

Tough Challenges: Great Rewards - A Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education

Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning
(Prince Edward Island)

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These individuals and the organizations they represent are:

- Colette Aucoin - Société éducative de l'Ile-du-Prince-Édouard
- Bob Charlton - Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)
- Dianne Morrow - P.E.I. Literacy Alliance
- Don Anderson/Gaelyne MacAulay - Holland College
- Barbara Macnutt - P.E.I. Association for Adult Education
- Nancy Smitheram - University of Prince Edward Island
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- Faye M. Martin (Chairperson) - Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning

The contribution of adult learners to the development of the strategy is also acknowledged. Their motivation, honesty and desire for learning was expressed in consultations on parts of the strategy.

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Definitions

Adult Learner	Any person 18 years of age or older, or out of public school for a minimum of two years.
Adult Education	Learning opportunities provided to adult learners to achieve up to and including a grade 12 level.
Adult Educator	(i) Qualified educators in their academic field who have additional training to work with adult learners. (ii) Volunteers trained as content experts in specific areas of adult literacy/education.
Literacy	Skills needed to read and respond to printed material commonly found at work, at home and in the community. (Basic literacy is grades 1 to 6; functional literacy is grades 7 to 12).
Health	The physical, social, mental and spiritual resources of the individual, the family, the group and the community.

The definitions are written for this report and may have different meanings in other contexts.

Summary Report

In Prince Edward Island, low literacy skills are a complex problem for 40% of the adult population who can read only simple material, and in fact, 17% of whom cannot read at all.

The economic and social cost of low literacy levels are high:

- illiteracy hampers businesses' ability to train employees, make use of new or advanced skills, introduce new technology and remain competitive
- illiteracy restricts the Province's ability to attract financial investment needed for economic growth and development
- illiteracy affects personal income, health, safety, child development, and social, cultural and civic activity.

In Prince Edward Island an aggressive approach to improve adult literacy/education levels is essential if the cycle of dependency and unemployment is to be broken. Education and training are the key to this Province's ability to meet the challenge of global competition.

Issues addressed by the *Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education in Prince Edward Island* are complex and clear:

- how to insure sufficient and sustainable resources
- how to significantly broaden the level of community commitment to achieve a fully literate province
- how to integrate the Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education with those of Health and Community Services, Education and Economic Development.

The policy framework put forward in the *Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education* requires partnerships involving adult learners, communities, post-secondary institutions, public sector, volunteer organizations, adult educators and governments in order to achieve the following objectives:

- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will take the lead in formalizing the partnerships required for a successful adult literacy/education system.
- In cooperation with other departments and groups, the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will establish a structured adult literacy/education system. The leadership and coordination roles of these partners will be clearly defined.
- The Provincial Government will take the lead, in conjunction with Federal Government Departments and other partners, to develop a funding model which insures a continuum of adult literacy/education programs.

- The Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education will ensure a full range of programs is available and responsive to the needs of all adult learners.
- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will work with the University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College and the P.E.I. Association for Adult Education to develop a process for adult educator certification that will be adopted by government and enforced provincially.
- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult learning will facilitate a continuum of learning in a community learning environment as part of an adult learning system.
- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will establish standards and a process for the evaluation of adult literacy/education programs.
- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will facilitate the establishment of adult learner assessment services.

Introduction

Systematic learning in modern society begins with literacy. Economic self-sufficiency increasingly depends upon it. Because of this, the gap between the literate and the illiterate has never been wider. In a knowledge-based world, the written word is the most important currency of exchange. Not a day goes by without the need to read instructions, signs, news and forms. New technology, once believed a substitute for print, is actually increasing the importance of reading and writing in offices and factories. It is estimated that the average blue-collar worker spends some 97 minutes reading each day. Almost all jobs, even those requiring manual labour, require some reading.¹

Many people compensate for low reading skills by creatively hiding the fact. This attempt to conceal further results in isolation and underachievement in work, family and community. Many adults with a grade 12 certificate cannot, in fact, read at that level. One can safely conclude that educational levels attained do not necessarily reflect literacy skills. As well, employment trends strongly indicate that grade 12 functioning is a minimum level for most jobs, particularly with increasing technology.²

The following charts indicate educational levels for the Province of Prince Edward Island. The information for these charts was obtained from Census Canada (1991). The regional differences in education levels is of major significance in determining resource requirements.

¹ *To Live and Learn, The Challenge of Education and Training*. Report of the Commission on Excellence in Education, New Brunswick 1993

² *Reading Skills of Adults in Canada* 1986

Chart 1 - Education Level as a % of population 15 and over by regions (P.E.I.)

