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Adult Learning and Literacy in Canada

Volume 2: Chapter Six
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Canada is a vast country stretching millions of square miles with a population of only 30.5 million as of 1999. With the move from rural to urban centers during this century, the population has clustered around major cities but remains strung out across the continent, situated mostly within a hundred miles of the U.S.-Canada border. The physical distances between communities and the generally sparse population have contributed to strong regional identities, which in some parts of the country, such as Quebec and to a lesser extent some western provinces, can surpass national loyalties. These regional identities have shaped Canada's culture and forms of government and policies, including those pertaining to education. Thus, it is not possible to talk about a single system of service provision regarding adult learning and literacy. Each of the ten provinces and three territories has its own constitutionally guaranteed system, any of which may differ from one another as much as do the systems in two different countries.

The varied terminology used to refer to adult learning and literacy across Canada is perhaps a reflection of the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories over education. Across Canada, the terms adult basic education (ABE) and literacy education are not necessarily defined in the same way, nor are they defined in the same way that they are in the United States. ABE is generally used to describe education for adults at the high school level, while literacy education usually refers to education for adults up to grade 9. Nonetheless, the term literacy is increasingly being used interchangeably with ABE in many provincial documents. The difficulty of separating these terms is evident in the definitions of literacy in current use in three provinces. The government of Alberta supports a definition formulated in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), conducted in 1994 and sponsored by the Canadian government and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): "[Literacy is] the ability to understand and employ printed information in

daily activities at home, at work and in the community-to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential." Alberta officials supplement this with additional definitions of "essential skills" and "employability skills." Quebec defines literacy education as follows: "Literacy services are designed to enable an adult to increase his functional abilities through the acquisition of listening, oral expression, reading, writing and arithmetic skills based on his everyday activities and needs and, when applicable, to make it possible for him to pursue further studies" (Ministry of Education of Quebec, 1994). Newfoundland, sensitive to the complexity and relativity of the concept of literacy, does not work from a single definition. For the purposes of this chapter, I will use the terms adult basic education and literacy education interchangeably, in keeping with their use in the other chapters. When a distinction in the grade-level equivalency is necessary, I will indicate it.

CULTURAL HISTORY

Like the United States, Canada is a country of immigrants carved out of land taken from its native inhabitants. After colonial battles between the British and French from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the British won final control in 1759. Unlike the United States, Canada was not created by means of a galvanizing ideology or momentous event such as the American Revolution. The country was built slowly, and often reluctantly, through negotiation and compromise, reflecting the distinct ethnic origins and geography of the provinces (Francis, Jones, & Smith, 1992; McConnell, 1977).

"Two Solitudes"

Canada has had from its beginning two official languages. The title of a famous Canadian novel, Two Solitudes, has become a recognized metaphor for the relationship between the English and French communities in Canada. Until the 1960s, they had developed separate ways of life that rarely crossed except in dramatic circumstances, such as conscription during the two world wars.

Following the British conquest, in 1763 the British accorded the French guarantees of language and religion as a way of keeping peace with a minimal military presence. Quebec became and has remained the place where a majority of French-speaking Canadians (today called francophones) live. Small communities of francophones continued to live in other parts of Canada, especially Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, and Manitoba. The French language survived because its use was institutionalized in the federal parliament, the Quebec legislature, and both federal and provincial courts. However, by the early twentieth century, the use of and official support for French had waned; two provinces had abolished official bilingualism, and some had limited the

teaching of French. By the 1960s such teaching was almost nonexistent outside Quebec (Wagner, 1990), where strong nationalist feelings were mounting as part of a "Quiet Revolution." This term, coined by a Toronto-based reporter, became a shorthand way to describe a new political and cultural reality that was peacefully transforming Quebec socially and economically from a closed Catholic society to a province with modern business and government structures. Simultaneously, Quebec politicians were stoking a sense of "national" pride based on their French language and heritage. (In Canada, the word national means Canadian or federal; in Quebec, it refers to Quebec.) The motto of the newly elected provincial government in 1960 was "MaÓtres chez nous" ("Masters in our home"). The federal government, fearing a polarization of Canada and Quebec, responded with dramatic new legislation that sought to reentrench bilingualism in all of Canada.

In 1963, the federal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism recommended a charter for the official languages of Canada that was implemented in 1969 with the Official Languages Act. It gave people the right to federal government services in the "official" language of their choice and gave preferential treatment to bilingual public servants. In protecting "minority language rights," it also gave parents the right to request education in one of the two official languages for students in grades Kñ12, where numbers warranted. The term minority language applies to French outside the province of Quebec and to English inside Quebec. It does not apply to other languages. The Official Languages Act was enshrined in the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This charter is increasingly being invoked in Canada's courts to claim individual rights and is seen by many groups across the country as vital to language rights.

The 1969 Official Languages Act, while not well received everywhere in Canada, did lead several provinces to implement their own language policies. The province of Quebec in 1977 passed Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, making French the official language in Quebec, restricting access to education in English, and limiting the use of languages other than French on public signs.

Under the umbrella of Official Languages, Heritage Canada, a department of the federal government, still annually transfers millions of dollars to provincial and territorial governments and to community groups for language teaching and cultural education. More than $250 million (Canadian)1 has been given out each year since 1993. Some of this money finds its way to ABE and literacy through various routes, including formal (or accredited) English as a second language/French as a second language (ESL/FSL) programs as well as volunteer and community-based projects and activities.2 Very little second-language

funding shows up in provincial reports on ABE and literacy, complicating the possibility of producing an accurate account of annual spending on these dossiers.

"Cultural Mosaic"
Four main cultural groupings are distinguished in Canadian policy. Predominant are the "two founding nations," Anglo-Saxon and French. Another is Native cultures, those of the "First Nations," who were here before the colonizers arrived. The fourth comprises all the other ethnic groups, representing many races and nationalities, who have immigrated to Canada since the nineteenth century, but in greatest numbers since World War II.

This immigration has changed the face of the country. Since the 1960s, Canada has represented itself as both a bilingual and a multicultural country that the federal government prefers to call a "cultural mosaic" rather than a "melting pot." The metaphor is meant to support the idea of ethnic and cultural diversity, expressing the fact that the different immigrant communities maintain many traditions and often continue to speak the languages of their country of origin while also becoming "Canadian" (Hawkins, 1988).

The concepts of "two founding nations" and "cultural mosaic" coexist with tension. The term multiculturalism arose in the 1960s, partly in response to criticism that biculturalism unfairly favored French. The federal government formalized a policy in 1971 that recognized the diversity of Canada's ethnic and cultural groups and supported programs to maintain the distinctions and foster mutual respect and equality. This policy was viewed with hostility by those who feared its potential to undermine bicultural policies and weaken the status of the French language (Palmer, 1975).

During this period, policies supporting the teaching of "heritage languages" (the mother tongues of immigrant groups) were implemented by the federal Department of Secretary of State (today part of Heritage Canada). While these policies were formulated with the children of immigrants in mind, funding streams such as the Newcomers Language/Orientation Classes (NLOC) allowed some creative community-based adult educators the opportunity to offer mother tongue literacy to immigrants who were not literate in their mother tongue and, it was argued, could not easily learn English as a second language. St. Christopher House and several other community-based organizations in Toronto, Ontario, ran mother tongue literacy programs for immigrants into the 1980s. These initiatives laid the foundation for some current models of literacy provision. For example, NLOC services in the 1960s were expanded to include a mother and preschooler program encouraging

reading to the child in the mother tongue; this component was later adapted by family literacy programs without the mother tongue emphasis (Larimer, 1999).

