
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Advanced Education

ADULT LITERACY FUNDING CONTINUES TO HELP LEARNERS

VANCOUVER – The Province will provide \$1.28 million for 47 adult literacy programs aimed at helping British Columbians reach their potential and reap the advantages of B.C.’s strong economy through better jobs, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell announced today.

“This year, we’re funding every established adult literacy program that met the ministry’s funding criteria so one-on-one tutoring and group learning activities will continue to help adult learners with the skills they need in their lives,” Coell said. “Our investments in adult literacy are bringing us closer to achieving our goal of making B.C. the most literate jurisdiction on the continent.”

Adult literacy grants help people in remote communities, Aboriginal learners, young parents, people living in poverty, and new Canadians who are not literate in their first language to create better futures for themselves and their families.

Through projects funded under the Community Adult Literacy Program, more than 5,000 people are expected to learn reading, writing and numeracy skills that will improve their employability. (Numeracy, short for “numerical literacy,” refers to the ability to handle numbers and mathematical concepts.) The projects are delivered through partnerships with post-secondary institutions.

Meanwhile, a new report shows B.C. has the highest adult education participation rate in Canada, and that the number of British Columbians with low prose literacy levels dropped by 4.5 per cent between 1994 and 2003.

Building Our Competencies: B.C. Results of the International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey provides further details from a 2003 survey showing proficiency levels from each province and territory in Canada, including these highlights:

- In B.C., 57 per cent of the population from 16 to 65 received adult education and training, the highest participation rate in Canada.
- Compared with the 1994 survey, the number of people in B.C. with low prose literacy levels improved by 4.5 per cent to 34 per cent.
- In B.C., only 40 per cent of adults 16 and older perform below Level 3 on the prose and document literacy scales, better than the national figure of 48 per cent. Level 3 proficiency is considered necessary to cope with increasing skills levels required by the knowledge economy.
- B.C. ranked above average, along with Alberta and Saskatchewan, and had a higher prose literacy proficiency rating than Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
- The average prose literacy proficiency in B.C. was higher than that of the United States, Switzerland and Italy and the same as Bermuda and Norway.

“We are very encouraged by the continued funding from the provincial government to support literacy for people of all ages,” said Linda Mitchell, chair of the Premier’s Advisory Panel on Literacy. “The literacy panel will continue to work with our literacy partners to ensure that all British Columbians have the learning opportunities and resources they need to improve their literacy skills.”

The Province has made improving literacy skills one of its five great goals for the coming decade. Over the past year, the Province has provided more than \$50 million in literacy funding, including \$12 million for libraries over three years, \$5 million for literacy innovation grants, \$1.4 million for adult literacy, \$5 million for LiteracyNow, \$10 million for textbooks, \$19 million for Adult Basic Education (fundamental level), and \$3 million for Ready, Set, Learn – a program for preschoolers.

Friday, Sept. 8 is International Literacy Day.

For information on AchieveBC, visit www.achievebc.ca online.

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