

Questions and Answers

Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training

“Literacy. It means more than you think”- Atlantic Adult Literacy Awareness Campaign Launch

Questions and Answers

1. Who developed the “Literacy. It means more than you think” campaign?

On September 2009, in response to the premiers’ resolution on literacy, adopted at the Meeting of Atlantic Cabinets 2008, the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training released a regional literacy action plan titled, *Literacy: Key to Learning and Path to Prosperity-An Action Plan for Atlantic Canada 2009-2014*. This regional literacy action plan outlines joint strategies that ministers will undertake to promote literacy and improve literacy rates throughout Atlantic Canada.

A component of the ministers’ literacy action plan is the development and launch of a regional adult literacy awareness campaign designed to empower and inspire Atlantic Canadians regarding the benefits of life-long learning and improving their literacy rates.

An Atlantic working group for adult literacy comprising experts from each of the four provinces, and supported by the CAMET Secretariat, articulated the objectives and strategy for this initiative. An RFP was issued, and m5 Marketing Communications was awarded the contract.

2. What is the goal of the “Literacy. It means more than you think” campaign?

The campaign tag-line, “Literacy. It means more than you think,” underlines that literacy encompasses much more than reading, writing, and numeracy. It affects every aspect of an individual’s daily life, whether as a learner, employer, worker, or parent. The overarching objective of the campaign is to increase awareness amongst Atlantic Canadians regarding the links between literacy levels and quality of life, health, employment and the overall economy. It will further challenge more Atlantic Canadians to improve their essential skills by making literacy everyone’s business.

The campaign will be implemented over four years, and is divided into two phases. The goal of Phase One (Years one and two) is to create public awareness of what literacy means and how important literacy is to our daily lives. These empowering messages will be delivered through the campaign's television advertising.

The focus of Phase Two (Years three and four) of the campaign will be on encouraging potential learners to participate in adult learning programs, as well as developing more grassroots tactics to enhance and mobilize partnerships among employers and adult learning and community organizations.

3. Who are the target audiences?

The primary target audience for Phase One of the campaign is the general population, ages 18+, with employers as the secondary audience. The primary target audiences for Phase Two are adult learners, with employers as the secondary audience.

4. What are the components of the campaign?

Phase One of the campaign consists of eight (fifteen second) TV ads, four French and four English in total. The four themes for the TV ads include: general literacy awareness, the benefits of strengthened literacy rates on the economy, the impacts and benefits for employers, and the health benefits of life-long learning for families.

Beginning November 1, with the launch of the campaign by ministers, these television advertisements will run for four weeks on stations across the four Atlantic provinces. The stations include ATV Maritimes, CBC Halifax, CBC Fredericton, CBC Charlottetown, CBC Newfoundland and Labrador, NTV, and CBAFT. A second four-week flight of the TV advertisements will take place in Year two of the campaign. The ads will air across the same Atlantic stations.

5. Why do the TV ads feature clips of streeters?

The campaign was designed to empower and inspire Atlantic Canadians to improve their literacy and essential skills by making literacy everyone's business. The TV ads reinforce this message by featuring ordinary Atlantic Canadians talking about literacy and sharing their experiences.

The advertisements convey the key message that literacy means having the skills we all need. It affects every aspect of an individual's daily life, whether as a learner, employer, worker, or parent.

6. Are there additional components of the campaign planned?

Yes. A learner/employer component designed to mobilize partnerships and encourage potential learners to participate in adult learning programs will be implemented in Phase Two of the campaign.

7. What are the Ministers' roles with respect to the "Literacy. It means more than you think" campaign?

Ministers will launch the TV ads in their respective province on November 1, showcasing their leadership, concern, and collaboration regarding the important issue of literacy.

8. What is the cost of the campaign and is this a good way to spend money?

The total cost of the campaign is \$500,000, cost-shared by the four Atlantic provinces. Investing in this initiative will mean long term gain as literacy is the foundation of social and economic progress. Strong literacy skills play a vital role in ensuring Atlantic Canadians participate fully in the workplace and in the community, from conducting on-line banking to helping children with homework.

The benefits to individuals of improved literacy in terms of employability, wage rates, income, and health have been well documented. In *Literacy Matters: A Call to Action*, published in 2007 by the TD bank, it states that as a result of better employment opportunities, there is a strong relationship between literacy and personal income.

9. Why is this important now?

Studies such as the 2003 *International Adult Literacy Skills Survey* (IALSS) indicate that more than half of Atlantic Canadians have literacy and numeracy levels below the minimum skills level suitable for coping with the demands of everyday life and work. Furthermore, the extent of the problem is not well understood, as individuals generally associate the idea of literacy with the ability to read, and do not appreciate its broader context, such as the skills to perform daily tasks, from banking to reading to children. Given that research highlights that strengthened literacy levels improve a person/employee's overall health and income, as well as a company's productivity, the adult literacy awareness campaign will focus on positive messages aimed at destigmatizing adult literacy, and promoting that "literacy is everyone's business".

10. What is New Brunswick doing to improve literacy levels in the province?

The vision of New Brunswick's adult literacy strategy, *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick* is for all New Brunswickers to have the literacy skills they need to participate fully at home, at work and in their communities. It focuses on four strategic areas to improve services in the province and raise literacy levels. These include:

- 1- to reduce barriers and increasing participation;
- 2- to increase the number and range of adult learning opportunities;
- 3- to ensure the quality and effectiveness of programs; and
- 4- to strengthen partnerships and develop a robust and effective adult literacy system.

Action is underway and further initiatives are planned for the next three years to improve our adult literacy system - in the department, with other departments of government and with stakeholders in the private and voluntary sectors.

11. What programs are available to New Brunswickers who want to improve their literacy and essential skills?

- 1- Community Adult Learning Centres, within The Community Adult Learning Network (CALNet), provide literacy training to the end of IALSS Level 2, GED preparation, both in class and online and e-learning programs offering computer training and other lifelong learning opportunities. This year funding has been provided for 160 academic and 70 e-learning programs in over 100 communities throughout the province.
- 2- The Workplace Essential Skills (WES) Program which is delivered both in the public and private sectors in partnership with business and labour provides an accelerated learning pathway for skills enhancement. Prior learning is recognized in the assessment process. Training utilizes a competency-based approach with curriculum based on HRSDC's nine essential skills.¹ Training is designed to improve performance and/or mobility within the individual's current workplace. For the unemployed, it will improve employability and access to further learning. Currently, there are 37 active initiatives and a further 50 are in the discussion/development stage.
- 3- The department is working with Laubach Literacy New Brunswick to help the organization build its capacity and improve the quality of its one-on-one tutoring service for Anglophones in the province. The department is partnering with LaFédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick to explore development of a similar service for Francophones.
- 4- The New Brunswick Public Library Service (NBPLS) has launched an Adult Literacy Collection of more than 15,000 books in both official languages. Since September 2009, province-wide access to bookmobile services is now available in rural areas not served by a public library. NBPLS has also developed and is testing a service model for people with print disabilities, which includes the provision of workstations with adaptive technology and access to special collections, in partnership with CNIB and Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, in 9 public libraries. NBPLS has also implemented a book-by-mail service available to New Brunswickers who are unable to visit a public library or bookmobile.

¹ HRSDC's nine essential skills are reading text, document use, writing, numeracy, oral communication, thinking skills, working with others, computer use and continuous learning.