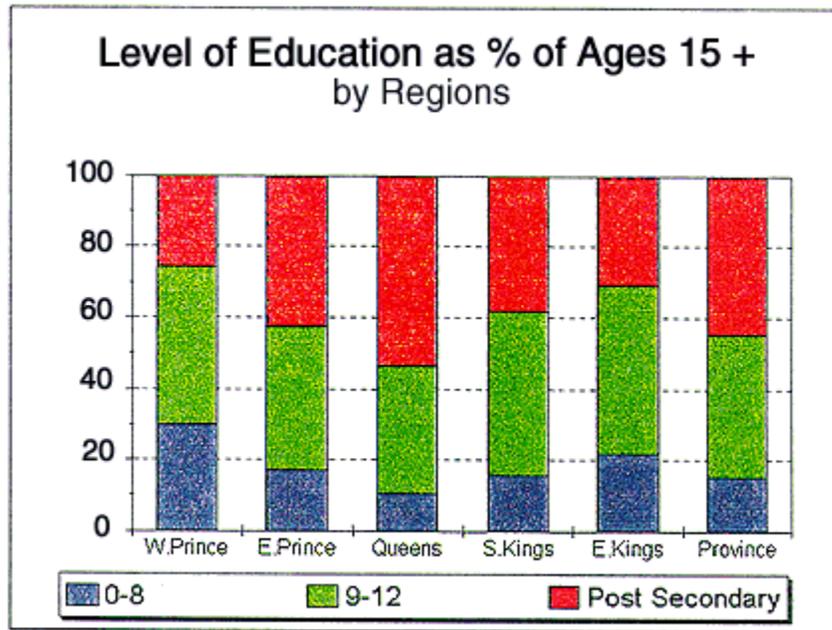
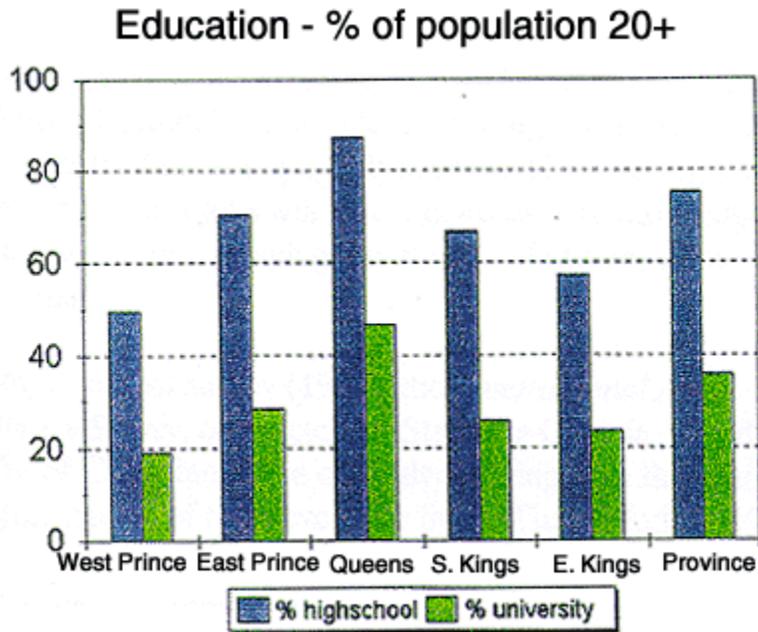


Chart 2 - High school and University completion as % of population 20 and over by regions (P.E.I.)



In a literacy survey conducted in 1989, Statistics Canada found:

- 7% of adults cannot read (Level 1)
- 9% can recognize simple words (Level 2) and
- 22% can use printed materials only if they are written in a simple and clearly-illustrated manner but tend to avoid situations requiring reading. (Level 3).³

(See Appendix A - Reading Skill Levels)

Furthermore, Atlantic Canada has the lowest rates of literacy in the country. In Prince Edward Island, low literacy skills are a complex problem for 40% of the adult population who can only read simple material and, in fact, 17% of whom cannot read at all.

Functional literacy skills are a minimum requirement for adults to fulfil their roles as workers, parents and community members. Literacy is increasingly necessary for community and economic health.

A 1988 report by the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy stated that illiteracy costs the country about \$ 10 billion a year. Industrial accidents caused by poor reading skills are estimated to cost \$1.6 billion. This does not take into account the consequent loss of productivity.

Functional illiteracy is a serious problem for the workplace, posing a formidable obstacle to training and retraining workers for the emerging job market. Considering that the majority of new jobs will be concentrated in knowledge-based industries, a high general level of literacy is clearly essential.

A more recent survey (1995), the *International Adult Literacy Survey*, conducted by Statistics Canada, found that 42% of Canadians have difficulty dealing with the reading requirements of their everyday lives. This includes 16% of

³ Statistics Canada. *Adult Literacy Survey* 1989

Canadians who do not have the skills to interpret most of the written materials they see. The *International Adult Literacy Survey* shows strong links among literacy skills, employment and income. People with lower literacy levels are less likely to have incomes and to be employed.

Canada participated with six other countries and three intergovernmental organizations in Europe and North America to complete this survey. Literacy has taken centre stage on policy agendas because of a new phase of global economic development. This has brought about both uncertainty and opportunities, as growth industries require high skills and a demand for literacy.

The International Adult Literacy Survey summarized:

- literacy demands serious consideration by decision and policy makers because the information society and global economy requires individuals and economies with high literacy skills
- literate adults and seniors will be far better equipped to maintain their independence and quality of life, thus lessening the need for social services
- growth sectors of finance, information, and personal service require high levels of literacy
- literacy skill is an important predictor of an individual's economic success affecting income, employment stability and incidence of unemployment; it also affects social indicators, including health, justice and safety.⁴

Literacy, however, is much more than an economic or efficiency issue. It is as well a matter of social equity. As June Callwood expressed it, "today, inability to read is a ticket to social segregation and economic oblivion." Unemployment, poverty, poor health, delinquency and criminality are all too often a part of the social costs of illiteracy. According to the 1986 census, those with less than grade nine education have the highest rate of unemployment and earn an average annual income 30 percent below the national average. Human suffering associated with illiteracy cannot be measured. The lives of those who cannot read or write are frequently lonely and frustrating.

Upgrading Prince Edward Island's literacy levels is critical to a stronger and more prosperous province.

We need a public adult literacy/education system with the depth to treat each student as an individual, the foresight to provide knowledge relevant to tomorrow's labor market and enough sensitivity to cultural issues that we teach tolerance and respect for all peoples.

If community and adult education are as closely linked as research and common sense say, then the community that includes both the private sector and public sector, both companies and schools, must come to recognize the web of mutual responsibility that binds one to the other.'

An implemented plan for addressing adult literacy/education needs in Prince Edward Island will increase employability and life management skills of individuals as well as contribute to family and community well-being, today and for generations to come.

⁴ Organisations for Economic Cooperation and Development & Statistics Canada *Literacy, Economy and Society*. 1995

⁵ GBN Education and Community: Implications 1996

Background

A Plan for the Future: Adult Literacy (August 1995) was commissioned by the P.E.I. Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning. The report highlighted some strengths in adult literacy in the province:

- literacy projects achieve worthwhile results
- Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I. one-to-one tutoring has been effective
- commitment of volunteer sector.

The report also highlighted the lack of some basics:

- consistent approach to planning and provincial policy
- provincial standards or requirements
- bridging/linkages to help students move between programs.

