

Saskatchewan Literacy Network

Responses

1. Economic Recovery and Growth

Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?

In an increasingly networked and digital world, it is recommended that Canada's workforce have access to opportunities that enable individuals to develop and maintain at least a level 3 literacy and essential skills. According to the 2004 StatsCan/OECD collaborative survey (Adult Literacy & Life Skills Survey), this is the minimum level recommended for all workers in order for businesses to stay current and competitive in the new knowledge-based economy. The benefits of literacy and essential skills training are reflected in a marked increase in company's bottom line and Canada's overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP). For every 1% increase in literacy skills, employers have found that productivity increases by 2.4%, which leads to a 1.5% permanent increase in GDP (Public Investment in Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?, C.D. Howe Institute, 2005). This means that workers have more choices in the labour market and that business and government are able to compete in local, national, and international markets while improving their profits (Building Essential Skills in the Workplace, written by The Conference Board of Canada, published by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005). Recommendation: 1. Prosperity and competitiveness are linked to Literacy and Essential Skills which require sustained federal investment and support for businesses to develop and implement programming that allows all workers access to current opportunities.

2. Job Creation

As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?

Access to current literacy and essential skills training is a must in enabling the creation of a knowledgeable workforce. An up-to-date workforce with transferable skills will make Canada attractive to investment in job creation. Access to post-secondary training and credentialing programs allows the knowledge of our current workforce to grow as well as ensures those entering the Canadian workforce for the first time have the skills to be successful in a new knowledge-based economy. Rick Miner, "Jobs of the Future: Options and Opportunities" (2012), states that, in order to remain competitive, 77% of our workforce will need post-secondary training by 2031. The need for a cultural paradigm shift is apparent. Miner is not only referring to a new knowledge-based economy, but highlighting a reality that transcends all sectors of our workforce. As we move into our future the need for literacy and essential skills training will not diminish. Investment in a current and skilled workforce is a predominant need. A culture of life-long learning and life-wide continuous learning will ensure the success of our workforce, our businesses, and our country. Recommendation: 1. Significant long-term investment in adult education to increase labour market outcomes for individuals, which will ensure employers have access to workers with the skills they need to establish innovative and sustainable industries.

3. Demographic Change

What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?

According to the report by G. Wayne McElree, "Apprentice Employment in the Public Sector: An Opportunity that is Overdue," submitted to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education and Employment in January 2007, "the fundamental solution to this issue will be found in the encouraging of [employers] to implement good human resource planning and practices for their [available positions]." Saskatchewan's "demographic boom," as noted in Francois Lamontagne's (Canadian Labour and Business Centre) "The Aboriginal Workforce: What Lies Ahead" September 2004 report, is currently comprised of at least 22% of Aboriginal peoples. This up and coming workforce is poised to becoming part of the solution to the challenges presented by an increasingly aging and skilled workforce. Access to education and training opportunities to this demographic is the first step in building a skilled and employment-ready workforce that is capable of stepping in as current workers retire. Recommendations: 1. Provision of opportunities to allow Aboriginal access to current literacy and essential skills training along with training opportunities to provide them with the skills needed to enter an increasingly networked and digitized knowledge-based workforce. 2. Provide incentives for employers who incorporate these opportunities into their workplaces to help develop and nurture a culture of continuous learning. 3. Federal partnership with all levels of government to support and develop existing programming and future programming initiatives.

4. Productivity

With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada's population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?

Providing relevant training to people in the workplace encourages employee confidence and helps build the necessary skills for employees and employers to achieve their goals. Investing in Canadians' workplace learning develops the essential skills necessary to be successful in the workplace, at home, and in their communities; thus developing a culture of learning that spreads across the life continuum. Employers have found that increased participation, improved morale, enhanced worker engagement, and improved team performance after implementing literacy and essential skills training in the workplace improves their bottom line (Building Essential Skills in the Workplace, written by the Conference Board of Canada, published by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2005). For every 1% increase in literacy skills, productivity increasing 2.5%, which leads to a 1.5% permanent increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Providing access to learning opportunities within the workplace is an easy route to receiving the benefits of increased productivity that has a side-benefit of creating healthy communities outside of the workplace. Recommendation: 1. The federal provision of incentives to Canadian companies, which are particularly devoted to providing literacy and essential skills training to all employees.

5. Other Challenges

With some Canadian individuals, businesses and communities facing particular challenges at this time, in your view, who is facing the most challenges, what are the challenges that are being faced and what specific federal actions are needed to address these challenges?

While there are many specific challenges facing adult learners (lack of resources and access to programming, for instance), it is the new digital divide that creates challenges to nearly all types of learners in all levels of employment. Today's increasingly networked and digitized world requires a high level of understanding of computers and other digital equipment. From the CEO to the cashier,

computer and digital knowledge is required to effectively perform duties within many workplaces across Canada. The ability to access technology as well as to navigate a complicated network that requires high functionality of essential skills help individuals keep pace with a continuously changing and advancing technological environment. Federal support of mentoring programs, digital skills programming, and other literacy and essential skills training is of utmost importance to encourage the development of the necessary essential skills that will ensure success of individuals and businesses in this new economy. Recommendation: 1. Federal support of existing digital training, mentoring programs, and literacy and essential skills training in the workplace through incentives to businesses who provide the essential learning opportunities to their employees. 2. Federal support of community-based training and programming that helps youth and adult learners gain the necessary skills to become successful in the workplace.