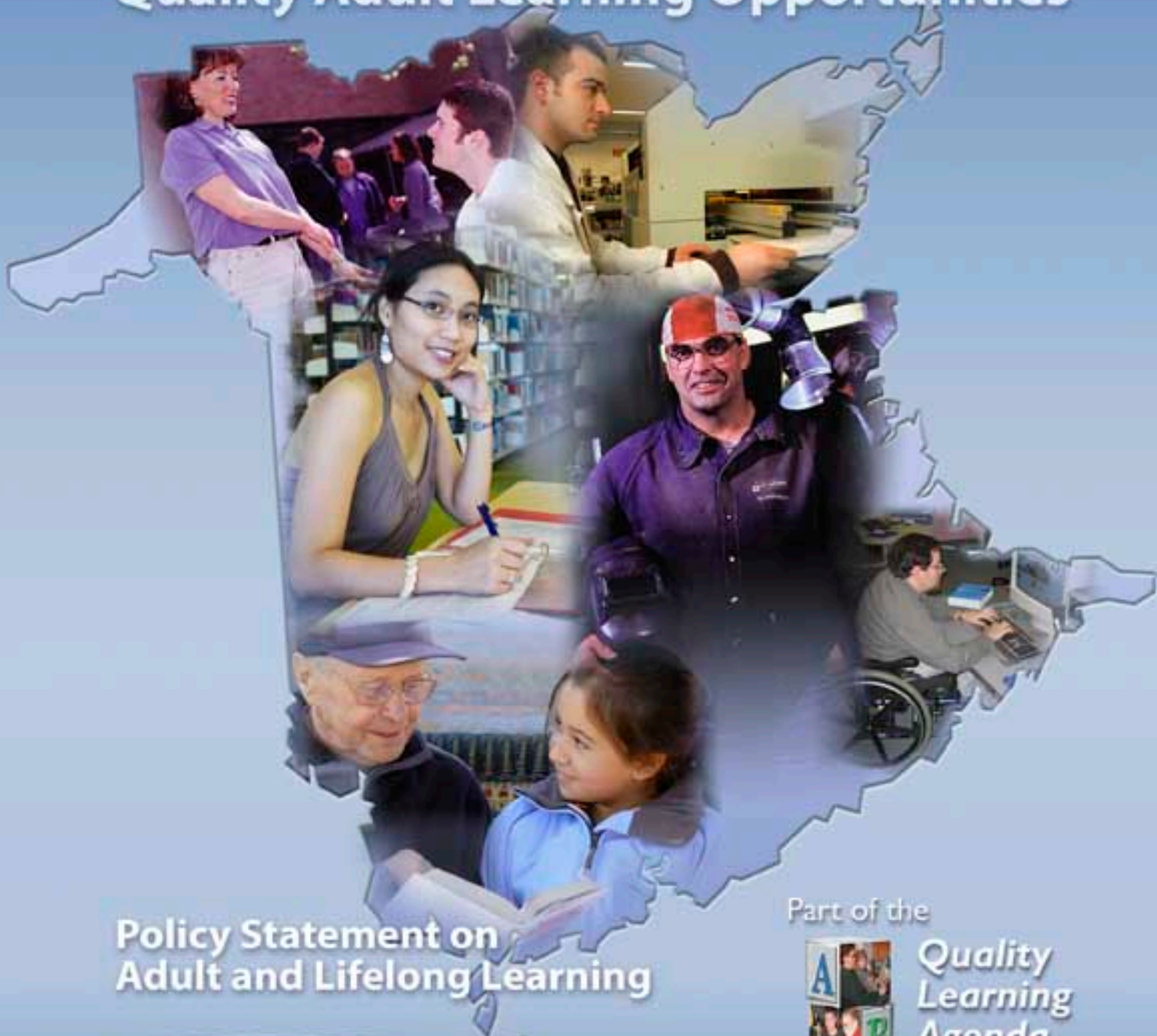




Lifelong Learning

Quality Adult Learning Opportunities



Policy Statement on
Adult and Lifelong Learning

Part of the

Quality
Learning
Agenda





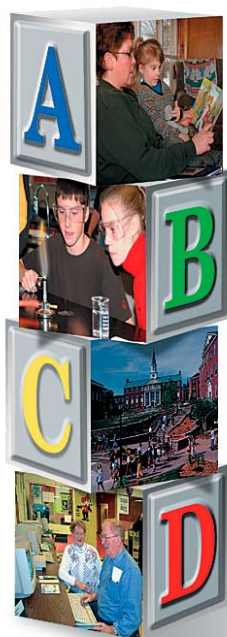
LIFELONG LEARNING:

QUALITY ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

POLICY STATEMENT ON ADULT
AND LIFELONG LEARNING:

**Lifelong Learning:
Quality Adult Learning Opportunities**

Part of the



Quality Learning Agenda

**A Cornerstone of
Greater Opportunity:**

New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan

2002 - 2012



**POLICY STATEMENT ON ADULT
AND LIFELONG LEARNING:**

**LIFELONG LEARNING:
QUALITY ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

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PREMIER'S MESSAGE



Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan

recognizes that our success in achieving prosperity in New Brunswick will only be realized if we invest in people. Our pursuit of prosperity will be strengthened if we make the right choices and invest strategically to ensure New Brunswickers embrace lifelong learning and a sustained learning culture.

Embracing lifelong learning means valuing and supporting learning that takes place throughout our entire lives; learning that will increase our knowledge and skills. This learning can take place in any setting such as at home, at school and in the workplace; and at any stage of life.

A sustained learning culture is one that will take New Brunswick to a prosperous future. It is a society where individuals, families, workplaces, communities, and government embrace lifelong learning and actively engage in learning opportunities.

Continued learning is critical in a knowledge-based economy. We need accessible, quality learning opportunities and learner services so that all New Brunswickers can contribute to the growth of our province, and share in its prosperity.

Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities sets out the policy framework around which to build learning opportunities and develop a sustained learning culture in New Brunswick. Learning will enrich our lives and help us build a stronger and more prosperous province.

Bernard Lord
Premier





MINISTERS' MESSAGE



Margaret-Ann Blaney
Minister of Training and
Employment Development

Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities is a ten-year action plan developed to increase learning opportunities for adult and lifelong learners. The plan contains specific targets and initiatives to support continued learning for all New Brunswickers and help us to achieve prosperity.

In today's knowledge-based economy, learning has never been more important. We will need all New Brunswickers to participate to their fullest in building a strong and prosperous province.

As one of the four stepping stones of the Quality Learning Agenda, Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities will support our overall effort of creating a culture of excellence and lifelong learning. This stepping stone provides a policy framework to increase learning opportunities for learners of all ages, and particularly for adult learners. This framework together with the frameworks developed for K-12, post-secondary education and training, and early childhood development form the complete ten-year plan for the continuum of learning in New Brunswick.

Quality learning opportunities are essential for New Brunswickers to succeed in today's competitive world and for New Brunswick to achieve lasting prosperity. We know, for example, that countries with higher levels of literacy have better health, a higher standard of living, greater civic engagement and a stronger economy.

- Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities is about helping New Brunswickers of all ages access quality learning opportunities.
- Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities is about raising adult literacy levels and empowering New Brunswickers to participate fully in our society.
- Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities is about providing opportunities for adults to continue to learn and acquire the skills they need to succeed in today's workplaces.



Madeleine Dubé
Minister of Education

Our success in creating a culture of lifelong learning in New Brunswick is dependent on the commitment and cooperation of all partners in learning. We will aim high and continue to work with partners using this action plan as a roadmap to ensure we reach our goal.





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VISION FOR THE QUALITY LEARNING AGENDA

“A culture of excellence and high achievement exemplified by innovation and lifelong learning.”

Planning for success and greater opportunity...

Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan is the Province's strategic, ten-year economic growth agenda for the 21st century. *Investing in People* is one of the four key *Building Blocks* that form the foundations of prosperity and competitive advantage for New Brunswick.