During the 1970s, concerns about the literacy of adults who had not completed at least the ninth grade began to emerge from the larger discussion about adult training and ABE. This was also a time when concerns related to second-language learning first became an issue in urban areas with large immigrant populations. Immigrants in Quebec today are accommodated in FSL classes; immigrants in the rest of Canada learn ESL. The overlap in instruction for adults in a second language and in literacy is problematic in many places in part because funding for literacy and for second-language services comes from different sources. Teaching methodology is also a concern, as methods appropriate for immigrant students who are highly literate in their mother tongue are not suited to students with limited or no mother tongue literacy. Both types of immigrant student are sometimes placed in the same class with Canadian-born ABE students.

Native communities have unique literacy problems. (The term Native is used to refer to the Indian tribes across the country, the Inuit people in the far North, and the MÈtis in the western prairie provinces. The MÈtis are the descendants of Indian-French intermarriage who were not accepted into either community.) Among multiple injustices committed against Native peoples was forced residential schooling for children, who were taken from their parents and placed in schools where they were forbidden to speak their mother tongue and compelled to learn English or French. This policy persisted into the 1950s. Not only were many Native languages lost, but family life was destroyed. Native children in these schools experienced neither Native nor Canadian parenting, and many suffered physical and sexual abuse, which led to lasting psychological damage. On another front, Native land claims are being heard in several provincial courts, such as British Columbia's, resulting in millions of square miles of territory being returned to the communities from which they were taken. But compensation and territory cannot respond adequately to the legacy of problems these communities face from alcohol, drugs, violence, suicide, a high incidence of disease (including diabetes and high blood pressure), and enduring racism. Not surprisingly, rates of low literacy, undereducation, and incarceration are significantly higher in Native communities than anywhere else in Canada. Although these communities were not included in the 1994 IALS (or in a significant earlier nationwide study, the 1989 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities), the issue of Native literacy has been studied and acknowledged at provincial and federal levels over the past decade (Rodriguez & Sawyer, 1990; Canada Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, 1990; Darling, 1993; George, 1997).

Native literacy issues vary across Canada. In some western provinces and in the territories, Native students comprise the majority or all of the ABE/literacy students. The Northwest Territories have eleven official languages: English, French, and nine Native languages. Some communities, such as the Mohawk, are attempting to revive dying languages through immersion schools for children, encouraging adults to learn as well. They are addressing mother tongue and English-language literacy simultaneously. Communities in the far North have been more likely than those in the South to keep their mother tongues, but these languages were passed on as part of an oral, not written, tradition. Through formal schooling today, they are passing on a recently written language that was not part of their ancestry. In the past decade, many outstanding Native literacy materials (see, for example, Parkland Regional College, 1998) have been created, often incorporating audio and video components in recognition of the oral traditions. Native resource centers have been established. British Columbia did some of the earliest work on Native literacy in the 1980s. AlphaPlus, the Ontario Resource Centre, has a fully staffed Native section, and clearinghouses such as Ningwakwe, in northern Ontario, publish, collect, and disseminate materials. These are only a few examples of the initiatives developing wherever Native communities reside. Native literacy in Canada today is guided and created by Native practitioners and reflects a holistic philosophy characteristic of their cultures; literacy is addressed in the context of traditional practices and contemporary community concerns. The work to date is only a beginning; Native leaders know it will take generations to address all the challenges (George, 1997).

Yet another example of the differences between the pieces in Canada's cultural mosaic is the province of Newfoundland. See Exhibit 6.1 for details.

EDUCATION: NO ONE SYSTEM
When Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, it brought the number of provinces to its current ten. All ten have jurisdictional control of education. In addition, there are three territories in the North: the Northwest Territories, Yukon Territory, and Nunavut. The Nunavut, created in April 1999, is a primarily Inuit territory of twenty-seven thousand citizens. Because the territories lack sufficient population or political maturity to warrant provincial status, they are under the jurisdiction of the federal government. In certain areas, however, including education, authority is delegated to the territorial governments. The federal government sits in Ottawa.

Canada became a country through the confederation of four colonies in 1867 and added provinces and territories slowly. Union was not always

popular, and in some cases was achieved by a bare majority vote or through political sleight-of-hand (Lower, 1977). Some of the early resistance has been carried over to the present day, manifesting itself in grassroots disaffection and power struggles between federal and provincial governments. At its most extreme, it has led to the separatist movement in Quebec, where the elected government is committed to creating its own country. Concurrently the federal government is preoccupied with maintaining national unity and renewing federalism.

Canada has no federal department of education, and although the federal government has tried since World War II to carve out a niche for itself in the education sector, it has done so gingerly, with extreme concern about upsetting the provinces, which fiercely guard their jurisdictional powers. The federal government maintained control of workforce, or manpower, training, as distinguished from education, until 1997. It thus had a legitimate role in adult education, with much of the workforce training money allocated for high school equivalency training. In 1997, the workforce training jurisdiction devolved to the provinces, raising the prospect that training systems across the country may now become as diverse as the country's education systems.

Amid this complex of forces, ABE policies and provision in Canada are played out. In the formal (accredited) education sector, this provision is institutional and generally leads to certification; it may be offered at secondary schools, community colleges, or work sites. In the informal sector, which is usually community based and nonaccredited, provision can be as varied as providers are innovative; it can be through volunteer one-on-one tutoring, participatory popular education, or other group methodologies, and it may be offered through the workplace, church, libraries, community-based organizations, cultural communities, family centers, health centers, and others.

The differences in secondary education systems in the provinces and territories have their greatest impact on ABE provision at the formal level in programs offered through local school boards or community colleges. For example, in most provinces, students attend high school only until grade 12, but in some others they must attend through grade 13. In still other provinces, grade 13 is optional, while high school in Quebec ends at grade 11. Thus, there is a difference between provinces of up to two years in the time required to complete high school, covering comparable curriculum. Canadian universities have had to decide on admission equivalencies. A few provinces, such as Alberta and British Columbia, offer the certificate of General Educational Development (GED), but it has little status anywhere in Canada, even in provinces where it is offered, and it does not drive the ABE sector as it does in the United States. Since the 1960s, community colleges in all provinces and

territories have offered technical and vocational certification. There are more than 140 colleges across Canada, but these also have diverse systems. In every province except Quebec, colleges play some role in ABE provision; in the northern regions of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, colleges are the primary providers. This is also the case in the three territories. British Columbia recently created a hybrid system of university-colleges that can confer degrees. In Quebec, meanwhile, the college system is a hybrid of two-year preuniversity institutions, compulsory for anyone seeking admission to a Quebec university, and of three-year technical-professional institutions leading directly to the job market. These technical programs include dozens of options, such as nursing, engineering technology, and computer science; the curriculum is closer to that of an American technical B.A. or B.S. program than to the certificate programs at other Canadian community colleges. Students in the preuniversity and technical streams take a common general education core. Quebec colleges are not mandated to offer ABE/literacy. To date, there exists no formal agreement that accreditation achieved at any level of the education system, from ABE to postgraduate, in one province will necessarily be recognized in another.

The provision of ABE/literacy services is not statutory in all provinces and has generally operated on the fringe of the education sector, even in provinces that claim it is statutory. In 1999, more than eight hundred formal and nonformal programs were involved in literacy in some way across Canada, yet access remains uneven, since in many parts of the country, students cannot find a program appropriate to their needs, and much of the provision remains short term and unstable (Barker, 1999; Hoddinott, 1998).

Despite this diversity, provincial ministers of education meet regularly through the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC), founded in 1967. They exchange information and try to work from common principles, but the council has no power. In 1988, the CMEC published a major study of adult illiteracy (see Cairns, 1988), comparing need and provision in the provinces and recommending new directions. That report identified a "lack of consensus" among the provinces on definitions of literacy and on "the validity and reliability of data," while acknowledging "considerable analysis of illiteracy in Canada" over the previous fifteen years (p. 14). In the 1990s, the CMEC began to do some "national" testing on reading, writing, and math for students ages nine, thirteen, and sixteen across several provinces but did not include a sample of those over sixteen, since adult literacy was being surveyed through Statistics Canada, the country's central statistical agency. In 1998, the CMEC commissioned another study that placed literacy among the "essential skills for the workplace" best addressed through a

paradigm of lifelong learning (MacLeod, 1998); however, no joint action among ministers regarding ABE has yet been taken.