The key recommendation of *A Plan for the Future: Adult Literacy* was:

- That the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning immediately commence a strategic planning process which will result in the establishment of a provincial policy framework to ensure delivery of quality adult literacy programs and services.

Subsequently, the Hon. Jeannie Lea, Minister Responsible for the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning established the Adult Literacy Steering Committee and, at that time, identified this exercise as a priority for her portfolio.

Steps taken by the Steering Committee have included:

- determining that adult literacy must be placed in the broader context of adult education (for this reason, the strategy addresses adult literacy/education)
- ensuring representation of principal organizations contributing to adult literacy/education
- developing a mission statement and guiding principles
- consulting adult learners
- researching information on policy, structure, funding, standards and accessibility in other provinces and territories
- participating in a structured strategic planning process.

Necessity for Improving Adult Literacy/Education Levels

Economic, social and political objectives are most often indicated as factors necessitating improvement in adult literacy/education levels.

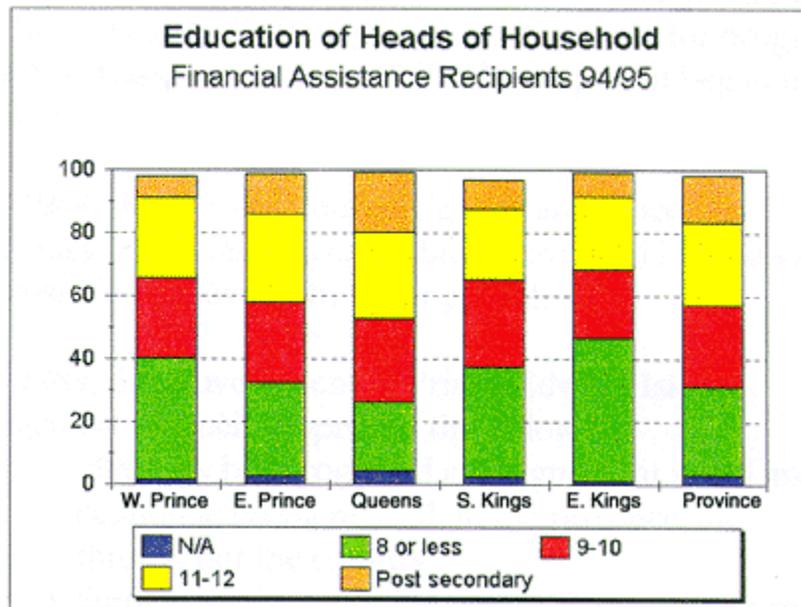
In the context of a global economy and global competition, low literacy skills contribute to economic problems for previously well-off countries such as Canada and the United States.⁶

For the economic well-being of the individual, literacy skills increase job opportunities and earning power to support oneself, family and community. The opportunity for self-employment is greatly enhanced by literacy.

Research shows that the educational level for people receiving financial assistance is generally lower than for those who are self-sufficient.

⁶ Wagner, Daniel "Literacy and Development: Rationales, Assessment and Innovation." 1993

Chart 3 - % of Heads of Household by Educational Level - Financial Assistance Recipients (P.E.I.)



Social objectives for adult literacy connect directly to the broad determinants of health. In addition to meaningful work and sufficient financial resources, social determinants of health include healthy child development, a sense of control over one's life, opportunities for lifelong learning, a clean and safe physical environment and the skills to handle stress. Literacy can help adults achieve self-reliance and contribute to the health of their children and community. "Effective communities appear to be different, not because of economic or demographic or regional differences, but because they are simply better educated as a community."⁶

The political objectives for adult literacy/education are established in democracy. An informed and involved citizenry is the foundation of a democratic society. From the rights and responsibilities of voting to the choice to run for a seat in municipal, provincial or federal government, literacy is the key to full participation.

⁶ Mathews, David. Community Education: Building Learning Communities

Federal/Provincial Strategies

Community organizations, volunteers and post-secondary education institutions have advocated for and provided programs in adult literacy/ education for decades in Prince Edward Island. Federal government support for programs such as Basic Training for Skills Development began in the mid-1960s.

In 1988, the Government of Canada announced the *Literacy Initiatives Program* which provided \$110 million across Canada over a five year period.

In 1989, the Government of Prince Edward Island, Executive Council, approved the following:

- illiteracy be recognized as a significant social and economic problem, both in the province and throughout the country
- literacy not be viewed as an absolute, but as a relative ability to that required to function as a productive member of society and
- a new initiative with a budget of \$ 100,000 to be used as part of the provincial contribution to access cost-shared funding.

Across Canada, most provinces and territories direct literacy activities through guidelines and strategies, usually operating from an Advanced Education, Training or Labour Ministry. In fact, the Province of Prince Edward Island provided a further opportunity to place a high priority on literacy by appointing a Minister Responsible for Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning (1994). In view of emerging trends in social and economic reforms, all provinces are reviewing adult literacy/education strategies in a concerted effort to strengthen them. ⁸

⁸ Smith Green & Associates Inc. *Adult Literacy/Education Findings*. May 1996

Resources for Literacy

Resources required for adult literacy/education include quality programs in suitable environments, income support for individuals and families, as well as transportation and child-care.