The single most important factor in achieving prosperity is the quality of our workforce. In today's information age, knowledge and creativity are the “human capital” in building economic success. An educated, well-trained, skilled, and adaptable labour force helps current business grow and attracts new investment from outside; it is an essential ingredient in high growth economies. Many jurisdictions are investing more and more in worker training and skills development to ensure new investment can be supported by a workforce equipped with the necessary skills to do the job. In today's fast-paced, changing world, learning cannot be static. It must be dynamic and form a part of a lifelong learning culture for New Brunswickers. (Prosperity Plan)

The *Quality Learning Agenda (QLA)* is one of four *Cornerstone Priorities of Investing in People*. The QLA is a strategic framework document that in turn contains four interdependent policy statements, or “stepping stones”, each with its own goal, objectives, 10-year targets and action plans. Together, they form a complete vision for the continuum of learning in New Brunswick over the next decade. These four stepping stones are:



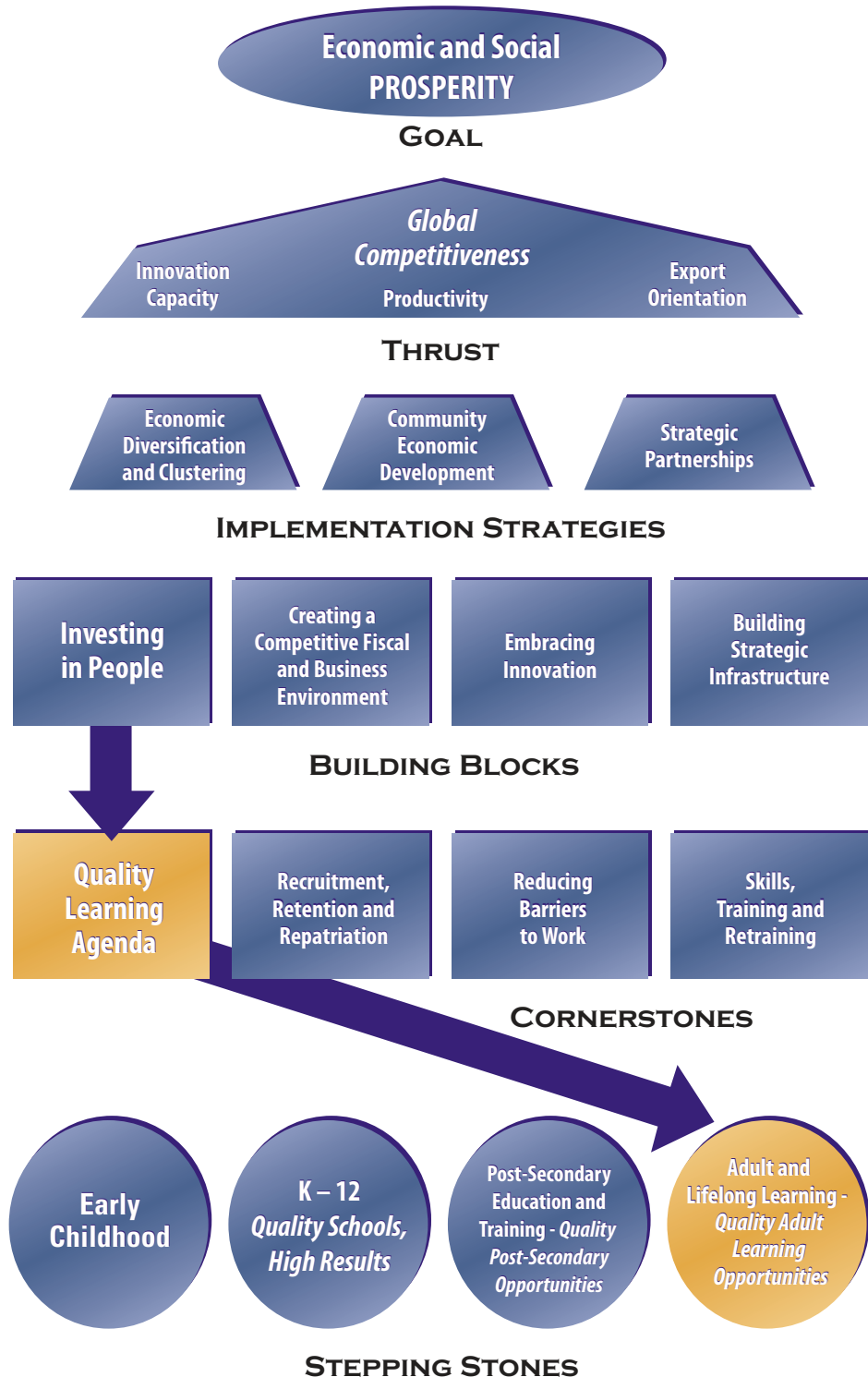
- Early Childhood Development
- Kindergarten to Grade 12 (*Quality Schools, High Results*)
- Post-Secondary Education and Training (*Quality Post-Secondary Opportunities*)
- Adult and Lifelong Learning (*Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities*)

The *Quality Learning Agenda* is being shared with all partners in learning including individuals (learners, parents, workers, and volunteers), institutions (educational and non-educational), businesses, community/service/non-governmental organizations, and governments. The Kindergarten to Grade 12 stepping stone, *Quality Schools, High Results*, was released in April 2003; and *Quality Post-Secondary Opportunities* was released in April 2005. This policy statement *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* is the framework for adult learning. It provides direction for adult learning policy and the provision of related services in New Brunswick.



THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Greater Opportunity: New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan





THE QUALITY LEARNING AGENDA AND THE ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY STATEMENT ARE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING BELIEFS AND VALUES

BELIEFS

- Our ability to create a culture of excellence and high achievement, exemplified by individual and societal innovation, and adult and lifelong learning, is critical to New Brunswick's long-term economic and social success.
- Lifelong learning starts in the home with parents taking an interest in their children's learning.
- Adult and lifelong learning contributes to the development of the whole person and is central to good citizenship and a strong society.
- Adults will learn more and take charge of their continued learning given flexible and relevant learning opportunities and appropriate supports.
- Adult and lifelong learning initiatives must be learner-centred in design and delivery.
- An informed and literate population is essential to New Brunswick's social and economic strength.

VALUES

Access

Learners need access to the services, programs, and materials that support their learning. Supports that are affordable and are available at convenient times and in flexible ways help sustain a culture of lifelong learning.

Opportunity

Adult and lifelong learning takes place in many settings. Educational institutions, public libraries, community access centres, communities, workplaces, and governments all have a role to play and can provide access to valuable learning and training opportunities.

Responsibility

Adult learners will take responsibility for their continued learning given the appropriate supports. These learners will pass on their value and love of learning to their children, helping them to achieve.

Quality

Programs and services for adult learners will be based on research and best practices in the field of adult education. Excellence, innovation and achievement are crucial to creating and sustaining a culture of lifelong learning in New Brunswick.



Community

Rich in culture and heritage, our communities play a critical role in responding to local needs; shaping the character and priorities of the individuals living there, and creating a supportive local environment for adult learners.

Diversity

The Province of New Brunswick encourages diversity by welcoming and respecting the wide range of differences among people, including, but not limited to race, colour, creed, culture, religion, place of origin, sex, disability, age, social condition, marital status, sexual orientation, and family status.

Accountability

New Brunswickers have the right to be informed about how well their learning and training organizations and institutions are doing relative to the learning goals and standards that have been set, and to expect that decisions about future directions will be based on sound information and evidence.

Equity

Public funds allocated to adult and lifelong learning will be distributed equitably to ensure maximum educational benefit for all New Brunswickers.

Official Languages

The Province of New Brunswick offers quality adult and lifelong learning opportunities in both official languages. This reflects the Province's respect for the preservation and promotion of its two official linguistic communities.



PARTNERS IN ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Our success in creating a culture of lifelong learning in New Brunswick is dependent on the commitment and cooperation of all partners in learning. While the provincial government's role is to focus and mobilize resources to realize this vision, it is partners sharing the vision who will make the difference. It is only through strong partnerships that we will achieve "a culture of excellence and high achievement exemplified by innovation and lifelong learning" in New Brunswick.

The main roles and responsibilities of the key partners are summarized on the following page. While sharing common objectives, each brings a different perspective to the pursuit of quality learning.





PARTNERS IN ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Adult Learners

- Pursue every opportunity to learn, innovate and create in all aspects of life at home, at work and in the community
- Understand the connection between adult and lifelong learning, and their own prosperity and active participation in society
- Take advantage of learning resources and support services
- Encourage children to become lifelong learners

Communities

- Provide learning opportunities locally, where people can access them easily
- Contribute time and resources to support dynamic and effective learning activities
- Respond to local needs and cultural differences
- Provide opportunities for people to network and share knowledge

Public Libraries

- Provide free and equitable access to library and information services, programs, resources and computers for New Brunswickers of all ages
- Offer a wide range of resources in various formats (print, audio-visual, electronic)
- Facilitate higher literacy in the province by promoting the value of reading and access to reading resources
- Provide lifelong learning opportunities
- Keep pace with the evolving learning needs of society

Post-Secondary Institutions

- Increase participation in post-secondary education and training by improving accessibility and inclusiveness for adult learners
- Provide positive and effective learner-centred learning environments
- Acknowledge, recognize and value adult learners' prior learning and experience
- Adapt programs to meet the ever-changing needs of society and the economy
- Recognize the importance of learners completing their post-secondary education and training
- Provide learners with opportunities to transfer formal credits between post-secondary institutions
- Provide quality post-secondary education and training opportunities

Workplaces

- Employers contribute time and resources to support a dynamic and effective learning environment, invest in upgrading employees' and their own skills, and actively participate in the development of relevant education and training opportunities
- Employers ensure workers are prepared and able to adapt to technological change in the workplace
- Employees take advantage of workplace learning and training opportunities
- Employee representatives respond to workers' learning needs

Organizations, Agencies and Associations

- Contribute expertise to support skills training and skills upgrading, develop well-defined competency requirements and encourage professional development opportunities
- Provide learning opportunities to expand the scope of lifelong learning
- Respond to community learning needs

Governments

- Provide the necessary organizational and policy supports for the provision of programs and services to adult learners
- Ensure skills certification services provided by the Province are of the highest quality
- Develop strategic partnerships among communities, post-secondary institutions, organizations, the private sector, and other orders of government to pursue common learning objectives
- Support the development of a social and economic environment in which learning and education are valued and pursued by people of all ages



LIFELONG LEARNING: QUALITY ADULT LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Adult and Lifelong Learning Stepping Stone

Goal

New Brunswickers embrace lifelong learning and a sustained learning culture

To achieve this goal New Brunswickers will need to embrace lifelong learning at all levels, with individuals, families, workplaces, and communities receiving the benefits - better health, a higher standard of living, greater civic engagement, and a stronger economy.