Since 1988, Statistics Canada has conducted two national adult literacy surveys. The 1989 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA) and the 1994 International Adult Literacy Survey have produced the only comparable data on adult literacy across provinces. The LSUDA, based on such earlier work in the United States as the 1985 Young Adult Literacy Survey, was conducted in both English and French and measured the literacy and numeracy skills of more than nine thousand adults ages sixteen to sixty-nine (Statistics Canada, 1991). It became the touchstone for literacy programs across the country and, with the imprimatur of Statistics Canada, provided credible empirical evidence that Canada required a national response to an issue that threatened the economic future of the country. The IALS was undertaken in seven industrialized countries by Statistics Canada and the OECD on the assumptions that adult literacy is "crucial to the economic performance of industrialized nations" and that "inadequate levels of literacy among a broad section of the population potentially threaten the strength of economies and the social cohesion of nations" (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 1995, p. 13). The seven participating countries were Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States. Expanding on the methodology used in the LSUDA and the 1993 U.S. National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), the IALS provided an updated profile of Canada's adult literacy skills, with better data on some subpopulations, and promoted a broader concept of literacy that had been evolving over the past decade. It presented literacy not as "a simple dichotomy that distinguishes those who have it from those who do not. Rather, it is a continuous distribution of abilities that depends on the type of information and the complexity of the tasks presented" (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 15). Although IALS data have been open to dispute, they serve as the most recent comparable data across the country and have been used extensively by the literacy community and the NLS to lobby for continued and expanded support from all levels of government and the corporate sector. Some of the IALS and LSUDA data are presented in the following section on demographics. (For a brief history of the legislation and organizations concerned with adult learning and literacy in Canada, see Appendix A. See Appendix B for contact information of relevant organizations today.)

DEMOGRAPHICS OF ADULT LEARNERS
In the past few years, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has several times named Canada as the most desirable country in the world in which to live. The country has a

strong social safety net that guarantees unemployment insurance, universal health care, and low-cost public education from kindergarten through postgraduate university levels. Canadians are, however, among the most highly taxed in the world. And with the increasing globalization of trade, passage of the North American Free Trade Act, and the advent of new technologies, the social benefits long taken for granted have come under attack. Canada's unemployment rate averaged close to 10 percent throughout the 1990s, unevenly distributed across provinces; only in November 1999 did the rate drop to a national average of 7.2 percent. Canada has an accumulated national debt of more than $576 billion and massive provincial debts. Under these circumstances, there has been a political shift to the right with calls for lower taxes, fewer social supports, more accountability, more targeted training for employment, and less "coddling" of "freeloaders." This has led to more short-term, narrowly focused skills training for specific jobs, has diverted funds from longer-term general education programs, and has forced some students out of ABE programs. Conversely, welfare-to-work policies have been implemented in many provinces, driving some reluctant students into literacy classes. These policy shifts have changed the profile of ABE provision over the past several years (Smith, 1997, 1998) and have caused fear among social activists that the neediest of the undereducated will be left out because they cannot be made employable quickly enough or because they may never be employable in the new economy.

While ABE and literacy have traditionally been the subject of little research, since the mid-1970s a series of researchers have dedicated themselves to the task (Hautecoeur, 1978; Thomas, 1976, 1983; Cairns, 1988; Wagner, 1990; Darville, 1992; Barker, 1992, 1999; Hoddinott, 1998). The caveat when conducting any sort of educational research in Canada is that there is no consistency of government data across provinces. Since funding comes from so many different streams and ministries, federal and provincial, reporting is fragmented, and similar kinds of provision are called by different names, making it almost impossible to come up with accurate figures on participation or costs. Much of what has passed for research from the field is memoir, anecdote, or, more recently, public relations documents written by participants, program developers, or government representatives. These can be invaluable sources of information, but they cannot be relied on to present a complete or objective picture. The university-based research that does exist has usually been based on short-term studies of limited samples. Researchers generally have only provincial government documents and figures as primary sources for studies and reports that have shaped policy. The most recent profile (1995ñ1996) of literacy activities and budgets in all the provinces and territories (Godin, 1996) illustrates the difficulty of conducting comparative analyses of activities in the

provinces and territories.

The 1989 LSUDA and 1994 IALS do, however, offer comparable demographic data by region in a range of categories, including the gender, age, education, linguistic background, and immigration status of adults in each of the levels of literacy measured.3 The IALS measured three literacy domains:

Prose-the knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts, including editorials, news stories, poems, and fiction

Document-the knowledge and skills needed to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, and maps

Quantitative-the knowledge and skills required to apply arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed materials, such as balancing a checkbook or figuring out a tip (Statistics Canada, 1996)

Table 6.1 shows the sample size of the IALS broken down by region and age group. Today, francophones make up just under 25 percent of the Canadian population but 82 percent of Quebec's. In many parts of the country, they have assimilated into the English-speaking population; in Quebec, under the mandate of Bill 101, francophones are flourishing, but they remain worried about living in a North American "sea of English."

A further complication with the IALS data is that residents of the territories, prison inmates, persons living on Indian reserves, and full-time members of the Canadian armed forces were excluded. The number of Native Canadians living off reserves was too small for separate analysis (Statistics Canada, 1996, p. 18). Although the Northwest Territories, where Native Canadians make up 61 percent of the population, was not surveyed in the 1989 LSUDA or the 1994 IALS, a 1994 Northwest Territories labor force survey indicated that the Native population has the lowest literacy rate in Canada, with more than one in three residents over the age of fourteen having an educational level of grade 9 or lower (Godin, 1996).

Table 6.2 compares the findings of the 1989 LSUDA and 1994 IALS. The LSUDA measured across four levels of proficiency, with levels 1 and 2 considered to be less than functionally literate and level 3 to be merely functional; the population had 7 percent, 9 percent, and 22 percent, respectively, in each of these three categories (Jones, 1993). The IALS collapsed the LSUDA levels 1 and 2 into level 1 and replaced level 4 with three new levels: 3, 4, and 5. The IALS shows 47 percent of the population in levels 1 and 2, both defined as below functional literacy

for an industrialized society; 22 percent fell into level 1. Since the 1970s, regardless of the measures used or the programs implemented in various provinces, the estimate of those in the lowest levels has not diminished. In fact, it has increased, prompting some critics to suggest that the cut-off points for the different levels are not scientifically valid (Sticht, 1999).

Table 6.3 shows the relationship between literacy and education as measured by the IALS. While earlier studies stressed the relationship between low education and literacy, this survey offered a more nuanced commentary. The relationship between literacy and education was interpreted as strong but "far from perfect. Many individuals did not fit the general pattern. One-third of Canadians who had not completed secondary school were at level 3 or above; a quarter or more of those who had completed a community college program were at level 1 or 2" (Statistics Canada, 1996). The authors of the IALS hypothesized that literacy skills require maintenance over time and can be enhanced through use at home or on the job or lost through lack of use.

Distribution by gender (Table 6.4) was interpreted to show that differences between men and women mirrored differences in school-based assessments in both Canada and the United States. Women scored higher on the prose scale, but men scored higher on the document and quantitative scales.

Adults participating in the IALS could choose to complete the survey in English or French. The data show that francophones have more serious literacy problems than do English Canadians. The differences inside and outside Quebec reflect the lack of access to French schooling outside Quebec until recent years. Inside Quebec, the numbers in level 4 reflect the fact that access to postsecondary education did not become widely available in the province until the late 1960s. (See Table 6.5.)

