

Our Nova Scotia

is a beautiful and unique environment of friendly hardworking people, closely-knit communities and strong values.

Historically it has been a centre both of plentiful jobs in traditional marine- and resource-based industries and of well-regarded universities.

But our world is changing fast, and some of what worked in the past is no longer serving us well.

As proud and committed Nova Scotians, we want to maintain our unique culture and values, and to strengthen and revitalize our communities.

We need to build on what is working well as we adapt to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Investing in Skills for Nova Scotia in the 21st Century

***Learning* is key to adaptation in today's world, and will become even more so in the future.**

The skills we need to thrive in Nova Scotia (and elsewhere in Canada) have **changed**. All aspects of life, but particularly the workplace, require a greater and greater ability to process information, use technology, and keep on learning throughout our lives. The resource-based jobs that used to sustain much of our population are disappearing and being replaced by others that need more and/or different skills.¹ Even traditional jobs have been transformed by the use of technology and new, more exclusive entrance requirements.

Nova Scotia's population is growing much more slowly than the Canadian average - due in part to a low birth rate, out-migration of youth, and low net immigration;² and workforce shortages are projected in the not-too-distant future. Already there are shortages in the skilled trades, which are not attracting enough new entrants even to replace the baby boomers as they retire.

Literacy is for life.



*To create the workforce we need for the future,
we will need all hands on deck...*

The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) set a benchmark for the level of skills required to meet the demands of today's economy and society, and 38% of Nova Scotians fail to meet that standard.³ The learning needs among this 38% of our population range from basic foundational literacy and numeracy to high school completion, employment preparation, and occupational training. The “learning gaps” are not only in the people. Consultations⁴ and research⁵ have shown that although many workers are underskilled for their jobs, many of the jobs in Nova Scotia do not give people the opportunity to use and build on their skills. In fact, the shortage of “good” jobs may be a factor in people moving out of the province.

Ensuring that our adult learning programs and opportunities line up with the needs of Nova Scotia communities, workplaces, and individual learners, and making these opportunities available, accessible and attractive, is crucial to Nova Scotia's social and economic future.

The cost/benefit analysis suggests that the rate of return on raising all Canadians to the benchmark of IALSS Level 3 could be as high as 250%. A 2004 study pointed out that a 1% increase in average literacy scores can result in a permanent 1.5% increase in GDP per capita, and that raising the skills of those at the lower skill levels has the greatest effect on productivity.⁷ Another recent study outlined three types of costs associated with low literacy: “opportunity costs” (economic, social, cultural and political benefits lost when a large proportion of the population is sidelined by their literacy barriers); “remedial costs” such as social assistance, skills

upgrading, and higher costs for healthcare and correctional services; and “intergenerational costs”, as children whose parents have literacy issues are at risk of similar challenges.⁸

“Through literacy, individuals can become self-reliant and gain the resilience they need to be able to cope with the setbacks and the opportunities that come their way. As they become self-reliant, they become effective citizens – paying their taxes, voting in elections, volunteering in their communities – and effective workers. They also gain the capacity to be able to support their children to achieve higher literacy skills.”⁹

Improving literacy levels will pay off in labour market productivity, lower social assistance costs, greater tax revenues, better outcomes for children;

Raising the skill levels of all Nova Scotians to the level required is likely to be expensive.

We don't know for sure how expensive, but a recent cost/benefit analysis projects costs per person ranging from a high of \$4441 to a low of \$229, depending on the person's starting point.

But this should be viewed as an investment rather than as a cost.

In fact, analysts are now suggesting that ***we can't afford NOT to invest.***



...including groups that have been marginalized in the past, such as aboriginal people, immigrants and people with literacy barriers.

better integration of newcomers; lower healthcare costs; better rehabilitation of offenders; safer and more cohesive communities; greater civic participation; and more.

Now more than ever, we need to create a culture that values and supports not only higher learning, but all learning, throughout the life span.¹⁰

We need thriving communities that support families in raising new generations of successful learners; welcome and integrate newcomers; and allow everyone to contribute to the community and share in its benefits. We need strong, viable businesses providing “good” jobs that encourage people to stay and grow. We need workplaces that support, utilize and reward ongoing learning for everyone in the organization. We need well-resourced learning systems that respond to the needs of learners, the community and the province.