Lifelong Learning

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines lifelong learning as “all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with an aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.”¹ Features of the OECD concept² for lifelong learning are:

- A Systemic View - Lifelong learning covers the entire lifespan and includes “all forms of formal and informal learning.”
- Centrality of the Learner- The learner is the focus rather than the institution.
- Motivation - “The motivation to learn is an essential foundation for learning that continues throughout life. It requires attention to developing the capacity for ‘learning to learn’ through self-paced and self-directed learning.”
- Multiple Objectives of Education Policy - The priorities associated with “the multiple goals of education - such as personal development, knowledge development, economic, social and cultural objectives” may change over time.

Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities is based on the Province’s commitment to:

- Focus on the learner and successful outcomes that will help individuals reach their goals.
- Engage more New Brunswickers in lifelong learning.
- Build strong partnerships with learners, communities, employers, other orders of government, educational institutions, and organizations and agencies.
- Promote quality learning opportunities that are accessible and flexible so that adults of all ages, cultures and all abilities can integrate learning into their lives.

¹ OECD Education Working Paper No. 3 (EDU/WKP(2003)1

² OECD *Observer* Policy Brief, February 2004.



ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Three of the four stepping stones of the *Quality Learning Agenda* place strong emphasis on the attainment of excellence in the education and training of children, youth and young adults and establish the foundation which is essential for securing New Brunswick's future prosperity. The *Quality Learning Agenda* establishes clear goals, supporting policies, action plans and high standards for meeting these responsibilities for the development of our youth. However the agenda is not complete and cannot be fully successful without also addressing the learning needs of New Brunswick's adult population.

There are two compelling reasons for developing the Adult and Lifelong Learning stepping stone, an ambitious agenda specifically focused on adult learning:



1. We will succeed in our educational goals for children and youth by supporting efforts within an enhanced culture of learning for all throughout life. Increasing the number of adults who communicate the value of education -- and visibly demonstrate it by pursuing their own learning -- will have an immeasurable positive impact on the children and youth in their lives.
2. We will meet New Brunswick's Prosperity Plan goals for increased innovation, productivity and the development of a knowledge-based economy by achieving significant gains in the skills development of our adult working age population. Current demographics, reflecting the facts of a lower birthrate and continued out-migration, indicate we will not have a sufficient younger population entering the workforce to meet current and impending skills shortages. Policies and plans to support increased immigration, inclusiveness and repatriation will contribute to the resolution of this issue, but will not completely resolve the skills shortage. It is therefore imperative that a new focus be placed on adult learning and that policy, plans and partnerships be developed to increase adult learning opportunities and facilitate access to them.

There are distinguishing features about adult learning that pose different challenges for developing a strategy that will respond effectively to varying learning needs. One is that adult learning is generally voluntary and self motivated. While further (post-secondary) education and training is not mandatory, there are strong arguments for continuing the learning process:

- Individuals benefit. Adults with higher level skills are more likely to be employed and maintain healthier lifestyles.
- Society benefits. Involved and actively learning individuals make for an engaged citizenry. An engaged citizenry contributes to all facets of life: health, education, community development, the environment, the democratic process, and arts and culture.
- The economy is stronger. Future job projections for New Brunswick indicate that the majority of new jobs will require highly-skilled workers, most with post-secondary education.



Another distinguishing feature of adult learning is the learners themselves. Adult learners have a wealth of life experience which serves as a base for new learning and expect learning to be practical and connected to their goals. They have commitments and responsibilities to family, work, and community and have many demands on their time.

Adult learners are a diverse group of people with different backgrounds, needs and goals. Despite these differences there are some characteristics that many New Brunswickers share. Approximately 56% of the province's population, over the age of 16, have low literacy skills. (Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, 2003) In addition, 34% of New Brunswickers aged 20 years and older have less than a high school education and many more lack formal credentials (2001 Census).

One way to view education and training is as a distinct sequential process that begins in kindergarten, runs through high school and ends following completion of post-secondary pursuits. According to this perspective, learning follows a well-defined path. The concept of lifelong learning is different from this view because it acknowledges that an individual's learning, the knowledge and experience supporting their abilities and competence, is much more broadly and continuously acquired. Lifelong learning includes all the learning that a person does in their lifetime, much of which occurs outside the period from kindergarten to completion of post-secondary studies.

The Fifth International Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg, Germany in 1997 "encouraged a world-wide commitment to adult education and lifelong learning."³ Canada was a participant in the conference and a signatory to The Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning.

The Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education states, in part:

"Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult education encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.

The *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* policy statement provides a framework around which to build learning opportunities for New Brunswickers. This is a framework for assisting learners, and in particular adult learners, who want to pursue purposeful learning – regardless of whether they want to improve their literacy skills, access other learning and training opportunities, pursue professional development, or acquire credentials. The Province will work with partners to build on this framework to create quality learning opportunities for New Brunswickers in the coming years.

³ Report of the Canadian Delegation on the Mid-Term Review of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (Feb 2004).



STRENGTHS

New Brunswick has many strengths upon which to build a culture of lifelong learning. It is an officially bilingual province with government services available in both official languages. It is a province where people and communities are involved, working together through partnerships and networks to support learning. And New Brunswick is a province that embraces new technology.

Partnerships are helping New Brunswickers access more learning and training opportunities. Apprenticeship training, for example, is successful because of the full support and participation of three partners: the apprentice, the employer and the Province. Articulation agreements that increase flexibility for learners to take courses at the New Brunswick Community College and at universities are in place because of the cooperative efforts of the learning institutions. The Province is a member of the Atlantic Consortium responsible for developing the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (ALKC). The ALKC is one of five regionally-based knowledge centres across Canada and has been assigned to the University of New Brunswick.

Various provincial networks that support learning are established in New Brunswick: an extensive network of English and French, private occupational trainers and public post-secondary institutions, community colleges, online and private universities; a network of community-based organizations and volunteers dedicated to the provision of quality adult literacy training and a consultative body with knowledge, experience and expertise on literacy issues; a province-wide network of not-for-profit Community Access Centres, operating with the help of volunteers in over 100 communities; a provincial network of 62 public libraries and four bookmobiles that provides a wide range of library and information services onsite and online through long standing community and government partnerships; and a network of community economic development agencies with established networks and working relationships with employers, government departments, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions.

In addition to strong partnerships and extensive networks, the Province has a streamlined and client-centred approach to assisting New Brunswickers in obtaining long-term sustainable employment and a progressive approach to integrating new technology in the province. As well, New Brunswick has developed considerable expertise in e-learning with post-secondary institutions, private sector companies and government agencies that have extensive knowledge and experience in the area of online learning products.



CHALLENGES

The demands of the economy and of society at large for higher levels of skills and learning are driving individuals and institutions to recognize that learning cannot stop with formal schooling. In order to ensure our competitiveness and to meet our goal of a society that embraces lifelong learning, New Brunswick must address a number of challenges that remain despite significant investments by government.

New Brunswick's population is small and is declining. The 2001 Census shows that the number of youth in high school has been falling steadily since 1981. The Census also indicates that half of the province's population (49.6%) lives in rural areas, which presents a geographic challenge to providing residents with lifelong learning opportunities.

Jobs in today's knowledge-based economy require higher levels of skills and education than was required in the past. Meeting this need is a challenge given that seventeen percent of the province's population, over the age of 25, has less than a grade 9 education, and adult literacy levels are low (among the lowest in Canada).

There are also a number of challenges associated with the labour market in New Brunswick: a skills imbalance and shortage in certain trades and professions, due in part to an aging workforce; a need to better match skills training with employment opportunities; a demand for ongoing skills training and upgrading for existing members of our workforce; a significant number of working New Brunswickers who are marginally employed; and a labour force participation rate below the national average

In addition to these challenges there is a need for a larger proportion of New Brunswickers to access language training in one or the other of New Brunswick's official languages.



