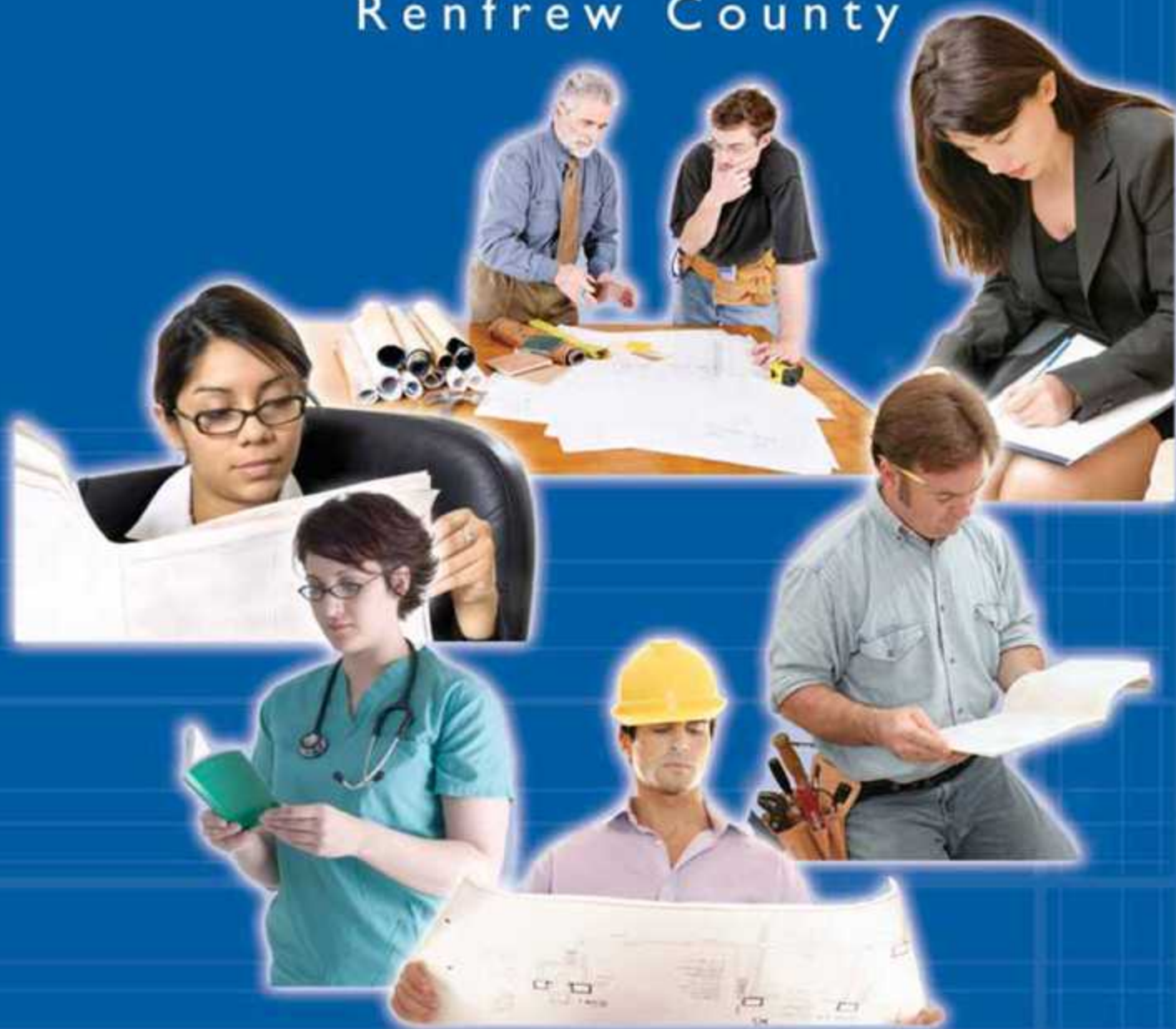


Making Cent\$ of Literacy

the bottom line impact

Renfrew County



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the bottom line impact

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1000 Islands Region Workforce Development Board
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Making Cent\$ of Literacy

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Literacy in the Workplace

"By the Year 2020, the Canadian shortage of skilled workers is forecast to be about one million workers. One of the real keys to our future economic progress will be our willingness to address the looming skills shortage."
(Business Edge, Eric Newell, former CEO of Syncrude, March 2006)

- Workplace literacy is an important issue for business and labour.
- Globalization and new technologies have brought about significant changes in productivity and innovation in the workplace that have in turn placed greater demands on employees.
- Literacy skills are one of the cornerstones of economic success, yet the latest literacy study by Statistics Canada shows that millions of Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need to keep pace with the escalating demands of society and the economy.