The literacy levels of immigrants (Table 6.6) are anomalous. While the proportion of immigrants in level 1 is larger than the proportion of those born in Canada, Canada was unique among the seven countries surveyed in having such a large proportion in level 4/5. In its analysis, the IALS assumed that this reflects the Canadian policy of selecting skilled immigrants. However, the large numbers in level 1 should raise concern about the ESL/FSL/literacy overlap.

NATIONAL SUPPORT FOR ADULT LEARNING AND LITERACY
While most educators in the field of adult literacy agree that the most direct route to improving services for students is through the provinces and territories that are mandated to provide those services, a portrait of

ABE provision would be incomplete without an overview of federal involvement. The most commanding agency in literacy in Canada is the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS). The NLS also recognizes as national and offers funding support for six nongovernment organizations.

National Literacy Secretariat
The creation of the NLS by the federal government in 1987 was prompted by a number of government studies and independent reports on adult literacy in the preceding decade and a survey commissioned by the Southam newspaper chain and published earlier that year. The creation of the NLS was also timed to plan for International Literacy Year activities in Canada in 1990; its mandate allowed it to raise public awareness, develop learning materials, carry out research, improve student access and outreach, and improve coordination and information sharing among practitioners. The NLS is restricted from directing any of its funds to the actual teaching of ABE students. To maintain the arms-length relation to education demanded by jurisdictional divisions, the secretariat has worked through partnerships with a range of organizations, including local and regional literacy organizations, school boards, colleges, business groups, labor unions, and national organizations specializing in issues other than literacy, such as women's issues, health, criminal justice, and taxation. It also works with each province through Federal-Provincial/Territorial Initiatives, a mechanism whereby representatives from the provincial government and local agencies and groups work with an NLS project officer to identify literacy needs in that province and negotiate matched funding for projects to address them. These are separate from project proposals worked out independently by provincial groups or organizations for submission to the NLS.

The NLS has been housed in several different federal departments, and its movement over the decade reflects shifts in government thinking about literacy. Initially the NLS was located in the Department of the Secretary of State and Multiculturalism Canada. At that point, rather than focusing on the economic costs of illiteracy or on failures of the education system to teach young people, many of those interested in the issue of literacy viewed it as a fundamental human right for citizens of all ethnic groups (Miller, 1990). Literacy advocates were concerned with the human and social costs to a democratic society if citizens could not read and write well enough to know or exercise their rights as voters, as workers, as tenants, or in any of the other multiple roles every citizen plays. In 1987, this emphasis was a convenient point of entry for a federal agency that did not have the jurisdictional right to engage directly in education. Since then, the NLS has been moved twice and is now located in Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) as part of a Literacy and Learning Directorate that includes several other agencies, such as the Office of Learning Technologies. This move is in line with a

general international trend to locate literacy as a workforce training and economic issue. The NLS has attempted to balance the social justice motive for literacy with the economic.

Small in size if not in stature (the NLS has ranged in number from sixteen to twenty-six project officers) and located within huge departments (HRDC has twenty-six thousand employees), the NLS is the antithesis of a faceless bureaucracy. Project officers have made a point of meeting the field on the ground and, through continuing relationships with stakeholders, have developed a strong understanding of the way things work politically and logistically at the local level in every part of the country. They have also had a profile disproportionate to their size. For several years during the 1990s, until 1997, the government named a special minister responsible for literacy, with signing authority for the secretariat, an unprecedented appointment.4

Since its founding in 1987, the NLS has funded more than forty-five hundred projects across Canada (information on most of these projects can be found on the NLS Web site at www.nald.ca/nls/aboutnls/activ.htm). From 1987 to 1997 it distributed $22.5 million per year; in the February 1997 budget, its allocation was raised to $30 million annually, making it the only federal agency to receive an increase in funding in 1997, a year in which massive reductions in spending were made across the board to reduce the national deficit. The increase was seen as a sign that the federal government remained committed to literacy. In allocating the increase, however, the government also tightened its control, targeting the additional money to family literacy, workplace literacy, and new technology. The funding level has been maintained as of the year 2000, with greater emphasis on research. There is also more focus on evaluating the results, or outcomes, of funded projects. The NLS support for research is part of its original mandate. It sponsored the 1989 LSUDA and cosponsored the 1994 IALS.

In the academic arena, in 1998, in cooperation with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the NLS launched a new program, Valuing Literacy in Canada: A New Research Agenda, to fund strategic research. This program will make available $2.5 million over five years, a large amount by Canadian standards. It supports three-year projects that link university and community-based researchers in an effort to connect theory and practice through credible research models. One of the first proposals to be funded was an ethnographic study of several successful Canadian workplace literacy programs. As another piece of the research agenda, the NLS has funded the Centre for Research on Literacy at the University of Alberta, where the first task was to create a directory of all literacy research conducted and ongoing in Canada since 1994; each

entry in the directory summarizes the project and its findings, and research reports are to be available for downloading in their entirety. (Although it is not yet complete, the directory can be visited at www.nald.ca/crd/start.htm.) Besides these few examples, the NLS has also funded original research on women and literacy through independent researchers (see Horsman, 1999) and through the Canadian Congress on Learning Opportunities for Women, a nongovernmental organization.

Since its inception, the NLS has been critical to the field, responsible for the creation of infrastructure such as provincial resource centers and the electronic links of the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) as well as some provincial communication networks. Canada's NALD, one of the six literacy organizations in the country referred to as "nationals" (discussed later), is a database of information on all Canadian adult literacy programs, resources, services, and activities; it has also created and organized more than one hundred Web sites for literacy organizations across Canada and maintains them. Resource centers now exist in almost every province and territory. Functioning as libraries and technology centers, the resource centers have collections of materials for practitioners, students, and any other interested users; they are often repositories for locally developed materials never previously catalogued. Unfortunately, the resource centers are funded differently in different provinces. Some are supported by both the province and the NLS, and some by the NLS alone; some have additional support from a local library, and some, as in New Brunswick, have no support at all. Consequently, each resource center has developed independently and chosen various systems for organizing its collection. The NLS is funding a project to find a way to share resources through electronic links in a Web-based environment. This promises more equitable distribution of literacy resources and expertise across the country. To enable systematic cataloguing of literacy materials by resource centers, the NLS funded the Canadian Library Association in 1993 to undertake a bilingual Canadian Literacy Thesaurus Project, which collected and continues to update descriptors and key words that allow librarians to assign subject headings familiar to literacy practitioners. The thesaurus makes more precise distinctions between terms than the widely used U.S. Library of Congress system, which offers "adult literacy" as a catch-all subheading of "adult education." The Canadian Literacy Thesaurus is promoted by UNESCO and served as a model when the U.S. National Institute for Literacy developed its on-line thesaurus.

Another form of infrastructure supported by the NLS is the creation or expansion of literacy coalitions in almost every province and territory. These coalitions are not uniform in structure, but they all serve as meeting places for many, if not most, of the organizations involved in literacy in their province. They engage in awareness-raising activities,

support practitioners, research the impact of various social policies, such as welfare reform, on the provision of literacy services, and represent their constituents in other forums. One coalition from each province and territory has a seat on the board of the Movement for Canadian Literacy, another of the six nationals. This organization plays a role in keeping literacy on the agenda at the federal level.

The NLS can also take credit for continually bringing literacy to the attention of other parts of the federal government. For example, it supported an internationally recognized national health and literacy program with the Canadian Public Health Association (CPHA) that has encouraged more than twenty national medical associations to promote the connections between literacy and health to their membership. In spring 2000, CPHA held its first International Conference on Literacy and Health. Ongoing NLS-funded projects with the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada have produced manuals on adult literacy and learning disabilities and related pilot workshops in prisons across Canada. NLS-supported plain-language initiatives at Revenue Canada and Health Canada have resulted in public documents and forms being rewritten in easy-to-read English and French.

