

Statement from a network of organizations and individuals concerned about literacy in Canada and researchers in adult education

**International Literacy Day
September 8, 2019**

Choose success – Invest in literacy

Our world is transforming rapidly. Trends such as globalization, digitalization and demographic shifts are changing work, communities, the way society functions, and how people interact. In this environment literacy skills matter.

Literacy is more than reading and writing. It is about our ability to learn. It is about problem-solving and critical thinking. It is about accessing information and having the tools to understand and analyse that information. Literacy skills help us realize our life goals and meet the communication and information demands at work, at home, and in the community.

Literacy is about more than the individual person. It's also about our country. Strong literacy and essential skills contribute to a strong economy, civic engagement, and a healthy population. Although Canada's skills in general are above average, the proportion of those at the lowest levels has grown slightly over the past decade, and we have a striking digital literacy gap. We need a vision to ensure everyone has the skills to respond to the challenges and opportunities of a complex and rapidly changing world.

Why this matters:

Our standard of living will be secured and no one will be left behind

Our human rights commitments will be met

Our families and communities will be more resilient, informed and interconnected with access to digital tools and information

Our investment in education and learning will increase quality of life

Our economy will be strengthened by skilled workforce

Our democracy will be supported by civic engagement and participation

We can improve literacy in Canada. We can support people to participate in society and the economy. With leadership at the federal level leading to policy, funding, and conversation, we can achieve success for Canadians, today and for generations to come.

Canada needs:

- **A national literacy policy** to ensure consistency and commitment to advancing literacy programming in Canada. While the provinces and territories deliver literacy programming, the federal government has a vital role to play in setting a national framework and honouring Canada's international commitments. The federal government can support coordination across government and with other orders of government and stakeholders to ensure we make the most of everyone's potential.
- **Federal funding for literacy** to foster innovation, share best practices, and support accessible and affordable literacy programming for all adults who need it. The current federal government has taken steps by negotiating with the provinces and territories to provide literacy and essential skills training to the employed and unemployed. But much more can be done to enhance literacy levels in the family, at work and in the community particularly for Indigenous people, people living in Official Language minority communities, and those new to Canada.
- **Implement Canada's international commitments on adult education** including UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015), Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (2015) and Bélem Framework for Action (2009).
- **Conversations about lifelong learning** to enable all adults to learn in a safe and supportive environment to reduce stigma and ensure success. We must increase access to technology and the learning and tools to use technology. Workplace literacy programs, family literacy activities, community-based programs, and financial and social supports will give everyone the opportunity to learn.

We call on all candidates in Canada's 43rd general election to consider how they will address the literacy needs of Canadians. We call on you to choose success: invest in literacy.

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