THE 10-YEAR PLAN

Getting to where we want to be - a lifelong learning culture that supports learners of all ages and helps adults to achieve their goals through quality learning opportunities – will take time. It is, however, an attainable goal, and one we will reach by working together. Through coordinating our efforts with a strategic focus, and strengthening partnerships, we will continue to build a lifelong learning culture in New Brunswick.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE IN 10 YEARS

In ten years we want New Brunswick to be a province where learning is highly valued; where all individuals have opportunities to pursue and realize their learning goals. We envision quality community supported lifelong learning opportunities available throughout the province. We believe that all New Brunswickers can benefit from learning that extends throughout their lives given the right opportunities and appropriate supports. The projected demand over the next ten years for an increasingly skilled workforce, means more New Brunswickers will need opportunities to achieve their potential for learning and skill development. To meet this challenge we will require contributions from all New Brunswickers including those who are sometimes excluded from participating in skills training and learning initiatives, such as individuals with physical disabilities, members of First Nations communities and new or recent immigrants. In ten years we expect far greater numbers of New Brunswickers will be contributing fully to and sharing in our prosperity.



We will gauge our overall success in realizing *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* by measuring our progress in reaching the ambitious ten-year targets outlined in this policy statement. The targets reflect a wide range of activity required to build a lifelong learning culture that supports learners of all ages and helps adults to achieve their goals through quality learning opportunities. By setting “targets that reach” we will “stretch” ourselves as a province to achieve them.



TEN-YEAR TARGETS FOR ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING

The following targets represent a broad range of learning activities and in some cases are linked to new development areas. While monitoring and reporting on progress of learning outcomes is challenging it is possible through collaboration. The Province will work with partners to support knowledge exchange in the following target areas:

Targets	Indicates
<p>A Lifelong Learning Culture</p> <p>New Brunswick's participation rate in adult education and learning will increase by 25%. *</p> <p>New Brunswick will rank among the top five provinces in Canada in the proportion of its residents with post-secondary credentials.</p>	<p>New Brunswickers of all ages value learning and education.</p> <p>New Brunswickers are choosing to participate in and are successfully completing post-secondary studies.</p>
<p>Adult Literacy</p> <p>New Brunswick's adult literacy levels will increase to meet the Canadian average.</p>	<p>New Brunswickers recognize higher level literacy skills help them to participate more fully in society and in the knowledge-based economy.</p>
<p>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition</p> <p>New Brunswick will have 80% of participants in the Community Adult Learning Program also participating in a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) process.</p> <p>New Brunswick post-secondary institutions will increase the number of recognized credit transfers among institutions.</p>	<p>Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition is a process that expands adult learners' opportunities.</p> <p>Credit transfers are providing more choices and flexibility for New Brunswickers who wish to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities.</p>
<p>Workplace Essential Skills</p> <p>The number of workplace essential skills certificates granted will be comparable to the number of General Educational Development (GED) certificates issued.</p>	<p>New Brunswickers recognize that workplace essential skills are valuable skills.</p>
<p>New Brunswick Public Library Service</p> <p>In 2012, New Brunswick will exceed the national average for the percentage of the total population that are registered public library users.</p> <p>New Brunswick will meet the national average investment per capita on public library collections annually.</p>	<p>The New Brunswick Public Library Service is responding to New Brunswickers' needs.</p> <p>New Brunswickers have access to quality library resources in order to pursue their lifelong learning goals.</p>

* New research will capture New Brunswickers' participation and will establish a baseline on which to measure progress.



OBJECTIVES

In order for New Brunswickers to benefit from the Adult and Lifelong Learning stepping stone, we will work with our partners to achieve the following six objectives:

- I. Increase Participation Levels in Adult and Lifelong Learning in New Brunswick
- II. Improve Literacy Skills of Adults in New Brunswick
- III. Increase Learning and Employment Opportunities Through the Use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
- IV. Increase Opportunities For New Brunswickers Through Workplace Essential Skills Training and Expanded Certification Services
- V. Increase Learning and Training Opportunities for Working Adults
- VI. Improve Access to Public Library Services to Support Lifelong Learning

These objectives form the basis of the *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* policy statement. Each objective is supported by specific action priorities and targets. By setting targets and measuring performance we will monitor our progress in achieving these objectives.

As progress is made over the ten-year span of *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* and as needs evolve, the actions described within this policy statement will also evolve. We will support these objectives through the allocation of financial and other resources in partnership with stakeholders.



OBJECTIVE I.

INCREASE PARTICIPATION LEVELS IN ADULT AND LIFELONG LEARNING IN NEW BRUNSWICK



To attain “a lifelong learning culture that supports learners of all ages and helps adults to achieve their goals through quality learning opportunities” New Brunswickers must have access to a broad range of learning opportunities. Many learning opportunities, notably those for young people, are provided by long standing publicly-funded programs and services. These programs and services are accessible to the public through an established provincial infrastructure which includes the K-12 public school system, the public post-secondary education and training system, and the New Brunswick Public Library Service “(NBPLS). In contrast, adult and lifelong learning opportunities, which are extensive and often fall outside of the established provincial system, may not be easily accessible to all learners.

Research shows that a significant number of New Brunswickers are not participating in education or training opportunities. A Canadian study⁴ found that close to three quarters of adults living in New Brunswick were not participating in adult education and training (either job-related or for personal interest). An international study, the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2003, found that although participation rates have improved in Canada since 1994, half of adults in this country do not participate in organized education and training. Research also shows that adults with more education pursue more learning, both formal and informal, and that participation in education and training declines with age (both in terms of hours of participation and participation rates).

We will promote learner-centred approaches that support effective learning experiences

Learning takes place throughout life and a significant portion of it occurs in the adult years. Adult learners are a diverse group of individuals often with family, financial and employment responsibilities and they have different learning needs and goals. A broad range of resources and services is required to help them achieve their personal learning goals.

Learner-centred approaches that acknowledge these differences and that are built on high quality standards are more effective and produce better outcomes than more traditional program or institution-centred approaches. The Province is developing learner-centred approaches that will enhance New Brunswickers’ learning experiences. It is proceeding with “blended learning” for the government-supported adult literacy training program and a course-based approach for the New Brunswick Community College network. New Brunswick universities are also making progress in this area and will continue to support this learning approach.

⁴ Adult Education and Training Survey (AETS) 1997



“Blended learning” is a learning approach that has flexibility and can be adapted to different learning needs and styles. This approach uses different formats, media and methods to achieve the best learning outcomes. The “blended” approach for adult literacy training draws on the strengths of different formats such as classrooms, online learning communities and web-based tutorials; different media options including books, videotapes, web sites, and online chat rooms; and a variety of methods such as working in face-to-face groups and one-on-one tutoring. This approach can be used in many settings including in post-secondary institutions.

The New Brunswick Community College (NBCC-CCNB) network which has been delivering training for the most part through a program-based approach is in the process of changing to a course-based format. Learners will have more opportunity to study part-time, combine work and study, and customize their learning plan. It will also be easier to transfer credits in and out of NBCC-CCNB. Course-based approaches offer learners more flexibility than traditional program-based models.

The Province will continue to promote learning approaches that focus on learners’ needs for increased accessibility, flexibility, choice, and transferability.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Promote learner-centred programs and services.
- Encourage learning institutions to offer flexible programs to meet the needs of adult learners who have other obligations, such as work and family.
- Encourage “blended learning” approaches to learning and training.
- Promote the development of quality online learning and training resources.
- Support improved access to learning opportunities for people of all ages.
- Explore new ways to support adult learners, such as learning mentors.
- Promote a wide variety of extended learning opportunities available through New Brunswick universities and community colleges.
- Explore approaches for granting dual credits, between secondary schools and post-secondary educational institutions.
- The New Brunswick Community College Network will continue to implement its course-based model.

We will provide support to lifelong learners through enhanced information and career development services

Information and career development services have traditionally been more accessible to students enrolled at educational institutions, and individuals receiving government income support. Services are offered to these groups through post-secondary institutions and government departments. Both the K-12 and post-secondary education and training components of the Quality Learning Agenda contain targets, initiatives and actions which focus



on preparing youth and their parents for the transition from secondary to post-secondary education and training. This includes improving guidance programs, career counselling, enrichment and technical-vocational courses, and post-secondary information for parents and students. We will build on these actions, through a broader approach to support a culture of lifelong learning in New Brunswick.

The Province acknowledges the diversity of lifelong learners and is working to enhance its services. For example, government staff have been trained to help them better serve clients with learning disabilities; counsellors can now screen for learning disabilities, refer individuals for diagnostic assessments, and provide the appropriate assistance. The Province will continue this work, in collaboration with partners - communities, employers, employers' organizations, trade unions, professional associations and other interested groups - to provide lifelong learners with a range of quality learning support services.