Although precise figures are impossible to pin down, a careful examination of project-by-project funding reveals that the NLS provides a substantial portion of the financial resources put into adult literacy projects in some provinces and territories; in the smallest ones, the NLS funds entire projects. Even some provincial projects that appear to have diversified sources of funds have at least some money that can be traced back to the NLS. It would be difficult to find a literacy project or program in Canada today that did not receive some portion of its funding from the NLS. If the secretariat were to close, many literacy organizations and programs would be in danger of disappearing or at minimum reducing their activities.

All of its accomplishments notwithstanding, the NLS has not gone without its critics. It has funded some arguably weak projects and initially conducted insufficient strategic funding or evaluation. In the past three years it has been tightening its funding criteria and monitoring progress more carefully. More important, since 1989, it has underwritten wholly or in part much of the best in all of the efforts intended to improve adult literacy throughout Canada. The list, long and impressive, demonstrates ABE's unhealthy dependency on a single supplier of funds.

Another weakness of the NLS is its project funding model, which fosters short-term thinking and drives organizations to behave in ways they would not if they had secure funding with accountability. It has also encouraged duplication of effort. For example, in the mid-1990s, three

unrelated organizations in three provinces were funded to survey literacy programs across Canada about the software they used. In addition, project funding has created competition between the six national organizations and members of local and regional groups across the country, who perceive that some of the nationals, which no longer received core funding in the late 1990s, are receiving or soliciting project funds that should go directly to the regions. Project funding is not peculiar to literacy; all federal funding programs work through this model. It can, however, be dangerous, as demonstrated by the closing of many strong Canadian women's organizations in the 1990s when support from their funding body in the federal government, Status of Women Canada, diminished. As is the case with research, there is currently a move at the NLS to guarantee funding for more than one year where warranted, as in maintaining infrastructure, such as the National Adult Literacy Database. The project model nonetheless remains in place.

Politically, the NLS has not been as effective as it might have been in making its role or its accomplishments clear to members of Parliament, many of whom still think about literacy in simplistic terms connected only to numbers of adults learning to read. The NLS is under considerable political pressure because the 1994 IALS data showed no improvement in literacy levels from the 1989 LSUDA data, and there is no empirical evidence of any further change today. Since the NLS was never in a jurisdictional position to provide students with direct services, there is some irony in the fact that it should be held accountable for something it is not allowed to do. What the NLS has done is to lay the groundwork and begin to create an infrastructure such that first-class services could be provided if all the provinces were able to fulfill their responsibilities for adult education.

Six National Literacy Organizations

When the NLS was created in 1987, it tried to respect and build on preexisting organizational structures to facilitate its work. Frontier College, the Movement for Canadian Literacy, and Laubach Literacy of Canada predated the NLS and had national mandates. The NLS therefore chose to confer on them the special status of national literacy organization. At the time, this meant they were eligible for core funding, while other organizations could only apply for project grants. Since then, the formula has changed, and the "nationals," as they are known, must also submit project proposals for their annual funding rounds, although this policy is to be revisited. Within two years of its creation, the NLS funded three additional organizations designated "national" because of the nature of their mandates: the National Adult Literacy Database, ABC Canada, and the FÈdÈration canadienne pour l'alphabÈtisation en franÁais (FCAF). The six, all nongovernmental, nonprofit organizations, remain the only literacy organizations entitled to

call themselves nationals. Because of this special status, organization representatives are frequently called on to speak at national political and media events to represent the literacy community.

The nationals engender some distrust and resentment among provincial organizations, whose representatives argue that the nationals sometimes compete with provincial and local groups for similar project grants and that occasionally a "national" project carried out in locations across the country comes into conflict with local projects. Over time, the nationals are becoming somewhat more effective at defining their mandates, more sensitive about respecting boundaries, and more cooperative among themselves. The nationals are described in more detail in Exhibit 6.2.

CHALLENGES AHEAD, PROMISING EFFORTS TO MEET THEM

Recent trends in Canada have been contradictory. As practitioners have broadened their understanding and practice of literacy education, policymakers have been tightening the definition of what counts as literacy and what outcomes are acceptable. Several provinces are involving the entire field in an examination of practice to identify outcomes that will respect learners' needs and providers' values; the provinces will present their findings to policymakers as alternatives to the more rigid assessment indicators. While these outcomes projects hold great promise, they also demonstrate that all the shifts in thinking about literacy will require a reexamination of curricula, retraining of personnel, and an increase in the dialogue between the formal and community-based sectors. A shift in the definition, or boundaries, of literacy is intertwined with most of the other challenges facing the Canadian literacy community today; these include the impact of technology, the roles and training of volunteers and practitioners, the increasing support for family and workplace literacy, the promotion of partnership models, and the ESL/FSL/literacy interface. The greatest challenge is to create a sustainable ABE system in the midst of jurisdictional circumstances that inherently work against it.

Redefining the Boundaries of Literacy

Until the early 1990s, the focus of Canadian (as well as international) studies of adult literacy was illiteracy. Literacy, understood to be a continuum of skills rather than a great divide between haves and have-nots, is now the term and topic of choice. Although the definition of literacy has been broadened, the official understanding of the term as reflected in its use in government surveys and other documents acknowledges mainly reading and writing print information. Some literacy organizations talk about "new literacies" and "multiple literacies," but many practitioners, as well as members of the public,

remain fixed on the idea of literacy strictly as a print-based concept.

Redefining the boundaries means looking beyond the medium of literacy to the reasons that adults seek out literacy programs and the outcomes that may result. In addition to enrolling in programs for the purpose of job upgrading, adults enroll in these programs to broaden their general education, help their children succeed in school, or make social connections. Besides learning to read and write, students report increased self-esteem and confidence and an awareness of the ability to learn. Whether programs focus on academic or school-based literacy or on the practices related to the uses of literacy for daily living, the question of boundaries persists. The boundary issues ultimately determine the scope of literacy programming eligible for funding.5

One organization that promotes continued questioning about the boundaries of literacy is the Centre for Literacy of Quebec, an NLS-funded resource center. Created in 1989 from a college-based professional development program, it offers a working definition of literacy as "a complex set of abilities to understand and use the dominant symbol systems of a culture for personal and community development . . . [including] the media and electronic text in addition to alphabets and numbers." Practitioners, researchers, and policymakers from across the country and internationally meet at the center each summer for an institute on literacy and technologies. While the center's vision was perceived by most practitioners as being on the fringe in the early 1990s, the currently increasing number of visitors to the "definition" and media/technology pages of its Web site (http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm) may indicate a growing interest in expanding the concept of literacy. The center's semiannual newsletter, Literacy Across the CurriculuMedia Focus, examines the interfaces of literacy, media, and technology.

Integrating New Technologies
Canada has developed some state-of-the-art uses of technologies for learning in Kñ12, university, and adult distance education, but until recently, few of them were used in ABE. Broadcasting has a long history in Canadian community-based education. Because of the vast distances separating sparse populations, radio was used in the 1930s to link the country from coast to coast, just as the railways had done a century earlier. Radio was used for adult education from the 1930s to the 1960s with programming such as citizenship forums and farm broadcasts. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Canada's public broadcaster, identified education as a priority in its mandate and consistently produced high-quality radio and then television programming for adult learners well into the 1960s. In recent years, the CBC has been more committed to children's education. Other than these early uses, however, radio has been overlooked and television has not been used widely for

adult literacy instruction in Canada, even though adults with the lowest levels of literacy watch more television than those with higher levels and use it as their primary source of information about the world. The cost of developing and sustaining high-quality television has worked against its being used to its full potential for literacy instruction, although its value for raising public awareness has been recognized (see ABC Canada in Exhibit 6.2).

An innovative use of low-cost television is a Newfoundland community video project that has involved citizens with limited education living in remote communities being trained to videotape town hall meetings on local issues and broadcast them to other communities to initiate dialogue and action. Growing out of an acclaimed 1960s project by the National Film Board, the Fogo Island Project, this participatory form of production continues today. Although the project is not referred to as a kind of literacy or adult basic education, it engages participants in the activities of scripting, filming, editing, and producing video documentaries that lead to community action.

