

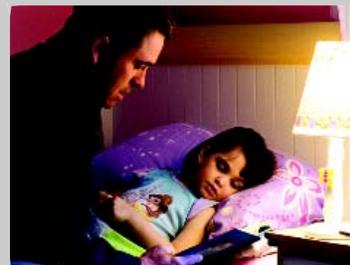
It's Time for Action

Summary Of a Literacy Catch-Up Plan For adult Francophones In minority Settings



**Fédération canadienne pour
l'alphabétisation en français**

November 2007



It's Time for action

In Canada, as in most industrialized countries, literacy has become a major societal issue. Over the past several years, the concept of literacy has changed: it is now recognized that there are several levels of people's ability to understand what they read.

Reading and writing skills are essential not only for the quality of life of people and their families, but also for the social and economic vitality of society as a whole.

Two out of five working-age adults in Canada have trouble in understanding what they read

According to the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), 42% of all adult Canadians of working age (16 to 65) have trouble in meeting the requirements of today's knowledge-based society and economy, because they have trouble in understanding what they read.

Moreover, an analysis of the IALSS data has shown that certain regions of Canada and certain segments of the Canadian population have lower literacy rates than others. For example, the proportion of the population who have difficulty in understanding what they read is 56% among people whose mother tongue is French, compared with 39% among people whose mother tongue is English.

.....

The French-language minority communities, out of concern for their own continuing vitality, have duly noted the IALSS findings. The participants in the Francophone and Acadian Community Summit held in Ottawa in June 2007 have recognized the importance of this issue. The organizations and institutions that signed the final declaration of this Summit have committed themselves to strengthening infrastructures and institutions in a variety of areas, including literacy.¹

¹ De mille regards, nous avons créé une vision : Actes du Sommet des communautés francophones et acadiennes, Fédération des communautés francophones et acadiennes, Ottawa, Octobre 2007, pages 45 to 48 (http://www.fcfa.ca/media_uploads/pdf/698.pdf)

A high rate of literacy is just as beneficial for the vitality of communities as for the individuals concerned.

The IALSS shows that people who have adequate-to- strong reading skills:

- have higher rates of employment and higher incomes;
- enjoy more secure jobs and better working conditions;
- participate in more training and development activities;
- report themselves to be in better health;
- participate in more volunteer activities in their communities;
- are better able to support their children in their schooling.

Achieving the literacy level of the best-performing countries

The *Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français* (FCAF) has developed a plan to increase the average literacy level of Canada's French-language minority communities. The goal of this "catch-up" plan is to achieve a literacy level equivalent to that of Norway, the country that ranked first in the international survey.

Francophone Literacy Catch-up Plan

The FCAF's plan is based on its vision of literacy training, the needs of adult Francophones in minority settings, and the experience that its member organizations have acquired in recent years, particularly in the field of family literacy training.

Note : This plan targets only those Francophones who live in minority settings. Hence, in this document, the term "Francophones" excludes Francophones living in Quebec, and the term "provinces and territories" excludes Quebec.

The plan's objective

First the FCAF reviewed the IALSS results for every age group of adults whose mother tongue is French in every province and territory of Canada. Next, the FCAF developed a method of comparing these results with those for Norway. Using this method, the FCAF then determined that in order to achieve a literacy level equivalent to Norway's within this target population, literacy training will have to be provided to an estimated **125 000 Francophone learners in Canada over the next 10 years.**

The FCAF recognizes that it cannot achieve this ambitious objective all on its own. The Federation believes that Canada must set itself this objective of training 125 000 learners and that, in this context, the FCAF's activities must be seen as complementary to those of all the other stakeholders—employers and unions, educational institutions, and other organizations working in the fields of training and education.

Strategic activities to achieve this objective

To achieve this objective, the FCAF plans to pursue activities in the following six strategic areas:

- 1. *Publicity, promotion and recruitment:***
raise awareness of the various aspects of Francophones' literacy and promote literacy training for adult Francophones in Canada;
- 2. *Training and empowerment:*** provide initial training and continuing education for literacy trainers and for managers of literacy services;
- 3. *Programs and services:*** develop, adapt, and disseminate various literacy training models and services; deliver the various types of literacy services to Francophones;
- 4. *Strengthening of ties:*** share expertise, communicate, consult, harmonize activities and initiatives, legitimize literacy training and literacy services through strong, effective partnerships;
- 5. *Assessment and research:*** gather, analyze, and share data to enhance intervention approaches and models, prepare inventories and assess the impact of interventions;
- 6. *Organizational capacities:*** develop the capacities of literacy organizations so that they can respond to the continuing growth of their clientele.

Costs and benefits

The total estimated cost of achieving the targeted objective is \$260.6 million, of which \$198 million will be spent on the direct delivery of services.

A report by TD Bank estimates that a 1% increase in Canadians' literacy scores would boost national income by approximately \$32 billion. This report goes on to state that Canada could reap an economic payoff of close to \$80 billion if all Canadians achieved an adequate level of literacy ².

The FCAF's catch-up plan is designed to achieve this desired level of literacy among Canada's Francophone population living in minority settings.

Expected outcomes

Within three years, Canada's French-language literacy training organizations will have the ability to offer permanent, diversified literacy training services to a growing number of adults.

Within seven years, Canada's French-language literacy training organizations will have established partnerships with various sectors and will be offering permanent, diversified literacy training services to both employed and unemployed adult Francophones.

Within ten years, Canada's adult Francophones will have access to high-quality French-language training and education services in every province and territory. They will receive continuing education and training so that they can participate in a fully literate society.

Commitment needed from the Government of Canada

The Government of Canada must assume a leadership role to strengthen the Canadian economy. There is no question that the low rate of literacy among a substantial portion of Canada's working-age population jeopardizes the advancement of its national economic priorities.

The Government of Canada must also assume a leadership role to promote the development of the Francophone minority community and ensure that it can operate effectively in the knowledge-based economy, in keeping with the amendments made to the *Official Languages Act* in 2005 to remind federal institutions of their responsibility to take positive steps to support the development of Canada's official-language communities.

The FCAF is submitting this plan to the Government of Canada in connection with the renewal of the *Action Plan for Official Languages*, which expires in March 2008. The FCAF will also be submitting this catch-up plan to regional bodies within the federal government, such as the regional development agencies, as well as to the provincial and territorial governments.

² *Literacy Matters: A call for action*, by Craig Alexander, Vice President and Deputy Chief Economist of the TD Bank Financial Group, September 2007, page 14. http://www.td.com/corporateresponsibility/community/literacy_matters.pdf