Career development services such as counselling and educational services help learners make more informed decisions about their future. These services help learners identify and validate their knowledge, skills and capabilities; understand labour market opportunities; cope with change and transition; establish personal learning plans and find the best pathway to achieve their goals. Lifelong learner services will empower individuals to become more self-sufficient learners.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Review existing career development services.
- Collaborate with partners to deliver a range of services to serve the diverse needs of lifelong learners.
- Encourage learners to be active participants in lifelong learning and career planning.
- Promote learning self-sufficiency.
- Develop tools using information and communication technology (ICT) that provide flexibility and support learners' independence.
- Support the use of personal learning plans.
- Work with partners to enhance career development services offered by post-secondary institutions.
- Increase accessibility to learning support services through flexible and innovative approaches.
- Integrate learning support services with adult learner services such as PLAR, literacy training, workplace essential skills training, and apprenticeship training.



We will continue to support online learning in New Brunswick through public access to the Internet

Changing technology and the shift to a knowledge-based economy have heightened the need to learn and keep up-to-date. Online learning adds flexibility and convenience, and increases learning opportunities. It is also



an important element in a “blended learning” approach where it is used in combination with other learning resources, technologies and practices. New Brunswick has kept pace with new technology, investing in Broadband technology.

The Community Access Network provides public access to the Internet and operates through a partnership among governments, the private sector and community groups. These centres are grass roots, not-for-profit, community-run organizations. They have been operating in more than 100 communities throughout in the province with assistance from Industry Canada and the Government of New Brunswick.

The New Brunswick Public Library Service, through its network of 62 public libraries, provides free access to e-library services to support online learning across the province. NBPLS provides free public access to five regional training labs as well as province-wide access to online resources such as the provincial catalogue, virtual reference library and reference databases.

The Department of Training and Employment Development has recently developed a new online training program for General Educational Development (GED) preparation. The Province will work with adult learners, communities, volunteers, post-secondary institutions and other stakeholders to ensure that the availability of public Internet access continues to meet the needs of learners, and in particular those of adult learners.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Review online learning products available at Community Access Centres, and develop new online learning products and services to meet the needs of New Brunswickers.
- Support adult learners through expanded opportunities for online GED preparation and e-learning.
- Provide access to e-government services including online job searches, inquiries, applications, and payments.
- Explore innovative partnerships to ensure the sustainability of Community Access Centres.

We will develop a sustainable model for adult learning centres in New Brunswick

Adult learners require a broad range of resources and services to make the most of available learning opportunities and to effectively plan and navigate the many possible routes or learning pathways that lead to their learning goals. Once individuals have begun to identify their goals, personal learning maps or plans can begin to be developed. These maps are useful tools, containing information such as available options and relevant learning resources.



Learning supports are available to adults in New Brunswick through the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. The Province wants to increase learners' accessibility to these resources and services through adult learning centres so that information, guidance, and online learning tools, for example, are easier to locate and use.

We will work together with learners, educational institutions, communities, employers and other stakeholders to develop a model for adult learning centres that is sustainable and will meet the many needs of adult learners. The model will include integrated supports and services and will be focused on quality, flexibility and innovation. It will be piloted in several regions of the province with more centres to follow, based on the results of the pilot projects and the level of stakeholder support.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Review existing resources and services available to adult learners in New Brunswick.
- Review best practices for adult learning centres in other jurisdictions.
- Develop learning partnerships with communities and employers.
- Establish resource requirements for adult learning centres.
- Integrate adult learner services.
- Develop innovative and flexible approaches to delivering career development and other services that respond to regional needs, including exploring the potential use of public school infrastructure in various locations to support community learning centres.
- Within two years, the Department of Training and Employment Development will pilot four adult learning centres and then adjust the model based on results of the pilot projects.

We will increase access to lifelong learning opportunities by improving affordability for adult learners

Financial assistance, that is relevant to the changing learning environment, is important to enabling more New Brunswickers to pursue learning opportunities. The Province recognizes the value of investing in education, and in April 2005 the New Brunswick Tuition "Tax Cash Back" was introduced. This new tax rebate for post-secondary students, is part of the *Quality Post-Secondary Opportunities* stepping stone of the Quality Learning Agenda.

The departments of Education, and Training and Employment Development will continue to monitor the emerging needs of adult learners with respect to the affordability of valuable learning opportunities

Specific actions we will take include:

- Review current acts, regulations and policy to ensure that they respond to the needs of adult learners.
- Explore other mechanisms to encourage New Brunswickers to pursue learning opportunities.





OBJECTIVE II.

IMPROVE LITERACY SKILLS OF ADULTS IN NEW BRUNSWICK

Recent studies comparing literacy and numeracy levels to economic prosperity across a large number of countries clearly indicate a link between the two; those populated with people with higher literacy and numeracy levels do better economically. As literacy and numeracy levels rise so does economic (and social) prosperity. Improved literacy also benefits individuals and society in general. Adults with higher literacy skills are more likely to be employed, have healthier lifestyles and are better able to help their children with their studies, and to participate in civic life. The strong link between literacy and health is well documented and is another reason for investing in adult literacy in New Brunswick. We are committed to the long-term goal of providing access to all New Brunswickers who wish to pursue adult literacy training.

Almost sixty percent of New Brunswickers over the age of 16 are functioning at low literacy levels⁵ with close to half of these individuals at the lowest level. In addition to investing in early childhood development and K-12 education it is also crucial to address the problem of low education and literacy levels in adults. A greater emphasis on improving adult literacy levels is needed now.

We will implement a revised model for quality literacy training

The Community Academic Services Program (CASP) has been the main delivery method for government-supported adult literacy training in New Brunswick since 1991. This community-based program has offered training from grade level 1 to 9 as well as General Educational Development (GED) preparation. Training has been delivered in over 100 locations throughout New Brunswick through the efforts of a strong network of community-based organizations, non-governmental literacy organizations (literacy NGOs) and volunteers, dedicated to the provision of quality adult literacy training.

The Province has consulted with literacy NGOs over the past several years to find ways to improve adult literacy training services in New Brunswick. A report, commissioned by Provincial Partners in Literacy (PPL), offered recommendations for improving literacy levels in the province which included: recognizing adult literacy as an integral component of lifelong learning, consolidating funding and delivery mechanisms in one department, and ensuring the changing needs and circumstances affecting adult literacy are addressed.

Within one year, the Government of New Brunswick will implement a revised model for quality literacy training, the new *Community Adult Learning Program*. The Province recently consolidated the full responsibility for adult literacy in the Department of Training and Employment

⁵ Literacy Levels 1-5, as defined by the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS)



Development (TED); this department will continue to work with literacy partners to provide high quality adult literacy training in New Brunswick. The revised model will include a blended learning approach in which individuals will have opportunities to learn in one-on-one and group settings, and to use electronic and paper-based learning resources. Integrating this approach in adult literacy programs will improve learning opportunities for adult learners. Blended learning will provide literacy instructors with additional tools to increase learning experiences in basic reading, writing, mathematics, and information and communication technology skills.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Develop and implement new quality standards to support high quality adult literacy training; including standards for instruction, instructor qualifications, results measurement and reporting, and learning facilities.
- Encourage professional development for literacy instructors.
- Support the establishment of community based regional adult literacy committees to oversee the delivery of adult literacy training services.
- Focus on learner-centred services and training to improve learner outcomes and develop more effective learners.
- Continue to evaluate online learning and assessment tools and incorporate them into program delivery.
- Use an integrated approach to promoting and delivering adult learner services and adult literacy training.
- Facilitate the learner's transition from community-based literacy training to further education and training and stable employment.
- Encourage partnerships between health and literacy organizations.
- Within one year we will establish standards for initial learner assessment and academic placement.
- Within one year we will establish standards for curriculum, resource materials and testing.
- Within two years we will establish standards for instructor qualifications and experience, using a "competency-based" approach.
- Within two years we will provide online assessment services.



We will focus on raising adult literacy levels so that New Brunswickers can participate more fully in the labour force

Canadian workers require higher literacy skills than they did in the past. Research shows that the industries that have experienced growth are the ones whose employees have relatively high levels of skills. The indications are that adults at literacy level 3 and above are more likely to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth.



The Province will work with adult learners, Literacy New Brunswick Inc. (LNBI), Provincial Partners in Literacy (PPL), New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS), communities, employers, and other stakeholders to raise literacy levels in New Brunswick.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Work to assist adults who are in the workforce, or who want to enter the workforce, increase their literacy skills.
- Encourage training for literacy volunteers.
- Introduce new modes of delivery, such as online training, to provide a blended learning approach to literacy training.
- Incorporate workplace essential skills in literacy training.
- Collaborate with literacy groups to increase participation in adult literacy training.
- Recognize contributions of volunteers.



We will encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to support workplace adult literacy training

An increase in technology is driving the need for workers with higher literacy levels. As new technology is introduced in the workplace those with lower literacy skills are at the greatest risk. As an example, individuals with low skills may have difficulty following training manuals and may lack the literacy skills they need to participate in training sessions.