"A country's most important resource is its human capital. In order for Canada to move forward and be strong, we must invest in Canadians, ensuring that no member of society is left behind in the knowledge-based economy."

– Human Resources and Social Development Canada

Table 1 (below) - the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey – reveals a working-age (16 to 65) Canadian population lacking in the minimum literacy skills required to cope with the everyday demands of life and work - and Ontario is no exception.

Table 1

Sector	%
Accommodation & Food Services	67%
Construction	54%
Manufacturing	46%
Trade, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate & Leasing	36%
Health Care & Social Assistance	35%

Source: International Adult Literacy Survey - a seven country comparative study of adult literacy.

"Just a 1% increase in average literacy rates would yield a 1.5% or \$18 billion permanent increase in the GDP and a 2.5% increase in productivity."

– Columbe, Tremblay and Marchund, 2004

Making Cent\$ of Literacy



Facts About Literacy Levels

- Literacy is not only a person's ability to read words and sentences, it also includes the ability to understand and use written material.
- Canadians with strong literacy skills have better paying jobs and are less likely to become unemployed than those with lower literacy levels.
- The most common place that people practice and improve their literacy skills is at work.
- The opportunity to use literacy skills on the job can actually help people maintain and enhance skills long after they have completed their formal education.
- Growth industries require high levels of literacy; jobs requiring lower skills are declining.
- People with low literacy levels may be good performers in their current job; they may have learned by example, experience and instinct.
- People with low literacy levels tend to effectively develop coping skills to hide their literacy shortfalls.
- People with low literacy levels tend to be slower to respond to new developments and change, and may have difficulty with some situations that require reading such as computer skills, training exercises, problem solving, or using charts and graphs.

Definition of Literacy

Traditionally, literacy has been defined as the ability to read and write. Today, the definition of literacy also includes the ability to understand and use written information, such as reading, writing, numeracy, critical thinking and problem solving.^[1] In this sense, it is defined as:

"The fundamental skills, attributes, attitudes and behaviours that enable people to speak, write prose, use documents and numbers, and work responsibly alone or in teams in the workplace."^[2]

Because few adults are unable to read at all, literacy is normally regarded as a given. However, literacy encompasses a more complex set of "Essential Skills" that people need at work.

The benefits of improving workplace literacy levels are not always clear, but raising the level of employee literacy and basic skills translates into an improved bottom line through financial savings, higher profits, and improved performance and productivity.

Essential Skills

The Government of Canada recognizes nine "Essential Skills" that are used in daily life and almost every occupation. It defines these as "the skills needed for work, learning and life."

Nine Essential Skills

1. Reading Text
2. Document Use
3. Numeracy
4. Writing
5. Oral Communication
6. Working with Others
7. Continuous Learning
8. Thinking Skills
9. Computer Use

Key employability skills needed to enter, stay in and progress in the world of work are outlined by the Conference Board of Canada at:

www.conferenceboard.ca/education/learning-tools/default.htm

1. Business Results Through Literacy - Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters
2. Conference Board of Canada

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Are You Ready?

Low literacy skill levels represent a social and economic challenge that will likely become even more acute as on-the-job demands increase through the adoption of information and communication technologies and as the demographic makeup of Canada's workforce changes.

- Tomorrow's business world will see a strong demand for skilled labour and technological expertise.
- Employees will be expected to learn and adapt to new and continually changing processes.

Are you and your employees prepared for these changes in the workplace?

