

Citizenship

Literacy is not just a tool; it is a necessity for citizenship.

To participate fully in civic life, citizens must have the skills necessary to access and act upon information. Literacy supports critical thinking and enables informed actions and responses. These are the keys to a healthy democracy.

Literacy creates engaged citizens. Low literacy skills present a barrier to civic participation. This leaves individuals disenfranchised from power, control and decision-making and can cause them to feel alienated or marginalized, thereby undermining social cohesion.

Literacy is necessary to participate fully in the democratic process. The voting process requires fairly sophisticated literacy skills and it has been noted that less literate citizens are less likely to vote than those who are fully literate.

Literacy is a key to a healthier and less violent society. Low literacy contributes to poverty, crime and poor health. Improved literacy contributes to a more equitable and inclusive society in which everyone is fully able to participate.

Literacy allows for the inclusion of immigrants into Canadian life. Proficiency in one of Canada's official languages enables new Canadians to access services, training and employment so that they may benefit and contribute as citizens. A literate and tolerant society allows diversity to thrive.

What can be done?

- Encourage the use of clear language in all aspects of society to be as inclusive as possible.
- Adult education should be an experience of participatory democracy as literacy programs share information on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- Citizen engagement activities must provide less literate individuals with a meaningful role in democracy.