New Brunswick's employers have much to gain from developing a more skilled workforce. Studies have shown that workers with higher literacy skills contribute to overall economic growth rates by adding flexibility, productivity and a greater capacity to compete nationally and globally.

Employers can be instrumental in helping their workers reach higher literacy levels, and some are already involved.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Assist small and medium-sized enterprises deliver work-based literacy training that meets employers' and workers' needs.
- Encourage flexible working arrangements that accommodate workers' learning needs.
- Work with communities, employers, employer groups, unions, public libraries, Community Access Centres and others to improve delivery of literacy training for adults in the workforce.
- Encourage employers to create a "literacy-rich" work environment that provides workers with opportunities to use and improve their literacy skills.
- Recognize employers that are committed to helping their employees raise their literacy levels.



OBJECTIVE III.

INCREASE LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE USE OF PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION

Our goal to compete in a knowledge-based economy requires that the province expand the size and the skill level of its workforce. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process that we will use to help us reach this goal. By supporting and advancing PLAR in the province, we will ensure that more New Brunswickers are well positioned to participate in the new economy.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

“a systematic process that involves the identification, documentation, assessment and recognition of learning (i.e., skills, knowledge and values). This learning may be acquired through formal and informal study, including work and life experience, training, independent study, volunteer work, travel, hobbies and family experiences. Recognition of prior learning can be used toward the requirements of education and training programs; occupational and/or professional certification; labour market entry and organizational and human resource capacity building.” (The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment)

Current research shows that many adults have little understanding of the range and depth of the skills and learning they have acquired through their life and work experience, as well as through formal education and training. They may not see that a great deal of their learning is transferable to the new challenges and opportunities they are facing. PLAR is a process that enables individuals to identify their learning strengths and gaps fully and precisely.

Both access to and progress within post-secondary education and training programs can be enhanced by effective use of prior learning assessment and recognition methodologies. The use of PLAR can enhance access to post-secondary education and training for adult and lifelong learners by facilitating program entry for individuals who lack formal credentials for eligibility but have the capabilities to succeed.

Collaborations between the provincial government and private and public learning and training institutions will ensure the success of PLAR initiatives. The establishment of PLAR as a priority began in *Post-Secondary Opportunities*, the post-secondary education and training stepping stone of the Quality Learning Agenda which was released earlier this year. This included a commitment to create a centralized approach to PLAR. It also includes working with public and private post-secondary institutions to foster sustained continuing education programs in New Brunswick.



We will continue to build upon these actions through ensuring the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition process recognizes lifelong learning in concrete ways and is consistent with the values and beliefs presented in this policy statement. Adults who participate in PLAR activities will gain an appreciation of the value of their learning. When this participation includes effective career development services such as counseling, they will begin to take charge of their learning. The process will help adults become more self-sufficient as they learn to recognize and promote their assets; assess their needs relative to training and employment goals; and access services and programs to meet those needs.



Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition has two components. The assessment component includes a learning assessment and a validation of the learning that has taken place. The second component, *recognition*, is recognition of the learning by the learner and also by a third party, such as a learning institution or an employer.

PLAR is both time and resource efficient. By identifying and validating a person's skills and knowledge and comparing these to standards for training or job skills, PLAR can reduce the need for repeating courses or elements of training. PLAR can provide a reliable means of assessing and matching skills to workplace needs and it can help to establish a basis for career development and educational planning.

By working together the government, post-secondary institutions, employers, unions, and other stakeholders can advance the use of PLAR so that learning, training and employment opportunities will be more accessible to New Brunswickers.

Another important and related process is credit transfer. This process increases learning and employment opportunities as it allows for seamless mobility between post-secondary institutions. This is essential to increasing the participation of New Brunswickers in the knowledge-based economy. It is also essential to developing a culture of adult and lifelong learning by eliminating barriers for adult New Brunswickers to continue their post-secondary education and training experiences.

We will increase access to PLAR assessment services

Increasing access to PLAR assessment services is essential to improving access to learning opportunities for adults who have relevant experience but lack formal credentials. Adults who complete the assessment component can move on to training opportunities knowing that their prior learning has been taken into account.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Review existing PLAR assessment methods and tools, including those piloted by the Departments of Training and Employment Development and Family and Community Services, as well as those used in other jurisdictions.



- Use best practices to develop prior learning assessment methods for use in provincial government programs and services.
- Ensure provincial government prior learning assessment services are delivered and/or managed by certified PLAR practitioners.
- Within three years the Department of Training and Employment Development (TED) will integrate PLAR assessment services with training initiatives in the areas: of adult literacy, workplace essential skills and apprenticeship. Services will be accessible at adult learning centres (pilot sites) and at select Community Adult Learning Program sites and TED employment offices.

We will integrate PLAR services into professional employment counselling and case management services

The world of work is constantly changing and individuals must constantly learn new skills and continue to acquire knowledge to keep abreast of the labour market and the emerging skill requirements. PLAR is a useful tool for identifying and validating adults' skills and learning and the PLAR process can help individuals reach their learning and employment goals. Adults at various stages in their lives, including those who want to resume purposeful learning, choose a viable career path, or develop career-management skills can benefit from PLAR.

Counsellors trained in PLAR methodologies provide advice and assist with establishing learning goals. They also help individuals prepare portfolios that can be used to validate learning. The government of New Brunswick supports the use of PLAR in its employment counselling and case management services. Training and Employment Development (TED) and Family and Community Services (FCS) counsellors receive professional development training in PLAR methodologies, and these departments have certified PLAR practitioners who can provide services in portfolio development. As more staff is trained services will be expanded to assist more learners throughout the province.

Specific actions we will take include:

- TED and FCS will establish the roles and responsibilities for employment counsellors and case managers in the PLAR process.
- TED and FCS will continue to include PLAR in training initiatives for employment counsellors and case managers.
- TED and FCS will ensure that staff certified as PLAR practitioners receive ongoing professional development opportunities in PLAR.
- Within four years each TED region will have its own certified PLAR practitioner.
- Within four years PLAR services will be integrated in TED and FCS counselling and case management services.
- Conduct research into training and certification for PLAR practitioners.



We will develop PLAR applications for apprenticeship and certification



New Brunswick's *Prosperity Plan* sets targets for economic and employment performance for 2002-2012. The government's projections show 15% of the jobs available through attrition during this period will be in trades, transport and equipment operation. In addition, more than 40% of the new jobs to be created under the Plan will require college level training, including apprenticeship training.

Adults with knowledge and skills, acquired through informal learning and work experience, may be able to gain quicker access to apprenticeship training through PLAR. Formal recognition of prior learning may also lead to shorter training times for apprentices.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Develop and formalize PLAR applications for apprenticeship training.
- Integrate the PLAR process into the apprenticeship training model.
- Formalize PLAR methodologies/applications for apprenticeship training courses at New Brunswick Community Colleges.
- Communicate the integrated model to adult learners, career counsellors, unions and other interested groups.
- Within two years the integrated model will be implemented to increase access to apprenticeship training programs and where appropriate to accelerate training times leading to certification.

We will advance and support PLAR utilization in the workplace

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) can be used to assess employees' and potential employees' skills. PLAR is particularly useful for individuals who lack formal credentials but who have acquired relevant knowledge and skills through informal learning and/or work experience.

The Department of Training and Employment Development, in partnership with the federal government, is conducting a three-year pilot project that incorporates Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition. This project, which started in 2003, provides PLAR services to adults to help them make a rapid and successful entry into the workforce. Results of the pilot will assist in establishing standards and protocols and in developing quality learning assessment tools.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Develop partnerships with learning institutions, employers, and unions.
- Promote PLAR to employers, particularly the "recognition" part of the process.
- Develop and test online learning assessment tools and support their use.
- Collaborate with partners to develop standards and protocols.



We will advance and support PLAR utilization and recognition in post-secondary education and training programs

Both access to and progress within post-secondary education and training programs can be enhanced by effective use of prior learning assessment and recognition methodologies. The use of PLAR can enhance access to post-secondary education and training by facilitating program entry for individuals who lack formal credentials for eligibility but have the capabilities to succeed.

Collaborations between the provincial government and private and public learning and training institutions will ensure the success of PLAR initiatives.

Specific actions we will take include:

- We will work with New Brunswick universities, colleges, and private institutions to increase the scope and number of recognized credit transfers, articulated programs, e-learning opportunities, and PLAR services offered by universities, colleges and private institutions. This strategy will help New Brunswickers apply prior learning and training, foreign credentials and work experience of all types towards the completion of post-secondary credentials.
- New Brunswick will foster the development of regular and sustained continuing education programs in strategic sectors and industries, relying both on improved PLAR and partnerships with training and educational institutions.



We will increase opportunities for adult learners through credit transfer and articulated programming among post-secondary institutions

Credit transfer among post-secondary institutions is important in providing more choices and flexibility to adult learners. It allows adults who have left the post-secondary education or training system the opportunity to receive credit for the courses they have already taken if they choose to resume their studies at another institution.