Three demographic trends are converging with serious ramifications for almost every industry:

1. Retirement of baby boomers
2. Increase in life expectancy (People are living longer due to improved medicine and public healthcare. For example, Canadian women born in 2001 have an average life expectancy of 82, and Canadian men, of 77)
3. Birthrate is at an historic low (In Canada: 1.1 children per family)

These trends suggest a population of aging citizens, followed by successive, smaller generations. Companies will start to experience a "talent crunch" when they seek to replace large numbers of key employees as they retire.^[3]

Employer Myths About Literacy in the Workplace

Do any of the following statements describe your organization's outlook on literacy issues?

- We do not have a problem
- We might lose employees if we invest in training
- We cannot afford to invest in training

If you have checked off at least one of these statements, you should consider the hidden impact to YOUR bottom line!

FACT:

- Raising employee literacy skills levels will help to:
- improve productivity, quality and safety
 - improve problem solving
 - improve ability to handle change
 - help handle the introduction of new technology
 - improve employee relations.

Making Cent\$ of Literacy



Understand the Bottom Line Benefits of Improving Literacy

Bottom line benefits to the employer include:

- reduced error rates
- improved health and safety record
- reduced waste in production of goods and services
- increased customer and employee retention

Bottom line benefits to the employee include:

- ability to complete the same tasks faster and more accurately
- improved morale/self-esteem
- ability to work better with co-workers or in teams
- improved reading, writing, numeracy, communication and problem-solving skills
- greater chance of promotion or transfer into new positions
- increased pay and/or responsibility

Why support workplace literacy and basic skills programs?

Improved literacy skill levels create a win-win situation for everyone. Employers who support literacy and basic skills development often enjoy a more conscientious, resourceful, loyal and dependable workforce. More skillful employees are more confident employees. Employee confidence translates into creativity and initiative that, in turn, contributes to the overall performance of the organization.

Table 2 (below) - A (2001) national survey of The Conference Board of Canada revealed the following reasons why organizations use or would use workplace literacy and basic skills programs:

Table 2

Reasons to Use Program	% of Organizations
Improve Productivity	66%
Cost Savings	53%
Improve Communications	52%
New Technology	35%
Improve Health and Safety	31%
Increase Profits	17%
Build Employee Loyalty	15%
Lack of Qualified Applicants	6%

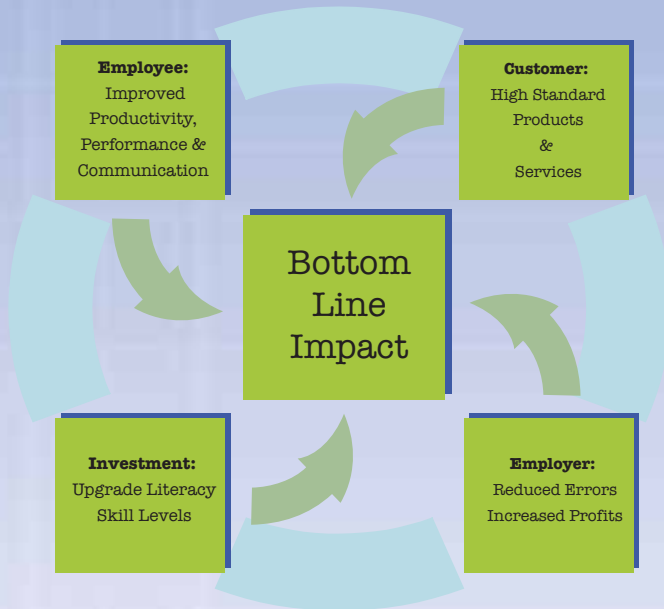
"The Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy (1988) estimated low literacy levels cost businesses \$1.6 billion in lost time due to workplace accidents and \$2.5 billion in lost productivity."

– Literacy at Work, Literacy Alberta

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"The marginal value of investing in human capital is about three times greater than the value of investing in machinery."
 – T Stewart, Intellectual Capital, 1997



- Literacy is important because it is one of the keys to maintaining corporate competitiveness and personal success.
- Workplaces and processes are becoming more sophisticated with technology, machinery and equipment.
- Through hallmarks of excellence such as the ISO 9000 certification, employers are under mounting pressure to demonstrate to customers that their products and services meet the highest standards.
- As work environments become more demanding, employers need to ensure that all employees have the literacy and basic skills to perform safely, accurately and efficiently.