The federal and provincial governments contribute revenue to literacy programs. (See Chart 4 - Resources for Literacy, page 11)

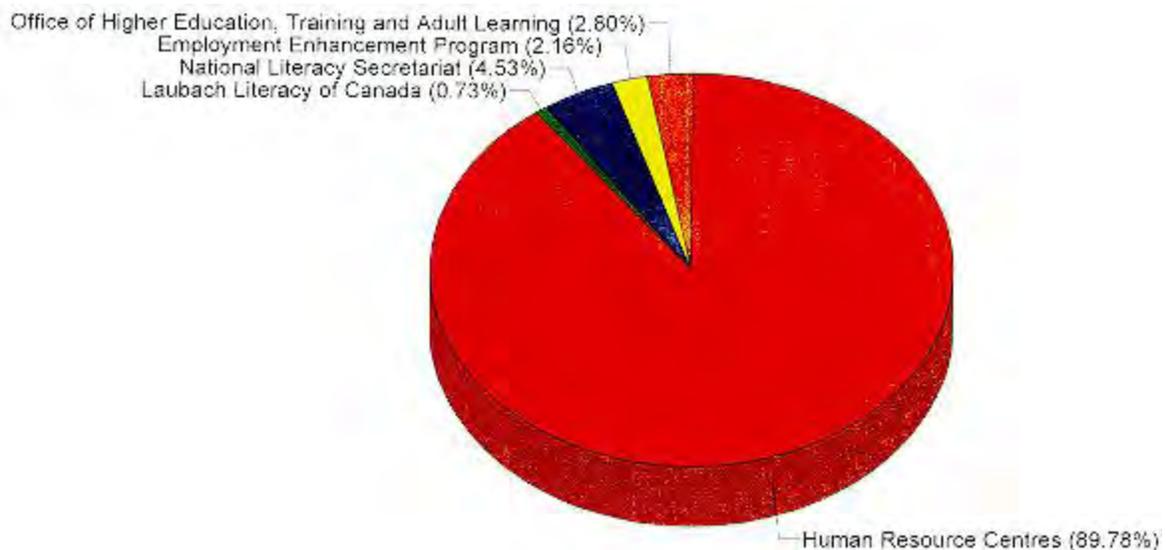
Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), P.E.I. Region, contributed \$6.425M to programs in Prince Edward Island in 1995/96 and an estimated additional \$1.2M carry-over amount. These funding amounts are broken into two main categories, adult literacy/education programs and bridging programs.

Bridging programs are "in support" of adult literacy/education and often provide a first-step for learners. The primary focus is generally in non-academic areas such as career exploration and life management skills, with a secondary emphasis on academics. The programs provide an opportunity for learners to start their path in adult literacy/education while addressing other issues which may impede their future academic progress.

As well, most Human Resources Centres have had jointly sponsored programs with the province for Social Assistance Recipient clients. In many cases, course costs and income support were shared. (The Provincial contribution through financial assistance is not included in Chart 4.)

Resources for Literacy 1995/96

* See Appendix B for details



The National Literacy Secretariat

The mandate of the [National Literacy Secretariat \(NLS\)](#), Department of Human Resources Development Canada, is to facilitate the involvement of all sectors of society in creating a more literate Canada. One of the ways that the National Literacy Secretariat does this is by providing financial assistance for literacy projects. The National Literacy Secretariat, in partnership with the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning, makes provision for federal support to literacy development in Prince Edward Island.

For example, in the fiscal year 1995-96, fifteen community organizations applied for and received grants from NLS for initiatives involving research and development. Financial support from the NLS is available for:

- Public awareness
- Coordination and information sharing
- Access and outreach
- Learning materials
- Research

Volunteer Sector

Volunteers lead, manage and teach in many literacy programs. The contribution of Laubach Literacy Canada P.E.I. tutoring volunteers is approximately 6,200 hours annually. This does not include volunteer work of Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I. council executives who manage the program. [Laubach Literacy of Canada](#) - National contributes financially through training and materials and contribution to individual councils.

The number of adult literacy/education programs fluctuates because most depend on government priorities. While there is considerable activity and expenditure of financial and human resources, there is no formal organizational structure for adult literacy/education in Prince Edward Island.

Existing Roles, Responsibilities and Organizations

The major partners in adult literacy/ education include learners, adult educators, planners, volunteers, managers, community organizations, educational institutions, businesses and government departments.

Community Organizations

Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I., formed in 1978, is a community based program which provides trained tutors to work with people to improve their basic and functional skills in reading, writing, speaking, listening, numeracy and other life skills. In 1995, Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I. had 6 Councils with a total of 174 tutors helping 114 students in one-to-one tutoring. The national office of Laubach Literacy of Canada contributed over \$50,000 to support the work of Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I.

P.E.I. Literacy Alliance, formed in 1990, promotes awareness of literacy issues, advises government and educational institutions and makes recommendations for programs and services to meet the identified needs of adult learners. The Alliance creates partnerships to develop projects based on need. These projects include Learner Support Groups, Learning and Reading Partners Adult Learning System, Project L.O.V.E. (Let Older Volunteers Educate) and Plain Language Workshops. Twenty-six organizations - including governments, social and educational institutions and community-based volunteer groups - are represented on the Alliance.

Post Secondary Educational Institutions

Holland College has been the primary provider of adult literacy/education programs in Prince Edward Island since 1976. The College offers a wide variety of adult programs in literacy, academic upgrading and applied skills. Holland College has been instrumental in the development and implementation of interprovincial curriculum standards for upgrading programs. These standards help to ensure consistent quality and content in adult education programs, as well as to facilitate transfer of students and acceptance of credits across Atlantic provinces boundaries.

The University of Prince Edward Island, as a provincial institution, has a great interest in the education of all Islanders and was a founding member of the P.E.I. Literacy Alliance. Through the Faculty of Education, credit courses in the field of adult education are being offered to teachers of adult literacy/ education already working in the province and to students wishing to enter the field. A committee has been established to advise the Department of Extension and Summer Sessions on the demand for specific courses within the field of adult literacy/education.

College de l'Acadie, the Francophone community college of Nova Scotia, is available to all Prince Edward Island adult learners who wish to engage in academic upgrading or skills training in the French language. La Société éducative de l'Ile-du-Prince-Édouard offers such programs through its Centre provincial de formation pour adultes. Registered under the Private Training Schools Act, this centre has state-of-the-art technology which permits distance education delivery of programs through various telecommunication systems, i.e. video-conferencing, audiographics and a wide area network.

As well as the professional and technical training programs offered at the Centre, adult learners may also access literacy training and academic upgrading to increase skills required for advanced skills training.