New Brunswick post-secondary institutions have increased articulated program opportunities between universities and NBCC-CCNB. This is a program of study which incorporates components of a post-secondary program by one participating institution with components of a post-secondary program delivered by another. The general aim is to provide the student with a sound theoretical, educational base, as well as practical training.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Within two years, the Department of Education will work with New Brunswick universities to ensure all first and second year introductory level courses are transferable among institutions.
- Within two years, the Departments of Education and Training and Employment Development will work with New Brunswick post-secondary institutions to increase articulated program opportunities in the province.



OBJECTIVE IV.

INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW BRUNSWICKERS THROUGH WORKPLACE ESSENTIAL SKILLS TRAINING AND EXPANDED CERTIFICATION SERVICES

Adults have a desire to use their learning and education for practical purposes. For adults, learning must be active, self-directed, relevant, immediate, and useful. When adults receive credentials for their learning, they can access better employment opportunities and are more motivated to learn. Assessment, learning and certification are important components of our plan for increasing employment opportunities for adult learners.

The Province has developed a significant number of services for adults and has expertise in the areas of testing, assessment and certification. These services, which include General Educational Development (GED) testing and second language evaluation, are delivered to thousands of New Brunswickers each year. However, there is still a need for additional services that incorporate flexibility and accessibility in their design.

Training programs and certification in workplace essential skills are new services that have the potential to be very helpful to New Brunswickers. A certificate in workplace essential skills, based on skills that are directly related to employers' needs, will be a credential that individuals and employers alike will recognize and value.

Workplace Essential Skills

Nine essential skill areas identified by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada:

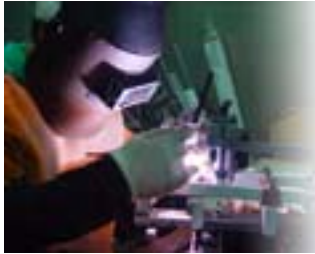
- Reading text,
- Document use,
- Writing,
- Numeracy,
- Oral communication,
- Thinking skills,
- Working with others,
- Computer use, and
- Continuous learning

Workplace essential skills are enabling skills that "help people perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life, provide people with a foundation to learn other skills, and enhance people's ability to adapt to workplace change" (*Making the Skills Connection*, HRSDC and Conference Board of Canada).



The Province will develop and implement training programs for adult learners that will provide them with the opportunity to acquire various levels of workplace essential skills, that can be certified, to assist them in finding and maintaining meaningful employment. Additional programming with appropriate credentials will be developed on an ongoing basis to address the needs of New Brunswick's changing economy.

We will develop and implement a workplace essential skills training program leading to certification



The Department of Training and Employment Development is conducting a pilot project that provides training in workplace essential skills to help participants gain the skills they need to enter and stay in the workforce. We plan to offer a program in workplace essential skills throughout New Brunswick, so that adults entering or re-entering the workforce, can access better employment opportunities. A certification in workplace essentials skills will assist employers by providing them with a tool to help them hire qualified employees and make better human resource decisions.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Develop and test a provincial program model by reviewing the pilot project and evaluating curricula, assessment techniques, certification, best practices, and successes.
- Deliver a training program throughout New Brunswick that will enable adult learners to acquire the workplace essential skills they need to meet their employment goals.
- Promote the training program and certification to individuals, agencies and organizations, communities, post-secondary institutions and employers.
- Recognize successes of learners and employers.
- Within three years training and certification in workplace essential skills will be available throughout New Brunswick.

We will integrate training in workplace essential skills into apprenticeship programs

Training in occupation-specific workplace essential skills will ensure that apprentices enter the workforce with the skills needed for work, learning and life. Acquiring these skills, attitudes and behaviours during their apprenticeship will ensure a smooth transition from school to work or further study, and from job to job, helping New Brunswickers better manage the many changes they will experience in their working lives.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Develop curricula to provide workplace essential skills to apprentices during their training.
- Promote the need for occupation-specific workplace essential skills to adult learners, workers, and unemployed and under-employed adults.



- Monitor employment outcomes for adults who obtain certification in workplace essential skills.
- Recognize learner successes.
- Within three years, we will ensure that apprentices will receive, as part of their program, training in workplace essential skills to the level required for their chosen occupations.

We will expand certification services to meet the needs of New Brunswick's changing workplaces

Additional certification services are needed from time to time to respond to the changing and rising skill requirements of today's workplace. Employers require a skilled and adaptable workforce and one of the most cost-effective ways to train is through an apprenticeship program. Benefits for companies include improved productivity and higher quality products and services.

Workers also benefit from apprenticeship training programs. As apprentices they gain valuable experience and get a good idea of employers' expectations. They also have an opportunity to earn as they learn.

We will continue to work with our partners, employers and apprentices, to develop certification services that are relevant for New Brunswick's changing workplaces. We will ensure that our partners continue to receive the high quality services that they need to be successful.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Continue to collaborate with industry and evaluate the need for new credentials.
- Explore ways to add more flexibility to GED testing.
- Promote the benefits of certification to employers, employees and individuals interested in a career in the trades.





OBJECTIVE V.

INCREASE LEARNING AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WORKING ADULTS

A Canadian study, the Workplace and Employee Survey (WES), found that the higher the employee's level of education the more likely they were to receive workplace training. Another finding is that⁶ most companies, with 100 or more employees, offered training while less than half of smaller companies (less than 20 employees) trained their workers. Workers with lower levels of education and literacy and individuals working for small businesses are at a disadvantage when it comes to workplace training. Professional development at all levels is an important investment for individuals and employers.

Workplace learning and training is essential to developing the skilled workforce necessary for a strong economy in New Brunswick. A recent report prepared for the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) identifies the existing workforce as a key area of the federal government's Skills and Learning Agenda stating, "New sources of skilled labour will need to come from among Canadians whose capacity to contribute to Canada's economic well-being has not been fully realized." While workplace learning has many benefits for both employers and employees such as increased job satisfaction, reduced stress, a safer work environment, and increased productivity; companies do not always have the necessary resources needed to support the training. This is particularly true of smaller businesses.

Small and medium-sized businesses that lack the resources to train their workers can benefit from a partnership approach to training. An example of such an approach is the one adopted by the Enterprise Agencies. The Agencies have established networks and working relationships with employers, government departments, non-governmental organizations, and educational institutions; and together they identify training needs and develop collaborative solutions.

The Department of Training and Employment Development conducted a workplace learning pilot project that assisted small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) with workplace learning programs. The project focused on basic education and workplace essential skills programs that integrate specific workplace issues and materials into the training curriculum. Employers participating in this pilot are positive about implementing workplace training and see the benefits for their company and their employees.

The Government of New Brunswick invites stakeholders to work together to increase workplace training in New Brunswick. The Province encourages employers, unions, associations, and other levels of government to support training and professional development initiatives that will give New Brunswickers opportunities to develop the skills necessary to adapt to a constantly changing workplace. This support will encourage workers to take

⁶ Skills Upgrading Initiatives in Canada: Regional Case Studies (January, 2005)



advantage of learning and training opportunities and to take an active role in developing their skills. The Province will work with partners to increase learning and training opportunities, particularly for workers who have tended not to receive training, and will invite the federal government to participate in future skills development initiatives.

We will focus on increasing learning and training in small and medium-sized businesses

As New Brunswick transitions to a knowledge-based economy, businesses in all sectors must adapt to change to be successful. While many large employers have sufficient resources to support workplace learning and training opportunities, smaller companies often do not. In this province small businesses employ large numbers of workers. In 2001 more than 37% or 120,000 New Brunswickers worked for businesses that employed less than 20 employees.

Canadian studies of workplace training initiatives show that training has significant benefits for both employers and workers. Benefits include improved quality of work, increased output, better health and safety records, and more capacity to deal with workplace change.

The Province will work with small and medium-sized businesses to increase learning and training opportunities for working New Brunswickers.

Specific actions we will take include:



- Explore funding for the delivery of workplace skills development initiatives with the federal government.
- Encourage learning partnerships between employers, employer groups, learning institutions and other stakeholders.
- Promote employer-sponsored skills upgrading and encourage small business owners and managers to champion this.
- Recognize new training initiatives of small and medium-sized businesses.
- Work with partners to promote best practices to small and medium-sized businesses.

We will provide learning and training support services to small and medium-sized businesses

The Province provides a range of support services to assist employers with their training needs. As the knowledge-based economy continues to grow it will place ever increasing demands on employers to train workers. We will help New Brunswick businesses meet these demands by providing more learning and training support services.



The Department of Training and Employment Development partnered with a group of employers to develop ways to support small and medium-sized enterprises. The pilot project involved assisting employers with learning assessments and customized learning and training plans.

