports, if any, were provided to employees to take the program (e.g. paid time, childcare, end of session bonus, etc.).
- How long the company's program/s were in place.
- How you determined the success of your literacy and basic skills training program.
- What role your employees or their representatives (such as unions) played in your decision to provide literacy training.
- Whether your company accessed government funding for literacy and basic skills training.
- If so, from which government source did the funding come (e.g. federal, provincial, municipal, and department). What was your experience with the funding process?

2. Has your company assisted employees to obtain workplace literacy or basic skills training off-site? If no, please go to question 3. If yes, please continue.

For example, do you:

- contribute a percentage of payroll to education and training
- provide paid, partially paid, or unpaid leave for educational purposes
- cover tuition fees and related education expenses
- contribute to a sector council for training purposes etc.
- other _____

3. If your company has not offered or supported workplace literacy or basic skills training, on- or off-site, for employees, why not?
4. What role, if any, has the availability of governmental initiatives or programs played in your decision to provide, or not provide, workplace literacy or basic skills training?

Conditions for Offering Literacy and Basic Skills Training

1. What circumstances or conditions exist for employers to offer workplace literacy/basic skills training programs to their employees? What circumstances or conditions exist for employers not to offer such programs?
2. Do you think some employers, companies, economic sectors, sector councils, unions, etc. offer more in the area of workplace literacy than others? If so, why do you think these organizations are investing in workplace literacy training? Why do you think others are not investing in workplace literacy training?

Government Initiatives for Literacy and Basic Skills Training

There are different models for government programs that provide support for employers to develop and offer training, including literacy and basic skills training for their employees.

In Quebec, the Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training (The 1% Law) requires employers with payrolls of \$1,000,000 or more to invest at least one per cent of their total salary to employee training.

In Manitoba government works with business and unions to assess an organization’s need for workplace literacy and to develop and deliver custom training, as well as to train the trainers. In PEI government also works with business and unions to assess organizations’ training needs and to assist with developing customized programs at no cost to the employer. The employer and unions contribute to costs such as instructor salary, materials and supplies, classroom space, and release time.

In the United Kingdom, Learning and Skills Councils (LSC) offer the “Train to Gain” program. A broker, trained by the LSC, reviews and analyzes an organization’s needs, makes recommendations regarding training and training providers, helps organizations choose a training package, makes recommendations for funding, including the contribution by LSC to wage costs for companies with less than fifty employees, all at no cost to the organization. Training providers meet national quality standards.

1. What types of governmental programs or supports would be helpful to your organization in setting up, or continuing, workplace literacy/basic skills training?

Specific Training and Literacy Questions for Quebec

The following questions are about the relationship between Quebec’s *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training (The 1% Law)* and workplace literacy and basic skills training. The 1% Law aims to increase employer investment in training, in order to support the creation of a more skilled workplace.

1. In your opinion, has The 1% Law encouraged workplace investment in more workplace literacy programs? Has there been an increase in workplace literacy and basic skills training since the law was enacted?
2. In your view, has The 1% Law influenced the creation of a workplace culture that supports education and learning?
3. How has The 1% Law affected businesses differently depending on factors such as the size of the company or the sector?
4. Have you accessed the training fund? If so, describe your experience. If not, why not?

5. In your opinion, is the training fund an effective way to encourage workplace literacy programs? Please explain.
6. What policies, initiatives or supports exist to encourage workplace literacy and basic skills training in companies with overall salaries of less than \$1,000,000?

Specific Training and Literacy Questions for Ontario

The following questions are about Ontario provincial government programs that may have influenced your company's workplace literacy training program.

1. Has your company made use of the programs offered by the Ontario government such as the Sector Initiatives Fund, the Adjustment Advisory program, or any other government initiatives around apprenticeship training? If yes, please describe the programs and your company's use of the funding.
2. Has your company found it easier or more difficult to access Ontario training funds in recent years? Please explain.
3. Has your company found it easier or more difficult to find training programs/solutions for employees with literacy and basic skills needs in recent years? Please explain.

Specific Training and Literacy Questions for Nova Scotia

The following questions are about Nova Scotia provincial government programs that may have influenced your company's workplace literacy training program.

1. Has your company made use of supports from Nova Scotia, Department of Education for workplace education programs? (e.g. financial assistance, instructors, advice, needs assessments, curriculum development, etc.) If so, please describe the types of support received.
2. Has your company found it easier or more difficult in recent years to find training programs/solutions for employees with literacy and basic skills needs? Please explain.