Workplace Education

Workplace education focuses on the need for basic skills in the areas of reading, writing, math, problem solving, critical thinking and communication. These skills enable an employee to function more effectively at work and relate to:

- reading and understanding instructions and manuals
- following directions for the use of hazardous materials
- measuring materials
- using charts and diagrams
- giving clear and succinct directions
- explaining delays to customers
- interpreting printouts or using a computer terminal to order parts or to check inventory.

Workplace education is becoming an increasingly important issue. Historically, companies have valued machines as an investment and treated people as cost. Therefore, little has been spent on training and education in the workplace. Employers have been able to "buy" skilled workers. However, as Canada shifts into a new millennium, employers will be faced with a smaller labour pool and the need for a workforce with higher skill levels. In the future, employers will no longer have the luxury of being selective. To meet the demands of increasing technology and competitiveness, employers and organizations will have to invest in workplace education to upgrade their workforce.

Cavendish Farms, Best Western Motel and Seaman's Beverages are examples of Workplace Skills Development Programs. These programs are cost shared between Laubach Literacy of Canada, the Province through the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning and the National Literacy Secretariat.

Federal Government

Human Resources Development Canada (H.R.D.C.) is presently the main federal department responsible for the funding of adult training and employment programs in Prince Edward Island. Both adult literacy/education and bridging programs have received substantial support from HRDC as part of its training purchases previously outlined in this report.

This support comes from different levels within the Department. There is substantial programming funded by Human Resources Centres (HRC) in each community to meet local needs. Each HRC works closely with other government and community partners to develop appropriate programs.

On July 1, 1996, proclamation of the new Employment Insurance Act repealed the former Unemployment Insurance Act and the National Training Act. The new Act provides legislative authority for federal withdrawal from the supply of training. In order to minimize the disruption to casting training programs, the federal purchase of training may continue for a maximum of three years. The duration of the transition period will depend on negotiations with each province/territory.

The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Department of Human Resources Development Canada, facilitates the involvement of all sectors of society in creating a more literate Canada. One of the ways that the National Literacy Secretariat does this is by providing financial assistance to literacy projects (previously outlined in this report). The National Literacy Secretariat, in partnership with the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning, makes provision for federal support to literacy development for non-profit, non-government organizations, as well as for post-secondary institutions.

Provincial Government

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning has the provincial responsibility for adult literacy/education. Through the Training and Adult Learning Division, policies are implemented to ensure relevant adult literacy/education opportunities are accessible.

The Office administers the Federal/Provincial Literacy Initiatives Program jointly with the National Literacy Secretariat. Through the Provincial Literacy Initiatives Committee (PLIC), an adjudication process is conducted resulting in the determination of funding for various project proposals. This committee, chaired by the Director of Training and Adult Learning, is comprised of representatives from the volunteer community as well as a representatives from the National Literacy Secretariat and from other provincial government departments.

As well, the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning provides funding to Holland College to ensure academic upgrading opportunities for approximately 250 Islanders in five locations at night.

The Health and Community Services Agency funds the Employment Enhancement Program, with staff in each of the five Health Authority regions in the province. Employment Enhancement programs work to develop training and employment opportunities for clients referred by Child and Family Services. Employment Enhancement has co-located with Human Resources Development Canada in many areas of the province, increasing efficiency, decreasing duplication of services and assuring easier access to training/employment for clients.

A Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education in Prince Edward Island

The Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education in Prince Edward Island outlines the following:

- Mission Statement
- Guiding Principles
- Priority Planning Issues
- Goal
- Objectives
- Implementation

Mission Statement

Equal access to adult education is a basic right of all adult learners.

This access will be provided through shared responsibilities of individuals, communities, institutions, business and government under the direction of the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning.

Guiding Principles

- Adult education is part of life long learning.
- Adult education is a critical part of the Provincial Government's priorities of education and economic development.
- Adult education, including basic literacy, is a shared responsibility of individual learners, adult educators, communities, businesses and governments.
- The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning must provide policy direction to ensure a coordinated response to the needs of adult learners.
- Adult education, including basic literacy, is not just an individual need; it is a family, health and economic concern.
- Adult education programs must meet a set of established standards of excellence.
- The range of adult education programs will respond to the needs of the whole learner to develop, maintain or enhance:
 - physical health - promote and preserve a high level of physical wellness
 - social health - relate to family, friends, strangers, environment and have economic stability
 - mental health - think critically, creatively, have a positive and realistic attitude and solve problems
 - spiritual health - have hope for self and others, belief in self and others and care for self and others.
- Adult education programs must be provided in a manner which ensures continuous progression toward the learner's goals.
- Adult education must respect the diversity of learners.
- Adult learners are entitled to resources to attain the level of literacy of which they are capable.
- Adult education must value learners':
 - experience, work and life skills
 - partnership in planning and decision making
 - rights, dignity and independence.
- Adult education must value educators':
 - education, training, experience and life skills
 - contribution to the field.

Priority Planning Issues

The Adult Literacy/Education Steering Committee identified several priority planning issues for Prince Edward Island.

Priority #1

- **Establish adult literacy/education as a planning priority on Provincial Government agenda.**

Adult literacy/education is an emerging priority with the Provincial Government as demonstrated by the establishment of the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning (1994).

Current reorganization and reform of federal and provincial government programs provide opportunities to clarify the importance of adult literacy/ education programming. Federal government changes to the Canada Health and Social Transfer Fund and the introduction of the new Employment Insurance Act have major implications for adult literacy/education and training - especially basic literacy - as well as for health and social services. It is crucial to recognize that without funding alternatives, presently existing systems will be dramatically altered.

Adult literacy is not well understood and is often considered an "individual" problem, rather than an influence on the whole of Island society. For example, potential businesses may consider literacy rates as an indicator of a qualified workforce in determining a move to P.E.I. Low literacy levels pose a formidable obstacle to training and retraining workers for the emerging job market.

Priority #2

- **Establish an organizational and planning structure for adult literacy/education.**

An approach to adult literacy/education must be integrated, comprehensive, affordable and accessible.