"Companies offer literacy skills training to their employees because enhanced reading, writing and numeracy skills will ultimately contribute to a stronger bottom line through time savings, lower costs and improvements in the quality of work."

– Conference Board of Canada -The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workforce

How to Overcome Barriers to Workplace Literacy

Table 3

Barrier	Possible Solution
Lack of Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify training needs ▪ Engage outside training providers ▪ Collaborate with employees
Limited Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Refer employees to existing community literacy programs ▪ Partner with a university, college, continuing education provider or local literacy agency ▪ Create an in-house training solution using volunteers as peer trainers or mentors ▪ Obtain free training materials from the library or on-line
Scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a convenient on-site learning centre ▪ Make use of mentoring to deliver workplace training ▪ Offer voluntary lunch & learn sessions ▪ Use desk top learning

Learn from Champions of Workforce Literacy



Eganville

Sylvia* is a young mother who left high school early. She was eager to upgrade her skills but lives in a rural area where adult education and training is limited. Meeting in the local library once a week with a tutor from Literacy Plus, Sylvia worked hard on her reading, writing and math skills. After two years, she was able to successfully write her high school equivalency exams and has taken on a second job. "I have come to realize the importance of Literacy Plus and how it has impacted my life. If it was not for the program, I wouldn't be where I am today. It has not only improved my outlook for life but also my self-esteem. I came out of school...into the real world and did not know which way to turn, and that's where your program came in. Words have a hard time expressing how this program has changed my life."

Arnprior

Cheyenne* is 57 year old Aboriginal woman. She quit school in grade 6 to help raise her 15 brothers and sisters. As an assistant cook, she 'dreamed' of becoming the Head Cook, a position soon to be vacant. This position required considerable documentation and writing skills, as well as mathematical skills for measuring and estimating food supplies. Cheyanne would also require some post secondary training in food preparation, in order to apply. Through her *or*trac career counsellor, she completed the necessary testing with the Renfrew County District School Board, Continuing and Community Education program. Cheyanne was a hard working student and she progressed quickly. She wrote the college challenge exam, and was accepted, but had to turn it down due to family obligations. The employer was so impressed with her academic accomplishment and commitment, that she was offered the position as

Head Cook when the position became open. Now with greater confidence, Cheyanne has been doing correspondence courses in order to obtain the necessary credits she requires for a grade 12 diploma.

Renfrew

Bob* quit high school to work at a booming manufacturing plant. Thirty years later he lost his job through downsizing. He quickly realized that he would need to upgrade his skills to be competitive for jobs in the trade related fields. Working with his Employment Networks Counsellor, he entered the Basic Skills Upgrading program with the Renfrew County Continuing Education. Bob researched the Oil & Gas Technician program through Kemptville College; the demand for a licensed technician was confirmed through local employer contact. After 8 months, he received his high school diploma from the Adult High School. Bob has currently secured an Apprenticeship position with a Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning Company and will complete his apprenticeship before he turns 55!

Pembroke

Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley offers the Ontario Basic Skills program, which helps adult learners prepare for a college program or the work place. Samantha, a 29 year old mother of three learned about the program from the staff at Job Connect, an Employment Ontario program that assists its clients with career and employment planning. "I didn't think that I had the "smarts" to actually complete my grade 12, but with the help of the teachers at Algonquin College I have been provided with a perfect learning environment to learn and grow every day," she says. Students in the Ontario Basic Skills program can complete the Academic and Career Entrance program that is recognized by colleges throughout Ontario as meeting the admission requirement for full-time programs and apprenticeship training. Samantha is working her way toward enrolling in the Business program at Algonquin College. "I can finally say that I am on the road to achieving my goals and that is a great feeling after such a long road to success."

