

March 6, 2013

Important Information on the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement and Literacy

Literacy matters in Ontario! Literacy skills are needed every day – at work, at home, at school, and in the community. However, 42% of Ontarians do not have the literacy skills they need for home, work and life. To further illustrate the need for literacy programming, in 2011, 22.4% of Canadians between the ages of 25 to 64 did not have a high school diploma.

In response to this serious skills gap, the Ontario government, through Employment Ontario, funds the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program. The LBS Program serves adults who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills in order to achieve their goals of post-secondary education and training, employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit or independence. The LBS Program is an integral part of Employment Ontario. In 2011-2012, more than 60,000 adults received LBS services in over 300 program sites, all across this province.

Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills programs are also funded in part by the Federal Government under the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement (LMA). Federal LMA funds are used to provide increased opportunities for vulnerable groups in the labour market; in particular, to serve unemployed individuals who are not Employment Insurance (EI) clients, or employed individuals who have low levels of literacy. In 2012-13, approximately 22% of the funding for LBS programming will come to Ontario through the Federal LMA agreement. The LMA is a vital source of funding required to support literacy and employment programming for those Ontarians most in need.

LMA funding supports crucial programming and services in the province of Ontario, such as adult literacy programs, support to increase the rates of apprenticeship completion, support for people with disabilities to enter the job market, support for people on Ontario Works to find and keep good jobs, job experience programs for youth and many other valuable programming initiatives. You can learn more about the Canada-Ontario Labour Market Agreement here: www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/labmark/lma2011_12.html

Unfortunately, the LMA will expire on March 31, 2014 and the Federal government has made no commitment to continue this important funding. Worse still, recent articles in major Canadian newspapers are indicating that the Federal Government may not renew the Labour Market Agreement. For example, see this article in the National Post on March 4, 2013 "*Ottawa set to cancel \$2-billion in EI training transfers to the provinces*":

<http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2013/03/04/john-ivison-ottawa-set-to-cancel-2-billion-in-ei-training-transfers-to-the-provinces/>

Continued LMA funding from the Federal Government is **crucial** for Ontario's literacy and employment programs and for the well-being of our province. This is an important issue to raise with stakeholder groups and particularly with Ontario MPs in your community.

To help raise awareness, Community Literacy of Ontario has prepared an updated version of *Literacy: Why It Matters*, which includes information about that importance of the Labour Market Agreement to Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills programs. You can access an online version of *Literacy: Why It Matters* here:

www.communityliteracyofontario.ca/resource/literacy_why_it_matters.pdf.

CLO will be circulating *Literacy: Why It Matters* to all Ontario MPs and MPPs, with an accompanying letter to explain the importance of the Labour Market Agreement to literacy programming. You can also link to the information CLO will be sharing via Facebook (www.facebook.com/CommunityLiteracyOntario) and Twitter (<https://twitter.com/Love4Literacy>).

We hope that the information and resources we have provided about this extremely important issue are useful to you.

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