An integrated approach will include community organizations, business, labour, municipal governments and various departments of federal and provincial governments in setting objectives and planning activities. Such an approach will permit effective use of financial and human resources to address adult literacy/education issues.

A comprehensive approach acknowledges broad implications for adult literacy/education and involves economic development education, health and community services.

An affordable approach uses resources where they have the greatest impact. An adult literacy/education system must function with agreed upon objectives setting the direction and boundaries for use of resources. Programs are assessed on their ability to achieve outcomes - the system is therefore accountable.

An accessible approach provides ease of admittance and a continuum of programming to help adult learners meet their goals.

An implementation plan for adult literacy/education must include a communication strategy to inform and motivate participation at all levels.

Priority #3

- **Establish a process for adult educator certification.**

There are many competent adult educators, although currently, there is no requirement for certification in Prince Edward Island. A certification process will ensure qualified adult educators. As a result of this requirement, opportunities will be available for professional development at various levels.

Priority #4

- **Establish standards for adult literacy/education programs.**

Formalizing adult literacy/education in Prince Edward Island will require standards of excellence in program delivery. Flexibility is important in adult literacy/education programs to meet the diverse needs of learners. Program standards will ensure that consistency and quality are achieved and maintained.

The information revolution is redefining the role of technology in adult literacy/education programs. New approaches to education include computer-assisted courses, audio-conferencing, video-conferencing and courses offered on the World Wide Web. Planning for adult literacy/education must include program delivery strategies for preparing learners in the appropriate use of technology in adult literacy/education programs.

Goal

The goal of this Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education is to make adult literacy/education accessible and affordable to all adult learners in Prince Edward Island.

Prince Edward Island has thousands of adults who cannot fully participate in employment, in the lives of their children, in the growth of their communities or in the direction and governance of their province. 'these adults need programs which can improve their literacy levels, their opportunities and challenges of being in meaningful employment and their ability to think critically about issues, subjects and life choices. They are precariously placed in Island society - somewhat safe in a stable and growing economy, at great peril in a tough, slow-growth economy. Adult literacy/education **"is one of those issues that runs the risk of being everyone's problem, therefore, no one's problem."**⁹

When adult literacy/education opportunities are available to those who need them, several results occur. There will be a healthier, more independent population with reduced dependence on income support programs and with increased vitality, energy and abilities to attract or start new business initiatives.

Adult literacy/education programs instill in learners the belief that self-learning is one of the most valued skills in our society - one which "employers cite as the greatest skill to have in the 21st century."¹⁰

Adult literacy/education programs will have a profound impact on the children of learners. Learning as a life-long process becomes more valued in the home, in each community and in schools. This is most noticeable in the reading abilities of younger children who can now be assisted by parents and who will be encouraged to stay in school until completion.

Adults and their employment options/learning needs can be grouped into four categories:

- Unskilled people who need basic education (literacy) and skill training.
- Low skilled unemployed people who need education to create employment options and for personal development.
- Skilled and unemployed people who need education to improve employment options and for personal development.
- Full and part-time employed people who need education to respond to changes in their work place and for personal development.

⁹ The Deeper News, Vol.3, 1992

¹⁰ Peter Cressy: Learning Partnerships

Objective 1

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will take the lead in formalizing the partnerships required for a successful adult literacy/education system.

Purpose

- to identify and establish the partnerships required for a comprehensive strategy.

Partners would include:

- La Société éducative de l'Ile-du-Prince-Édouard
- Community economic development organizations
- Health and Community Services System
- Holland College
- Human Resources Development Canada
- Laubach Literacy of Canada - P.E.I.
- National Literacy Secretariat
- P.E.I. Literacy Alliance
- Unions
- University of Prince Edward Island
- Workplace/business.

Success Indicators

- sustainable funding policy
- increase in numbers of adult learners in appropriate programs
- increase in the number of adults attaining grade 12 level in reading, writing and numeracy
- active, positive partnerships
- a system of adult literacy/education responsive to the needs of adult learners

Activities

- commitment of partners in implementation of the strategy for adult literacy/education
- evaluation of the partnerships, i.e. the effectiveness of the adult literacy/education system.

Objective 2

In cooperation with other departments and groups, the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will establish a structured adult literacy/education system. The leadership and coordination roles of these partners will be clearly defined.

Purpose

- to provide the full range of opportunities for adult learners
- to address the needs identified by learners, educators and communities.

Success Indicators

- roles and responsibilities of the partners clearly defined
- linkage between adult literacy/education programs and economic/social health clearly defined
- continuum of programs for adult learners
- increase in the number of adults enrolled in adult literacy/education programs
- sustainable funding and resources.

Activities

- create a structure that ensures ongoing development and implementation of Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education (See Appendix C - Proposed Structure)
- under the leadership of the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning, Government and other partners will monitor the system.

Objective 3

The Provincial Government will take the lead, in conjunction with federal government departments and other partners, to develop a funding model which ensures a continuum of adult literacy/education programs.

Purpose

- to ensure adult literacy/education programs in Prince Edward Island are affordable and sustainable for all adult learners.

Success Indicators

- fiscal policy for funding with clear guidelines
- an environment that provides stability for ongoing programs and allows for innovation
- equitable entitlement to provincial education resources (e.g. per year allocation for each public school student under the age of 21 is approximately \$5,000).

Activities

- cooperate with partners to develop a funding policy to ensure learner needs are met
- analyze costing in the context of changing strategies and priorities.

Objective 4

The strategy for adult literacy/education will ensure a full range of programs is available and responsive to the needs of all adult learners

Purpose

- to determine the means whereby adult literacy/education is accessible to adults who are currently excluded or who may be excluded as a result of changes to the Employment Insurance Act. This would include amongst others:
 - people who no longer qualify due to the new Employment Insurance Act
 - people who qualify for provincial financial assistance (but not E.I.)
 - people working for minimum wage and the working poor (who wish to increase literacy skills in order to improve employment opportunities)
 - people who are unemployed and not in receipt of income support
 - people who do not meet prerequisites for existing programs.