A different use of television for basic skills education has been developed by the Open Learning Agency (OLA) in British Columbia. The OLA is a postsecondary institution adapted from Britain's Open University model that uses distance learning, including television, to reach adult learners. Working with industry, the OLA has created some basic skills upgrading programs for workers. One example is Skill Plan B.C., which was developed with employers and unions of the B.C. Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council. Skill Plan brings flexible learning to thousands of construction workers in the province; it allows participants to work from a personalized program that combines one-on-one instruction, workshops, peer counseling, and computer-assisted training. As early as 1993, the OLA began to use communications software and modems to give workers at remote construction sites access to training (Godin, 1996).

Unfortunately, neither the Newfoundland community video nor the OLA model of targeted distance ABE programming is well known or replicated in other parts of Canada, and funders and program developers across the country have decided that computers and the Internet are the best way of reaching ABE students. Many unrealistic claims are being made for these technologies without sufficient attention to the teaching and support components.

Ontario's AlphaPlus embodies a new way of linking physical and virtual resources. Created in 1998 through the amalgamation of Alpha Ontario, the provincial literacy resource library, and AlphaCom, a provincial electronic communication system for literacy practitioners, AlphaPlus is

the first and most firmly established such system in Canada. Since the early 1990s, AlphaCom had maintained an electronic link between practitioners from the southern urban core of Ontario and the scattered northern communities near the Arctic Circle. Its on-line discussions and support of special interest spurred professional development and more coherent literacy provision across the huge province. AlphaPlus serves the four cultural communities recognized in Ontario literacy programming: English, French, Native, and hearing impaired. AlphaPlus also houses a large collection of ESL materials, serving as a bridge between the ESL and literacy communities in the province that receives the most immigrants in Canada. AlphaPlus staff are currently developing AlphaRoute, a resource that will eventually offer a supported on-line system of literacy instruction to students in a Web-based environment.

The four western provinces have linked their provincial literacy organizations through the First Class conferencing system, which allows them to communicate across provincial lines, a positive sign in Canada. The provinces anticipate using the system increasingly for professional development activities.

Nationally, the NLS has actively promoted the use of new technologies and sponsored seminars and consultations for practitioners and administrators. The creation of the National Adult Literacy Database has revolutionized the organization of information and research on adult learning and literacy in Canada. Every reference in this chapter can be traced through NALD. What has not yet been achieved is a national electronic discussion list, such as the National Literacy Advocacy list in the United States, through which policy issues can be discussed and rapid response to political issues can be generated. To date, the western provinces and Ontario have preferred to use their own communication systems for policy discussions. A national vision has not yet prevailed.

More recently, the NLS has funded Connect, a national newsletter on technology for literacy practitioners. Available in print and on-line, every issue includes regular features such as Software Reviews, Navigating the Web, Lesson Plans, Reports from Learners or Reports from the Field, and Technical Tips. Connect assumes that most literacy workers in Canada are new to, apprehensive about, or perhaps resistant to technology and need to be guided through it gently in the familiar medium of print, but it also supports more experienced users. Connect was originally funded as a short-term publication, but the NLS seems to recognize that the effective integration of new technology in literacy teaching will require long-term support through the medium of print.

The challenges of integrating technology into adult literacy practice are similar to those in the United States. They include a need for long-term

professional development, a need to determine the most appropriate uses of particular technologies, the recognition that practitioners and students do not have equal access to various technologies in all parts of Canada, and the recognition that a permanent technical infrastructure and support system are required. With many isolated models of excellence, Canada has a rich, if scattered, experience on which to build in integrating technology into adult basic education. The challenge is complicated by a Canadian tradition of creating provincial models and resisting national ones.

Redefining the Roles of Practitioners and Volunteers
The trends toward greater professionalization, the development of new approaches to teaching, and the demand for program accountability are calling into question the appropriate role for both volunteers and practitioners in adult literacy education.

The contribution of volunteers to adult literacy across Canada must be acknowledged. Volunteers were the backbone of Canadian adult literacy provision before ABE was officially sponsored. In some parts of the country, particularly in remote rural regions where practitioners are not available, volunteers have been the sole providers of service. Today two of the six national organizations, Frontier College and Laubach Literacy Canada, are volunteer organizations, and hundreds more exist across the country. Volunteers constitute one group-and a large proportion-of those teaching adult literacy today.

While volunteers have been among the strongest lobbyists for the cause of adult literacy education and fill many other roles in the field, the traditional and well-loved image of the volunteer is that of the individual tutor working closely with one adult student whose life may be changed as a result of the process. Since the early days of the Frontier College, the media have been enamored of the image of the volunteer, and Quigley (1997) points out that the literacy community itself often inadvertently contributes to it because such heart-warming stories can open donor purse strings. It is this role of the volunteer that has become subject to change as the call for professionalization and accountability and the development of new approaches to teaching come more and more into play.

As early as the 1950s, the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) began to advocate for more professionalization of the field. British Columbia and Ontario universities offered the first adult education degree and certificate programs in English. Eventually a few other institutions added this specialization, with a small number specifically naming ABE/literacy. In the 1970s, the University of Quebec in Montreal offered the first certificate in adult literacy in French. Thus,

over the past fifty years, a community of practitioners with academic credentials for teaching ABE has developed. Another group of ABE practitioners are teachers who moved over to ABE from the regular elementary or secondary school system. Although their academic training was not in ABE, they were nonetheless trained as teachers. As in the United States, practitioners with other, varied degrees of training and experience exist.

The question of accreditation has been hotly debated for several years. Surveys in a number of provinces have found that many practitioners would welcome a formal accreditation as literacy/ABE educators. The question then becomes, What kind of accreditation? Even among provinces offering university certificates or degrees, there is no consistent requirement in practice from one province to another. And until there is a stable, systemic provision of services with equitable working conditions for teachers, there is unlikely to be a universal requirement for university accreditation. Under current conditions, few ABE/literacy instructors have job security or benefits. Many have only sessional contracts and take on as many classes as they can manage because they are never certain if they will work in the next session.

In an attempt to respond to the call for professionalization while also heeding the reality of the circumstances in which practitioners teach, some local equivalency types of accreditation have been developed that in fact apply to volunteers as well as practitioners. The Nova Scotia Tutor Training Certification Program is a thirty-hour program that introduces volunteers to theories of reading, writing, and numeracy, with an emphasis on practical applications. The Nova Scotia Department of Education, acknowledging that it cannot afford to pay many full-time teachers, wants volunteers to use a common approach to teaching. On the other hand, STAPLE 1 and 2 (Supplemental Training for Literacy Practitioners), a CD-ROM-based professional development program created by Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, is an elaborate yet highly accessible training program that assumes some formal education background on the part of enrollees. It was designed by university-based literacy specialists to be used at a distance. There are also some excellent models of volunteer programs that provide ongoing tutor training and monitor student progress. Prospects Literacy in Alberta has developed a computerized management system called Litnet that allows it to track data such as hours of training, hours of tutoring, lessons covered, competencies achieved, levels completed, and more. Numerous well-designed volunteer tutor program evaluation kits have also been developed across Canada (Thomas, 1989). Each province is promoting consistency of training and evaluation within its borders; there is no general agreement nationwide as to how teachers should be trained or evaluated.