To build the future we all want, we need a long-term commitment to lifelong learning for all Nova Scotians. And we all have a part to play.

Governments can help educate the public about the importance of higher literacy, and provide funding and supports to ensure access to high-quality literacy training for anyone who needs it.

Employers can create “literacy-rich” environments where workers use their literacy and other skills, and support workplace learning for all their workers, not only the highest skilled.

Unions can promote literacy to workers as a means of strengthening their participation at work, at home, in their community and in their union.

Educators can ensure that their programs meet the needs of the learners in their communities. Individual Nova Scotians can make sure they exercise their literacy “muscles” every day, seek out ways to gain new skills and knowledge, and support their children in developing the literacy foundation they need to become lifelong learners.

References

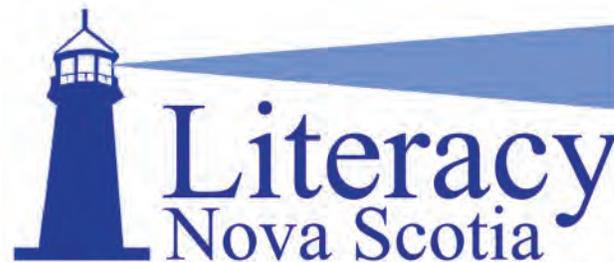
- ¹ NS Department of Finance, Overview of Nova Scotia Economy, 2002-2007 p 8-10
- ² Community Counts website, www.gov.ns.ca/finance/communitycounts/default.asp and NS Dept. of Finance website, www.gov.ns.ca/finance/statistics/agency/index
- ³ IALSS Facts for Nova Scotia, <http://www.ns.literacy.ca/factsheets.htm>
- ⁴ Workplace Partners Panel – Summaries of discussions held in the Atlantic provinces, Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2006, at <http://www.clbc.ca> (Research and Reports/Report Archive)
- ⁵ Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: a Cost/Benefit Analysis, T. Scott Murray, Mike Mccracken, et al, 2009 (<http://dataangel.ca>)
- ⁶ Addressing Canada's Literacy Challenge: a Cost/Benefit Analysis, T. Scott Murray, Mike Mccracken, et al, 2009 (<http://dataangel.ca>)
- ⁷ Literacy Scores, Human Capital and Growth across Fourteen OECD Countries. Coulombe, S., Tremblay, J.F. and Marchand S., Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 2004.
- ⁸ Canada's Hidden Deficit: The Social Cost of Low Literacy Skills, Judith Maxwell and Tatyana Teplova, Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network (www.cllrnet.ca)
- ⁹ Maxwell and Teplova, (p.6)
- ¹⁰ The Canadian Council on Learning's Composite Learning Index (CLI) is an annual measure of Canada's progress in lifelong learning, in school, the home, at work or in the community. The CLI website allows users to explore the interactions between learning and the economy in their city or region. (<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/CLI/index.htm>)

For further information

To read more about what an increase in literacy rates can mean for the Nova Scotia economy, go to....

Literacy Nova Scotia News (Spring 2009)
<http://www.ns.literacy.ca/printnews/spring09.pdf>

Literacy By the Numbers: a presentation by Scott Murray
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hIXzuJDEpsw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ns.literacy.ca%2Findex.htm&feature=player_embedded



What is literacy?

Literacy is **the** essential skill.

It is the ability to use printed information to function in society, at work and in the family.

It is the combination of thinking and social skills we need to analyze and use information to control our own lives, achieve our goals and develop our knowledge and potential.

How to reach us...



Literacy Nova Scotia
NSCC Truro Campus
Room 125, Forrester Hall
36 Arthur Street
Truro NS B2N 1X5



PO Box 1516
Truro NS B2N 5V2



902-897-2444 or
1-800-255-5203



902-897-4020



literacyns@nscc.ca



www.ns.literacy.ca

Investing in Nova Scotia's People: Panel discussion among educators, policy makers, business and labour
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcEcSM12g74>

Implications of Findings from IALSS 2003

(Powerpoint presentation):

In English- <http://www.ns.literacy.ca/factsheets/ialssns-en.ppt>

En Francais- <http://www.ns.literacy.ca/factsheets/ialssns-fr.ppt>