Specific actions we will take include:



- Identify best practices from the workplace learning pilot project.
- Explore ways to assist small and medium sized businesses with workplace training assessments, and training resources for literacy and workplace essential skills.
- Support innovative, value-added partnerships to assist small and medium-sized businesses.
- Collaborate with partners to develop customized learning assessment tools and approaches to help small and medium-sized businesses identify their training needs.
- Compile training resource information.
- Encourage partners to expand training resources.
- Promote learning assessment services and customized training resources.
- Collaborate with partners to launch an information and learning portal to assist New Brunswick businesses.

We will encourage professional development

Working New Brunswickers require professional development to stay current in and advance in their careers. This allows workers to further develop in their field of work and increases productivity, which is a key driver of economic growth. Professional development in the education, health, business and technology sectors is particularly important in New Brunswick.

We will continue to work with private occupational trainers, employers, professional associations and post-secondary institutions to build on the opportunities for learners who wish to pursue professional development

Specific actions we will take include:

- Encourage employers, professional associations and post-secondary institutions to provide education and training opportunities for professionals; and explore the development of certification for private occupational trainers.
- The Province will support the professional development of public sector employees.



OBJECTIVE VI.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES TO SUPPORT LIFELONG LEARNING

Accessing information and using it effectively in a knowledge-based economy is crucial to personal autonomy, learner self-sufficiency and to supporting literacy. Since 1954, New Brunswick public libraries have been part of a key provincial infrastructure providing access to information and lifelong learning opportunities for all ages. The network of 62 public libraries and four bookmobiles represents a unique system in Canada and an important asset for lifelong learning in this province – it provides one provincial public library card, one province-wide collection of English and French materials, free Internet access in every public library, long-standing community and government partnerships in the provision of service, and a nationally recognized provincial online library catalogue.

Public libraries are a primary source of reliable information in the community and have a mandate to offer information freely and equitably to all citizens. Public libraries are trusted places for individuals to expand knowledge and pursue goals.

Statistics demonstrate that public libraries are well used. Currently, 40% of New Brunswickers have a public library card. In 2005, New Brunswickers:

- asked over 208,000 information and research-based questions
- borrowed over 2.9 million items province-wide
- used 306 public access computers in libraries over 309,000 times
- consulted over 1.6 million print resources in public libraries, and
- accessed New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS) e-library services over 1.7 million times.
- Over 179,000 New Brunswickers participated in 9,300 public library programs

We envision improved public library services that are available onsite and online ensuring equitable access to information and services for all New Brunswickers. By building on public libraries' ability to respond to New Brunswickers' needs in a knowledge-based economy, we will meet a fundamental objective in supporting New Brunswickers in their lifelong learning.

We will build quality and relevant public library collections

In order for New Brunswickers to succeed in today's knowledge-based economy, facilitating equitable access to information through increased investment in public library collections is crucial.



The Province will continue to ensure that funding for public library collections is distributed equitably throughout the province. The Province will also continue to support the New Brunswick Public Libraries Foundation as its success continues to grow and positively impact library collection development.

We will continue to provide English and French collections in various formats that meet New Brunswickers' educational, information, cultural and recreational needs.

Specific actions we will take include:

- Within five years, establish and maintain additional annual funding to permit an annual per capita investment on public library collections that meets the national average. This will build the quality and quantity of print, audio-visual and electronic resources available in English and French and ensure New Brunswickers have access to information that is current and relevant to their lifelong learning needs. Special collections that will be acquired include resources for adult literacy, and workplace and employability skills training.
- New Brunswick Public Library Service and the New Brunswick Public Libraries Foundation will partner with public and private sector organizations to supplement library collections throughout the province in various formats and subject areas.

We will build quality and equitable public library services



Public library service is offered through a partnership between the Province and the local community. The local community partners can be either municipalities or associations of persons, and in the case of public-school libraries, school districts are a third partner. In general, through New Brunswick Public Library Service, the Province is responsible for the management and delivery of public library services, which includes staffing and collections. The participating municipalities (or associations of persons) and school districts are responsible for providing and maintaining facilities and equipment for the provision of public or public-school library service. School districts also contribute 50% of the salaries and any collections specifically intended to support the school curriculum.

A public-school library was opened on Grand Manan Island in 2001, the first new public library to be built since 1992. The province has also replaced the bookmobile of the Chaleur Library Region with a wheelchair accessible vehicle to improve access to library services in that region.

The Province has made significant progress in harmonizing the structure of the public library system. We will continue to work on a comprehensive framework for the standardization of open hours, library classification, and staffing levels that is needed in order to better plan the development of equitable services for the future.

We will continue to promote the use of library and information services for lifelong learning by building on partnerships with community groups, organizations, businesses and learning institutions to share valuable



resources and provide better access to services for New Brunswickers. For example, since 2004, we have conducted targeted campaigns to reach children from birth through high school by means of library card distribution projects for public school students, kindergarten students, pre-school children attending registered daycares and for newborns (through the Born to Read / Le goût de lire programs).

Access to library and information services will improve to better meet the needs of New Brunswickers.

Specific actions we will take include:

Equity of services province wide

- Within five years, ensure that specialized librarian positions exist in the library resource centres in the northern part of the province. This will improve equity in the delivery of children's, adult, and reference services in the province as the two northern library regions do not currently have these positions.
- Within five years, add a specialized adult and young adult services librarian position to the library resource centre of the Saint John region to address inequity between regions.
- Within five years, ensure that each region provides wheelchair accessible bookmobile service by adding a bookmobile for the Saint John region to serve the rural communities in the Fundy area.
- Within two years, develop a provincial framework for library open hours and staffing standards to ensure equitable service delivery; to address community needs; as well as to meet the operational requirements of the public library system.
- Within five years, implement library open hours and staffing standards to ensure equitable service delivery in all regions of the province. This will ensure public libraries respond to the needs of New Brunswickers and support their lifelong learning.
- Continue to work with community partners to implement facility standards in public libraries that are in need of expansion, renovation or relocation. This will ensure public library facilities meet standard space requirements for growing collections, staffing level, public access computers, individual study space, delivery of programs and general public usage.
- Within five years, replace three aging bookmobiles with wheelchair accessible vehicles. This will facilitate the equitable delivery of library and information services in rural communities. One of these three new wheelchair accessible bookmobiles will begin serving the York Library Region within one year.



Promotion and development of services

- Within one year, initiate a community analysis program that will focus on determining local community needs and better tailoring programs and services of public libraries to meet those needs.
- Within three years, develop an information literacy program that will be delivered to youth and adults in public libraries across the province. The program will demonstrate the information literacy skills necessary to succeed in a knowledge-based economy. The program will facilitate the acquisition of workplace essential skills and employability skills and independent lifelong learning.
- Work with organizations in the community to promote access to library and information services onsite and online through targeted library card distribution projects. Targeted groups include: adult learners, distance and e-learners, professionals, workplaces, and senior's organizations.

Proactive recruiting

- Partner with government departments or agencies to recruit professional librarians, particularly bilingual librarians, through government initiatives aimed at post-secondary recruitment, retention and repatriation.
- Establish a scholarship fund and provide summer employment for New Brunswickers completing a Master's degree in Library and Information Science.
- Work with the Office of Human Resources to ensure public librarians are part of the provincial Internship Program.

We will build and enhance e-library services



The public library network is an important asset for lifelong learning and a key element of the knowledge infrastructure. We want to maximize the use of this province-wide resource by continuing to introduce innovative e-library services that respond to the needs of New Brunswickers. Recent provincial scale e-library service additions include a public libraries website, request a library card online, online remote access to licensed electronic reference tools, a virtual reference library, web access to the provincial catalogue and online renewal of loans. The most recent addition is Quaestio, an Internet-based reference service available through the NBPLS website that enables New Brunswickers to ask library staff for assistance in finding information. Every public library offers at least one workstation with free access to the Internet for the public. Public libraries have been identified by Statistics Canada as the number one place outside of home, school or office used to access the Internet.



Specific actions we will take include:

- Within one year, we will upgrade the NBPLS provincial online catalogue to offer improved access to English and French library collections through increased hours of availability of the catalogue and improved search capabilities.
- Within three years, we will complete the upgrade of the library automation system to continue building and enhancing e-library service offerings in response to rapidly expanding demand and use of these services.
- Work closely with other institutions to improve access to library resources and information services that New Brunswickers taking distance education or online training courses need to successfully complete their programs.
- Install high-speed Internet access in all public libraries as soon as it is commercially available. This will provide more equitable access to online information for all New Brunswickers.
- Continue to develop new and improved online services through the NBPLS website and automated library system.

CONCLUSION

An invitation to partner

The success of *Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities* depends on all involved partners being fully engaged in the action items outlined in this policy statement. Each partner brings a unique perspective and has an important role to play in building a lifelong learning culture. Through partnerships characterized by collaboration and effective communication we will build a culture that supports quality lifelong learning for the people of New Brunswick.

We invite all of our partners to engage in this process.