As suggested by the example of the Nova Scotia program for volunteer training and evaluation, newer approaches to teaching are also having an effect on the roles that volunteers and practitioners play. Some community-based programs now use a participatory education model in which the curriculum is created collectively with the students. Two Alberta programs, the Learning Center Literacy Association (Edmonton) and the Write to Learn project, and the Adult Basic Education Writing Network in Newfoundland are outstanding models of community-based participatory education. Each of these programs has developed materials and guides for engaging adult learners in writing that builds on learners' strengths. Their publications have won recognition and respect beyond the literacy community (Norton & Campbell, 1998; Morgan, 1998; Woodrow, 1995). In Quebec, francophone educators have developed a model of "popular education," similar to participatory education (Wagner, 1990), carried out by paid educators adapting a Freirian empowerment philosophy. The model is not widely known in the rest of Canada, or even in the English community of Quebec, and is no longer as strong in Quebec as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, but it is worth examining as an effective alternative model for literacy education. (For a detailed description of Freire's philosophy, see Chapter Two in this book.) These models of participatory/popular education are quite different from the models of volunteer one-on-one tutoring and teacher-as-classroom-authority popular in most parts of the country.

Government demand for program accountability and measurable outcomes is also having an effect on the roles of volunteers and practitioners. Many formal programs in various provinces, caught between the conflicting demands of adult education funders and welfare reform funders, have begun to accept only higher-level learners who have a better chance of succeeding within a fixed time frame. Lower-level learners are being referred to the community and volunteer sectors (Ziegler, 1996; Smith, 1997, 1998). This trend highlights the question of who is best equipped to teach each of the different segments of ABE learners and what level of training can or should be required of providers. Learners at beginning levels of literacy will probably always need a person to guide and give them confidence. The need for volunteers to fill this role is likely to continue. Moreover, adult learners have different needs, some of which may require professional intervention and some of which may not. Even in urban areas, there are students who are not willing or able to attend a class because of embarrassment or disability or because they have a short-term goal and do not want or need certification. Volunteers have a role to play in these cases as well. They may also come to work as teachers' aides, a common role for volunteers in the Kñ12 system. The match between service and need in adult literacy is not easily made (ABC Canada, 1997). Despite the growing

dialogue between practitioners and volunteers across the country, in most places, there are still differences in beliefs about the best way to approach learning and literacy (Hambly, 1998).

In the future, it is likely that apart from those cases where a volunteer is a better option or the only option, if provision is well funded and stable, the role of volunteers could become similar to that of hospital auxiliaries, indispensable but not the primary or sole service providers. Canada is not yet close to this possibility.

Improving Family and Workplace Literacy
Family literacy and workplace literacy have been getting more attention over the past decade; increased funding for such programs is evidence of this trend. Policymakers and providers are optimistic that family literacy can achieve what more traditional models could not: a long-term commitment from adult learners motivated by wanting to help their children. Workplace literacy is tied to the rhetoric of employability and productivity in a global economy. Both models seem to offer more measurable outcomes than the more traditional models of ABE. The resulting challenge to the field is twofold. First, with disproportionate amounts of ABE funding being directed to these two sectors, there is a corresponding decrease in funding appropriated for other education options. Second, sufficient longitudinal research has not been conducted to justify the shift of so much of the available resource base to these two program options.

A research study tracing the development of Canadian family literacy programs showcased some best practices across the country. By the time the book was published (Thomas, 1998), however, several of the featured programs were no longer in existence. Many attempts to document the results of other family literacy programs and workplace literacy programs throughout the 1990s have been frustrated by the short-term nature of the programs (see Taylor, 1997a). As one researcher noted,

Future policy decisions regarding family literacy will increasingly depend on research. Nevertheless, there is no coherent strategy in place for developing a Canadian research base in family literacy. At the present time, program design and practices are only loosely related to a research base, and community-based implementation decisions often appear fragmented. Because local program developers have little access to program evaluation results of similar programs . . . Canadian family literacy intervention has been characterized by relatively short-term, low-intensity programs. [Thomas, 1998, pp. 21-22]

Since that pronouncement, the commitment to family literacy has grown as several provinces, such as Alberta and British Columbia, have

undertaken intensive initiatives under the heading of early intervention and prevention. This allows for shared federal funding, which would be seen as overstepping jurisdictional bounds if children, rather than the family as a whole, were the direct targets of the programs. The NLS research strategy is supporting some three-year studies. The challenges, in addition to those noted by Thomas, include a tendency to focus on children more than parents (unlike the highly structured model promoted by the U.S. National Center for Family Literacy). Some literacy advocates worry about the burden of responsibility being placed on mothers.

Workplace literacy has a longer history of support in Canada than does family literacy. It addresses workers' needs directly and has been justified through economic arguments, although it has generally been difficult to get employers to invest directly. The provincial record on such programs has also been checkered. Ontario created a well-funded ministry to support workplace literacy and set up programs across the province. But the more right-leaning Conservative government elected in the mid-1990s had dismantled the entire workplace component by the end of the decade, arguing that employers should not receive public funds for this purpose. A few enlightened employers and industry groups across Canada have identified their own self-interest in workplace literacy, but such initiatives have not been widespread. In the early 1990s, ABC Canada, with NLS support, created a Workplace Education Center (WEC) that developed an excellent model for literacy needs assessment and offered assessment and consulting services across Canada (Folinsbee & Jurmo, 1994; Belfiore, 1996). This program created resentment at local levels. Many provincial organizations that had their own workplace programs and assessment models complained that a Toronto-based organization was offering services to employers who could have bought the same or equivalent services from local providers. The WEC closed in 1998.

The expertise gained over the decade is nonetheless being tapped through more research. One of the first proposals funded under a research initiative called Valuing Literacy was a three-year ethnographic study of the impact and outcomes of a workplace literacy program. As more evaluation and research are conducted and more strategic funding provided, indicators should emerge as to whether the current shift in literacy investment has been justified.

Encouraging Partnerships
Encouraging partnerships is an international trend that has worked well for the literacy field in Canada. The practice was formalized through NLS policy, which states explicitly that the NLS works through the model of partnerships with literacy organizations across the country. This

policy has resulted in some dynamic projects and strong alliances, although the concept of partnership can also be problematic when there is an imbalance of power. A partnership implies equality or parity between partners; the question then arises: Can an organization be a partner with its primary or only funder? While the NLS has generally been perceived as fair, there is no doubt that its policies drive many of the ABE activities in progress across the country.

Literacy organizations across Canada also benefit from other kinds of partnerships. One example is the tripartite Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee of labor, business, and government, which has been highly effective in identifying ways of developing the skills of the province's workforce, with a heavy emphasis on basic skills (Despins, Maruca, & Turner, 1997). The strength of the Manitoba model is its diversified funding. If one of the funders were to withdraw, the others could continue with modified programs while rebuilding the funding base.

Because of the jurisdictional and funding complexities in Canada, many in the literacy field have formed partnerships with business or made alliances with colleagues in other sectors when there is common cause. One of the outstanding examples is in the health sector, where the Canadian Public Health Association has forged a partnership of more than two dozen health-related professional associations, such as the Canadian Medical Association, to raise awareness of the connections between health and literacy and to advocate for changes in professional practice around the use of plain language communication.

Some leaders see this trend toward strategic alliances as one that will carry literacy into the future. The hope is that work with antipoverty groups, women's and children's rights groups, human rights and criminal justice groups, and health and environmental groups will embed the cause of adult literacy within all these issues and make it eligible for funding from sources other than the traditional ones.

Improving ESL/FSL Literacy
The interface between ESL/FSL and literacy in Canada is charged with all the tensions accruing to the language conflicts between English and French speakers and between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The issue of English or French being a second language occurs mainly in urban areas of the country with large immigrant populations. The funding for such programs is difficult to trace, and the practice of placing second-language learners in regular literacy classes is not uncommon. Such placement sometimes occurs because there are not sufficient numbers to make up full classes of either group; sometimes it is because more funding is available for one than for the other. Whatever the reason,

providers are generally reluctant to discuss the question, but the mixing of the groups creates challenges for providers in terms of the appropriate methodologies to use. It creates challenges for students who find themselves in the same class but whose needs are radically different; what is the common ground between a physician from a foreign country and a Native speaker with third-grade education? The programs best able to meet these challenges are in Toronto, which has large programs serving both client groups.

