

# Statement from a network of organizations and researchers in adult education

8<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBRE 2015, INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

## Let's get the development of adult education back on TRACK in canada

In today's world, prosperous countries, successful businesses, dynamic communities, social progress and individual development demand high levels of knowledge and skills. Adults are faced with new challenges as workers, but equally as concerned citizens, parents, involved community members, new immigrants and as individuals taking care of their health and that of relatives.

**IT SHOULD BE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY TO MEET ADULTS' PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BY PROVIDING QUALITY LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES. HOWEVER, WE ARE WITNESSING:**

### **The withdrawal of the federal government from adult literacy**

Until recently, there was a broad consensus on the importance of adult education. However, in the past few years, we have seen the effects of the federal government withdrawal from adult literacy. We are concerned that the government has turned its back on hundreds of thousands of Canadians with low literacy skills, who represent 16% of our country's population, as well as the 32% of adults who rely on minimal basic skills (according to the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies- PIAAC). This course of action threatens to contribute to permanent situations of social, cultural and economic exclusion.

### **Observed impacts**

- » Literacy is increasingly reduced to its link to employability, at the expense of other needs such as health literacy, digital or financial literacy;
- » The Canada Job Grant excludes a significant part of the population who need to develop competencies, such as the unemployed or those with low literacy skills;
- » Adult and family literacy are now subject to chronic under-funding by the federal government;
- » Between 2006 and 2014, close to 80 million dollars provided in the budget for program and project funding for adult literacy under the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) were not spent;
- » Termination of funding for the operation of pan-Canadian, provincial and territorial literacy organizations forced networks to close their doors, while others had to lay off their employees or cancel services, wasting past investments of millions of taxpayers' dollars;
- » The absence of a plan to assume the function of this national infrastructure deprives Canada of networks and capacity to train educators, broadly disseminate literacy information, sponsor initiatives and projects, conduct research and contribute to innovation and impact in the field of adult learning.

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IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THESE DECISIONS UNDERMINE OR EVEN ELIMINATE THE ABILITY OF A NATIONAL LET'S GET THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION BACK ON NETWORK OF ADULT LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES OF LEARNING WITHIN OUR COMPLEX SOCIETIES.

## Toward a government that rises to the challenges of adult learning

Together, we must get the development of adult education back on track in Canada, by putting forward a comprehensive vision. With this goal, those who have signed this electoral platform call on political parties to support the following proposals:

1. Commit to take a strong and positive leadership role in the promotion of adult literacy and skills development, according to federal jurisdiction;
2. Develop an intergovernmental and intersectoral strategy on literacy and skills development; a) with provinces and territories, as well as organizations and networks; b) in the spirit of shared responsibility; and c) taking into account provincial and territorial realities as well as the needs of official language minority communities and Aboriginal peoples;
3. Fulfill Canada's constitutional obligations regarding linguistic rights of Francophone Canadians who live in a minority context;
4. Fund a stable infrastructure that supports and shares expertise and best practices in adult education and skills development across Canada, to meet adults' diverse and multiple learning needs;
5. Integrate literacy and skills development into relevant sectoral policies (e.g. employment development, Aboriginal education, justice and rehabilitation, health, environment, culture, the promotion of official languages, etc.);
6. Facilitate funding for literacy and skills development through the Employment Insurance Fund and the Canada Job Grant;
7. Implement Canada's international commitments on adult education (UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015), Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (2015), Bélem Framework for Action (2009) and Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education (1997)).

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## Questions to federal political parties in the context of the 2015 elections

1. What are your commitments with regard to adult literacy and skills development?
2. Will you commit to play a strong and positive leadership role in promoting literacy, according to federal jurisdiction? If so, how will this leadership be put into effect?
3. Will your party commit to adopt measures that comply with constitutional obligations regarding the linguistic rights of Francophone Canadians who live in a minority context? If so, please provide concrete illustrations of this commitment.
4. Are you willing to fund a stable infrastructure that will allow for the fulfillment of multiple functions such as information, innovation, research and sharing of expertise in the field of literacy and skills development?
5. Do you agree to integrate literacy and essential skills development into sectoral policies, where these aspects are relevant, such as, for example, employment policies, policies related to Aboriginal people, health, the environment, culture, and the promotion of official languages?
6. Do you support the inclusion of literacy and skills development funding in the Employment Insurance Fund and the Canada Job Grant?
7. Will you implement Canada's commitments to UNESCO and on the international stage in the fields of literacy and adult education (UNESCO's Education 2030 Framework for Action (2015), Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education (2015), Bélem Framework for Action (2009) and Hamburg Declaration on Adult Education (1997))?

**WE CHALLENGE POLITICAL PARTIES TO RESPOND TO OUR APPEAL BECAUSE LEAVING ADULT EDUCATION BEHIND IS A RISKY PROPOSITION IN SOCIETIES THAT DRAW SO HEAVILY ON KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.**

**WE INVITE YOU TO SEND IN YOUR RESPONSES AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS :**

**INFO@CDEACF.CA**

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## Signatories

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**BRIGID HAYES** Researcher in adult education

**RESDAC** Isabelle Salesse, Presidente, Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences

**LINDA SHOHE** Researcher and consultant, previously Executive Director of The Centre for literacy

**SUZANNE SMYTHE** Assistant Professor, Éducation des adultes, Simon Fraser University

**IF YOU SUPPORT THIS DECLARATION AND TO ADD YOU TO THE LIST OF OTHER SUPPORTERS, SEND US YOUR NAME AND AFFILIATION AT THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS :**

**INFO@CDEACF.CA**