

# Provincial and Territorial Government Support to Literacy and Essential Skills

## What's Working?

By examining each of the provinces and territories and their approach to literacy and essential skills programming, to labour's participation, and to multi-stakeholder involvement, it is possible to identify good practices. CUPE activists can take these practices to their respective provincial/territorial governments as part of an advocacy campaign to put literacy front and centre on the labour market policy agenda. These practices are drawn from the more extensive overviews of each province and territory.

## Adult Literacy Policy

### Legislation:

- In 2009, Manitoba introduced the first *Adult Literacy Act* in Canada.
- Nova Scotia passed the *Adult Learning Act* in 2010, which sets out the purpose of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning (NSSAL) and commits the Minister to regularly consult with the adult learning community including adult learners, practitioners, and organizations to continue the strategic development, implementation, and evaluation of adult learning in the province.

### Policy/Strategy Papers/Action Plans Specific to Literacy:

- In 2009, Alberta released *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation*. Goals include an articulated adult literacy system and increased and accessible programming.
- In 2007, BC created the *Adult Opportunities Action Plan* which includes free adult basic education.
- Manitoba created an *Adult Literacy Strategy Framework* focuses on adult literacy programs, adult learning centres, workforce development and employment, adult learning and literacy supports to English as an Additional Language learners, and Aboriginal education.
- New Brunswick's *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy* offers free adult upgrading, a delivery system based on the college and community groups, and the active participation of the province's library system. During 2010-11, the province finalized the *Quality Framework for Adult Literacy*

*and Essential Skills Service Delivery*. The framework is intended to apply to all adult literacy and essential skills service delivery undertaken by, on behalf of, or funded through the Community Adult Learning Services Branch.

- Newfoundland and Labrador has created a *Strategic Adult Literacy Plan*, but it has not yet been released.
- The NWT's *Towards Literacy: A Strategy Framework* has been updated with a plan lasting under 2018. A unique feature is the commitment to literacy in all official languages in the NWT.
- Nunavut developed a draft Adult Learning Strategy in 2005. The draft outlines proposed actions to support the development of workplace and workforce literacy, including basic education programs and financial incentives and programming supports for employers.
- PEI issued in 1996 a literacy strategy entitled, *Tough Challenges, Great Rewards: A Literacy and Adult Education Strategy* with a mission of: "Equal access to adult education is a basic right of all adult learners."
- Quebec has articulated a policy for adult education, continuing education, and training to provide basic education for adults; to maintain and continually upgrade adults' competencies; to acknowledge prior learning and competencies through official recognition; and to remove obstacles to access and retention.
- In Saskatchewan, a draft literacy strategy framework was written in partnership by the Ministries of Education and Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration in 2010-11. It is expected to be shared across government in 2011-12.
- The *Yukon Literacy Strategy* (2001) has as one of its objectives: To ensure that literacy programs are developed to address workplace literacy needs.

## **Is there a focus on workplace literacy and essential skills?**

- With the implementation of the Labour Market Agreements since 2008, a noticeable increase in workplace literacy and more common essential skills training has taken place in most provinces and territories.
- BC created the SkillsPlus program is designed to assist employers in providing foundation skills development for their employees by [integrating essential skills into workplace training](#).

- Alberta created the “Workplace Essential Skills Training” (WEST) program which supports workplace essential skills training through the development of partnerships.
- Manitoba used the LMA funds to open Workplace Essential Skills Training (WEST) centres, initially in Winnipeg and now in five other communities. Additional support was provided to the existing Workplace Education Manitoba initiative.
- New Brunswick created a province-wide Workplace Essential Skills service to provide customized workplace training.
- Newfoundland and Labrador announced “Adult Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills” initiative designed to support delivery of training and upgrading in the workplace. However it is not clear if the initiative has been implemented.
- The Northwest Territories has signaled an interest through a project with the NWT Literacy Council to develop a workplace essential skills framework.
- Nova Scotia’s Workplace Education Initiative received additional support through the LMA funds.
- Nunavut includes workplace literacy as part of its Community Literacy fund and support Nunavut Arctic College’s essential skills training programs.
- Ontario used STTF funds to pilot Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills projects. However the initiative ended with the termination of STTF funding.
- PEI’s longstanding Workplace Learning PEI Inc. benefited from LMA funds with additional financial support.
- Quebec continues to encourage workplace literacy training through its payroll tax and its employment action plan.
- Saskatchewan launched “Workplace Essential Skills Saskatchewan” (WESS) to support business and industry in training low-skilled job seekers and existing low-skilled employees to gain the workplace essential skills needed for long-term employment and/or advancement. Essential Skills in the Workplace supports those wishing to enter the labour force, particularly First Nations and Metis people.
- Yukon has had a few projects focused on workplace literacy and essential skills.

## Is there a formal role for labour?

- Manitoba's Workplace Education Steering Committee, coordinated by the provincial government, has labour representation.
- Nova Scotia Partners for Workplace Education is a multi-stakeholder committee that advises the NS Department of Education on its workplace education program, including approving funding for workplace programs. Labour is a full member of the committee.
- In Quebec, all the labour market partners are involved with supporting workplace literacy activities through the *Commission de partenaires du marché du travail* and its responsibility to expend funds collected under the *Act to foster the development of manpower training*.
- The Alberta Workplace Essential Skills committee appears to no longer have a dedicated labour seat. The Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission, which had been expected to take a leadership role in workplace literacy, has been disbanded. New Brunswick announced a partnership forum to discuss labour market issues, including essential skills, but it is not clear if that group has met.

## What is the available financial support?

- Labour is an eligible partner for Alberta's WEST program funding.
- In BC, Funding may be available from "SkillsPlus." CUPE, HEU, and Capilano College have partnered on "SkillsPlus" projects. Funding may also be available from RESD's "Workplace Training for Innovation Program," through the Strategic Training and Transition Fund.
- Support for program delivery is available from Manitoba Ministry of Entrepreneurship, Training, and Trade. Labour's involvement is expected at the workplace level and there is an oversight role played by the WEMSC to ensure that programs meet workers' needs.
- Labour is eligible for funding from the New Brunswick WES program.
- Funding is available under the NWT's "Community Literacy Development Fund" for workplace literacy programs.
- Workplace Education is available to businesses and labour organizations across Nova Scotia. Supports are also available to apprentices without work experience in some of the more essential skills of their trade.

- The Ontario Literacy Coalition has partnered with several labour organizations including the Ontario Federation of Labour, the CAW, Canadian Union of Public Employees, and UNITE HERE to run pilot workplace literacy and essential skills projects. .
- Through Workplace Education PEI, support is available for workplace-based programs.
- In Quebec, there is a myriad of programs available to support workplace learning. The funds for these programs are governed by the CPMT (Labour Market Partner Commission) with the full involvement and support of labour.
- Workers would benefit from projects funded under Saskatchewan's WESS.

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