Success Indicators

- increased numbers of people from above noted groups completing adult literacy/education programs
- increased numbers of people from above noted groups who are employed one year after completion of adult literacy/education programs
- fewer people on financial assistance
- fewer interventions from social services, health and education departments.

Activities

- ensure learning opportunities for those not qualifying under Employment Insurance Act provisions
- flexible programs for those who work or parent including flex-time and part-time
- access to assessment services to determine an appropriate, realistic learning plan for the learner.

Objective 5

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will work with the University of Prince Edward Island, Holland College and the P.E.I. Association for Adult Education to develop a process for adult educator certification that will be adopted by Government and enforced provincially.

Purpose

- to recognize adult education as a distinct profession with specific requirements of the practitioner
- to ensure the pursuit of excellence in the application of the profession
- to recognize the contribution of adult literacy/education as a positive and powerful force in economic development.

Success Indicators

- certification criteria adopted and enforced by the Government of Prince Edward Island
- certification of adult educators becomes an integral part of funding criteria for programs and/or registration as a private training school.

Activities

- a committee formed to develop a certification process which identifies certification criteria, opportunities for certification at various levels and procedures for those currently working in the field to become certified as adult educators
- designate the Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning with certification responsibility.

Objective 6

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will facilitate a continuum of learning in a community learning environment as part of an adult learning system.

A community learning environment is one in which the community determines its learning needs and how they will be met. ". . . community education is a process that identifies the community's educational needs, assesses available community resources and uses the resources to develop appropriate programs and activities to meet the identified needs." (DeLargy, 1989)

Purpose

- to respond to the needs of the community
- to develop healthy and economically sustainable communities
- to include a community education philosophy that provides active learning environments
- to give both the adult learners and the supporting community a greater stake in the success of the literacy initiatives
- to increase the impact on public awareness, acceptance and commitment.

Success Indicators

- community groups identify community needs, literacy goals become shared goals and a genuine community priority
- economically sustainable communities
- increase in the number of community learning sites
- increase in the number of learners who progress through different levels of learning
- learning centres contributing to the health of community
- educational facilities used beyond "normal" hours
- members of the community adaptable to changes occurring in the nature of work.

Activities

- Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning sponsor a community education workshop in cooperation with health, community, economic development and education sectors to develop a framework for community learning (October 1996)
- representatives of government departments and agencies, post secondary institutions and community groups attend the National Center for Community Education sponsored by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (This foundation is committed to developing and promoting strategic plans for community education in the 21st century. This includes a significant contribution of financial and human resources.)
- Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning ensure that support and guidance will be provided to communities in the implementation of their learning opportunities strategies
- ensure ongoing liaison and participation of Holland College as a key partner in the delivery of adult literacy/education in the province.

Objective 7

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will establish standards and a process for the evaluation of adult literacy/education programs.

Purpose

- to determine the effectiveness of adult literacy/ education programs including:
 - relevance to the learners' needs
 - cost effectiveness
 - quality of curriculum
 - outcomes for learners.

Success Indicators

- standards and guidelines designed to aid adult learners achieve their goals
- programs are recognized and achievement is transferable to other training, employers and geographic areas
- evaluation to ensure standards are met and procedures to redress problems
- programs evolving as client or economic needs change.

Activities

- establish and maintain program standards that permit empirical measurement that are enforceable and include follow-up measures
- establish list of approved programs available to adult learners.

Objective 8

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning will facilitate the establishment of adult learner assessment services.

Purpose

- to ensure an individualized assessment process is accessible and timely for adult learners.

Success Indicators

- permit adult learner placement in programs/courses appropriate to abilities, employability and economic security needs
- productive learning experiences for adult learners
- increased learner self-sufficiency.

Activities

- ensure that adult learners have the opportunity for assessment prior to entering the adult learning system
- develop an assessment process that learners participate in as they enter the adult learning system.

Implementation Plan

The goal and objectives of *A Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education* are the foundation for a province-wide approach to an adult literacy/education system based on shared commitment amongst adult learners, governments, educational institutions, community groups, private sector and individuals.

Organizations with membership on the Adult Literacy/ Education Steering Committee have written this report and will participate in the next steps toward implementation of the strategy.

The Implementation Plan (See Appendix D) outlines a process for achieving the goal of adult literacy/education. This process includes:

- Development
- Implementation
- Evaluation and
- Outcomes Measurement

Developing and implementing an adult literacy/education system is occurring in the midst of a rapidly changing economic environment. In the implementation of this adult literacy/education strategy, care must be taken to ensure minimal disruption to current activity while the new system is being introduced. At the same time flexibility is necessary for the inclusion of new ideas and programs.

Development

Step 1. Approval by Government

Since adult literacy/education has broad implications for many departments of government, approval of the goal and objectives by Executive Council would-ensure the inclusion of all relevant departments in its implementation.

Step 2. Mandate Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning to provide leadership.

The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning has chaired the Adult Literacy/Education Steering Committee in the development of this strategy. The Office of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning should continue in the role of leadership and coordination and determine resource allocations.

Step 3. Establish Adult Literacy/Education Implementation Committee reflecting the partnerships used in developing the strategy.

A committee comprised of representatives of community organizations, business, unions, educational institutions, individuals and government departments with a stake in adult literacy/education would oversee the implementation of *A Strategy for Adult Literacy/Education*.

Step 4. Prepare a detailed Implementation Plan.

The detailed Implementation Plan will identify allocation of resources.

By April 1, 1997, the fundamentals of an adult literacy/education system for Prince Edward Island will be determined with:

- key people and organizations participating in the development and approval of components of the Implementation Plan
- interested parties being well informed of progress
- policy and resource details decided.

Step 5. Ongoing evaluation of implementation activities reported to Minister of Higher Education, Training and Adult Learning and other stakeholders.

The Implementation Committee will evaluate progress toward the goal and objectives every three months and communicate such progress with all interested partners.

Implementation

The detailed Implementation Plan will outline clear outcomes, time-frames for activities and resource requirements.