(* not his/her real name)

making connections



Renfrew County

Community - Based Programs

Employment Networks

231 Argyle Street South
Renfrew, ON K7V 4A2

Tel: 613-432-3424
Fax: 613- 432-7304

www.employmentnetworks.ca

Employment Ontario

1-800-387-5656

www.ontario.ca/employmentontario

Job Connect- Arnprior

75 Elgin St. W., Arnprior, ON K7S 3T9

Tel: 613-622-5524

Fax: 613-623-2104

www.algonquincollege.com/jobconnect

Job Connect- Barry's Bay

19536 Opeongo Line

Barry's Bay, ON

Tel: 613-756-8079

www.algonquincollege.com/jobconnect

Job Connect- Pembroke

141 Lake Street, Pembroke, ON K8A 5L8

Tel: 613-735-4308

Fax: 613-635-4862

www.algonquincollege.com/jobconnect

Job Connect- Renfrew

39 Renfrew Avenue W., Renfrew, ON K7V 2Y2

Tel: 613-432-5863

Fax: 613-432-4087

www.algonquincollege.com/jobconnect

Literacy Ontario Central South

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Peterborough ON K9J 3R8

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Fax: 705-749-1883

www.locs.on.ca

Literacy Plus

131 Queen St, Unit #1,

P.O. Box 74, Eganville, ON, K0J 1T0

Tel: 613-628-1720

Fax: 613-628-1721

1-800-387-4712

www.literacyplus-renfrewcounty.ca

ontrac Employment Resource Services

Kenwood Corporate Centre, 160 William St W, Suite 110

Arnprior, ON, K7S 3W4

Tel: 613-623-4680

Fax: 613-623-2486

www.getontrac.ca

Service Canada

Employment Insurance Telephone

Information Service

1-800-206-7218

www.servicecanada.gc.ca

Tyerman & Daughters Inc. - Barry's Bay Centre

19536 Opeongo Line, Barry's Bay, ON K0J 1B0

Tel: 613-756-8079

<http://tyerman.com>

Tyerman & Daughters Inc. - Pembroke Centre

23 Pembroke Street West

Tel: 613-732-3334

<http://tyerman.com>

Tyerman & Daughters Inc. -

Rural Outreach Employment Services

Eganville Head Office

232 Bridge St, Box 431, Eganville, ON, K0J 1T0

Tel: 613-628-1700

Fax: 613-628-3538

1-800-462-0208

<http://tyerman.com>

School Board Programs

Renfrew County Catholic District School Board

Computer Assisted Adult Learning

Literacy and Basic Skills

499 Pembroke St W, Pembroke, ON, K8A 5P1

Tel: 613-735-1031

Fax: 613-735-9273

1 -800-267-0191

www.rccdsb.edu.on.ca

Renfrew County District School Board

Continuing and Community Education Department

Literacy and Basic Skills

480 Mary St., Pembroke, ON, K8A 5W9

Tel: 613 732-8740

Fax: 613 735-3219

www.renfrew.edu.on.ca

College Programs

Algonquin College

315 Pembroke Street East

Pembroke, ON K8A 3K2

Tel: 613-735-4700

Fax: 613-735-8800

www.algonquincollege.com

Making Cent\$ of Literacy



Participate in an Initiative to increase local workplace literacy and skills levels

One of the biggest challenges of providing workplace training is deciding whether or not it is successful. Employers should ask themselves the following questions:
What is a useful measure of training success? What is the return on the training investment?

Table 4 (below) shows sample measures of training effectiveness commonly used by Canadian organizations. The measures shown arise from a national survey of employers by the Conference Board of Canada in 2001.

Table 4

What is Measured	A Useful Measure Of...				
	Employee Buy-in	Management Buy-In	Customer Satisfaction	Financial Results	Operational Results
Employee learning	✓				✓
Productivity					✓
Error rates/efficiency			✓		✓
Employee absenteeism	✓				✓
Staff turnover	✓				
Promotions		✓			
Fines or claims related to health and safety				✓	✓

What Can You Do?

1. Identify the need for a workplace literacy program.
2. Discuss literacy and educational opportunities throughout all levels in the workplace.
3. Gain support from management, workers and union.
4. Identify resources to implement a workplace literacy program.

Take the Workplace Literacy Challenge!

Get on board with progressive employers in your area and start the ball rolling to implement your own workplace literacy program. Be a leader in your community. Participate in an initiative to increase local workplace literacy and skills levels.

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL LITERACY PROVIDER TODAY!



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