Evaluation

Evaluation will consider both the outcome and process of developing and implementing the Adult Literacy/Education System. However, accountability will be directly measured through outcomes.

Outcome Measurement

Outcome evaluation will be critical and will direct policy development and resource allocation.

Appendices

- A. Reading Skill Levels
- B. Federal/Provincial Funding Levels 1995/96
- C. Proposed Adult Literacy/Education Development Structure
- D. Implementation Plan

Reading Skill Levels

Appendix A

Reading skill levels were developed for the Statistics Canada survey *Reading Skills of Adults in Canada* and are simply points along the functional literacy continuum believed to be helpful in understanding the distribution of literacy skills and in identifying the types of programs required to satisfy the literacy needs of Canadians.

Level 1

Canadians at this level have difficulty dealing with printed materials. They most likely identify themselves as people who cannot read.

Level 2

Canadians at this level can use printed materials for limited purposes only, such as finding a familiar word in a simple text. They would likely recognize themselves as having difficulties with common reading materials.

Level 3

Canadians at this level can use reading materials in a variety of situations, provided the material was simple and clearly laid out, and the tasks involved are not too complicated. While these people generally do not see themselves as having significant reading difficulties, they tend to avoid situations requiring reading.

Level 4

Canadians at this level meet most everyday reading demands. This is a diverse group which exhibits a wide range of skills.

Federal/Provincial Funding Levels 1995-96

Appendix B

Program	Course Costs	Income Support	Total	Number of Adult Learners
HRCs*	\$3,475,552	\$2,905,219	\$6,425,771	1167
Laubach Literacy of Canada	52,200	N/A	52,200	114
NLS** Federal/Provincial literacy initiatives	324,000	N/A	324,000	N/A
Province of P.E.I. Federal/Provincial literacy initiatives	74,500	N/A	74,500	N/A
Province of P.E.I. Adult Night School	126,000	N/A	126,000	225
Employment Enhancement Program	154,928	N/A	+ income support 154,928	945

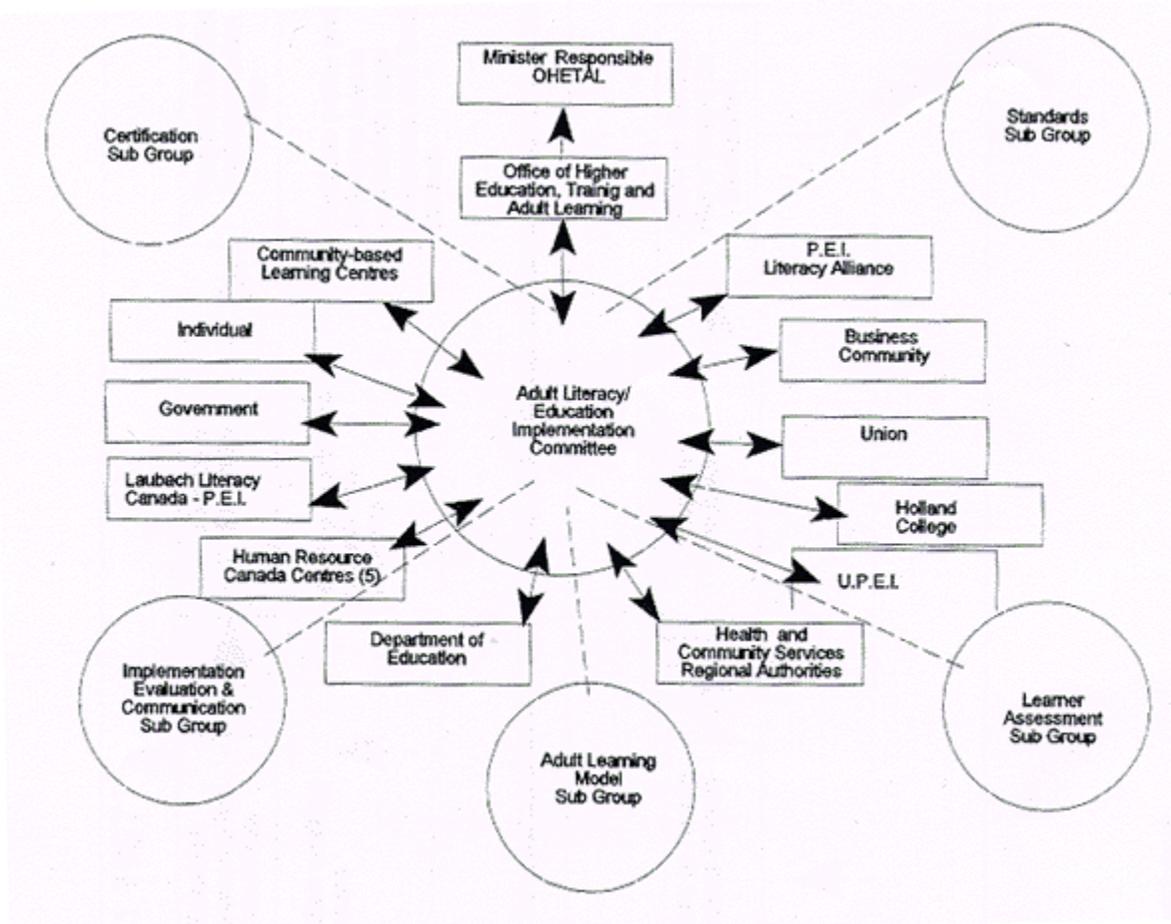
*HRCs - Human Resource Centres

**NLS - National Literacy Secretariat of the Department of Human Resources

Development Canada (The province is expected to match the NLS funds dollar for dollar)

Proposed Adult Literacy/Education Development Structure

Appendix C



Representatives on the Adult Literacy/Education Implementation Committee should have a clear mandate to represent their organization and contribute to decisions of the committee.

Sub Groups will be chaired by a member of the Implementation Committee and draw membership outside the Implementation Committee. Sub Groups will make recommendations to the Implementation Committee for decision.

Implementation Plan

Appendix D