A more complicated aspect is the provision of French literacy to francophones outside Quebec. The LSUDA and IALS corroborated that francophones had more serious literacy problems than anglophones. The francophones' advocacy organization, the FCAF (see Exhibit 6.2), argues that they need to learn their mother tongue as a prerequisite for learning English. There are those within the English literacy community who argue that if "refrancization" is included within the boundaries of literacy, then the same option should exist for immigrants who are not literate in their mother tongue. Other than St. Christopher House in Toronto, no programs offer mother tongue literacy to immigrants. This is one challenge not likely to be addressed too soon because it is too politically fraught.

Working Sustainability into the System
The greatest challenge facing the field is sustainability. Throughout the 1990s, report after report confirmed that students do not have equal access to adult basic and literacy education in every province and that in many provinces, provision is not part of a stable, funded education system (Darville, 1991; White & Hoddinott, 1991; Barker, 1992, 1999; Hoddinott, 1998). Both the dependency on the NLS for so much project funding and the model of project funding itself are problems. Some practitioners believe that provincial and territorial governments have not responded as strongly to the need for provision of adult literacy education as they should have because they too have become reliant on short-term federal grants that can be made to appear provincial. Until the provinces create a system of provision and support, making ABE a permanent part of the education system, as is Kñ12, access by students to programs will be temporary.

The Council of Ministers of Education is in an excellent position to initiate provincial cooperation by encouraging education ministers across Canada to expand systems to include statutory provision of adult education. Making space for adult literacy and learning on the continuum of lifelong learning would not address all the challenges facing the field, but it would go far in ensuring some degree of quality and equity of provision.

The concept of lifelong learning, which until now has been mainly a catch-phrase, could become the lever to propel change. A 1998 discussion document prepared for the Council of Ministers of Education on essential skills for the workplace, which included literacy and numeracy, analyzed the question of sustainability in relation to workplace basic skills. It called Canada's funding traditions "woefully inadequate for the future" and called sustainable funding "the life-support system of workplace learning initiatives [which] must be as well thought out and seamless as that of the Kñ12 and PSE [Post-Secondary Education]" (MacLeod, 1998, p. 11). The document recognized the diverse circumstances of each province in developing public policy but also suggested some broad principles that could be adapted to foster more sustained sources of funding. One such principle is that of the public-private partnership, exemplified by the tripartite committee in Manitoba.

CONCLUSION
The achievements of the adult literacy field in Canada have been the establishment of an infrastructure for resources and communication, including a network of resource centers and use of the Internet; production of high-quality educational materials, print and electronic, for both students and providers that reflects regional and national perspectives on literacy; a more knowledgeable and well-trained cadre of practitioners and volunteers; support for more credible research; greater public awareness; and a move toward redefining the problem from one of illiteracy to degrees of literacy. All of these accomplishments can be seen as necessary but not sufficient. The groundwork for sustainable provision has been laid. To make it a reality, the federal government should become permanently responsible for sustaining infrastructure, a responsibility that legitimately falls within current jurisdictional divisions of power, as does the responsibility for the public broadcasting service. The federal government could thus be responsible for communication networks, resources, and support for credible research, both academic and community-action based. The provinces would have to take responsibility for making adult education a statutory part of the Kñ12 system, and partnership among the education, community, and business sectors, of which Canada has developed many workable models, could become the principle for sustainability. The question is whether there are sufficient commitment and will to work against all the historical, political, and philosophical barriers to ensure equitable provision of high-quality adult basic education services across Canada.

Appendix A: Chronology of Events in the Development of Adult Basic Education and Literacy Nationwide
1899 The Canadian Reading Camp Movement is founded. Becomes

Frontier College in 1922. University students were sent to the Canadian wilderness to teach laborers, mostly lumberjacks and miners, how to read and write. (See Exhibit 6.2 for more information on Frontier College.) From this time until the 1930s, ABE was not significantly distinguished from other adult education initiatives, which were carried out through YMCAs and YWCAs, Mechanics' Institutes, churches, labor unions, farm organizations, traveling circuit lecturers and teachers, and other organizations.

1935 The Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) is founded as a clearinghouse to serve professionals in the field. The CAAE was the first national organization dedicated solely to adult education and laid the groundwork for the adult literacy organizations that eventually became central to the field. The CAAE became a developer of educational programs with a focus on citizenship, dedicated to informing adults about political, social, and economic issues. It was the main source of adult education publications until the 1950s and nurtured some of the early researchers who separated out for study high-school-equivalent education (sometimes referred to as ABE in Canada) and pre-high-school-equivalent education (sometimes referred to as literacy education).
The CAAE 1985 report, Educationally Disadvantaged Adults: A Project, contributed to the pressure for government action on literacy.
Its leadership role diminished in the late 1980s, and it folded in the mid-1990s.

1960s The decade was characterized by idealistic social consciousness and nationalist feeling in Canada and Quebec, waves of immigration, and broad social reforms, such as the war on poverty. Means of waging the war on poverty included expanded federal funding for technical and vocational education, which led to the exposure of undereducation among adults.

1960 The Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act authorizes Ottawa to join the provinces in funding capital costs for vocational training facilities. Within six years, projects valued at more than $1.5 billion served to create 662 new schools through which passed 439,952 students (Stamp, 1970). Because of federal-provincial conflict over roles and differences between Quebec and other provinces, this act was the last federal investment in capital and operating costs for technical and vocational education. Many institutes of technology created through this act were converted to community colleges.

1967 The Adult Occupational Training Act is passed, focusing on unemployed and underemployed workers and on short-term retraining. It led to the development of NewStart, creating six private nonprofit corporations to promote "experimentation in methods which would

motivate and train adults who were
educationally disadvantaged" (Selman & Dampier, 1991, p. 166).
Without intending to do so, NewStart revealed that a number of
Canadian adults were not educated enough to qualify for retraining; the
need for adult basic education was out in the open for the first time
(Thomas, 1983; Selman, 1995).

1969 The Official Languages Act is passed, leading to an explosion of
second-language teaching across the country and further contributing to
the awareness of the large numbers of undereducated adults.

Late 1960s/early 1970s Federal Basic Training and Skills Development
(BTSD) and early Basic Job Readiness Training (BJRT) are developed to
target adults who could be trained or retrained in short-term programs
leading directly to jobs. BTSD was intended to provide the elementary
and high school levels of education that were prerequisites for vocational
training.

1970s The decade was characterized by a retrenchment in spending on
adult learning and literacy. After reviews of BTSD and BJRT
showed these programs were not meeting the anticipated goals of skills
training, funds were restricted, and by the end of the decade "provision
for the most undereducated adults had almost ceased to exist" (Thomas,
1983, p. 65). Simultaneously a series of provincial reports and
commissions highlighted the needs of illiterate and undereducated adults.
A number of national reports from various government committees (such
as the Senate Committee on Poverty in 1971 and the Senate Finance
Committee in 1976) raised the same concern in the context of other
social issues. The first major study of illiteracy in Canada was written,
and the first organization dedicated exclusively to adult learning and
literacy, Movement for Canadian Literacy, was founded. (See Exhibit 6.2
for more information.) A concern for literacy as a social justice issue was
dominant among activists.

1970 The first Laubach tutor training workshop was offered in Canada.
Laubach councils were set up across the country during the next decade.
(See Exhibit 6.2 for more information.)

1976 Adult Basic Education in Canada and Literacy Activities in
Canada, 1975/76, the first detailed analysis of illiteracy in the country, is
published. Written by Audrey M. Thomas for World Literacy of Canada,
it used census data on school grade completion to estimate the number of
adults in need and collected all available data on provision across the
country from federal and provincial sources and from numerous
organizations of different types-government, research, and community
based.

1977 First national conference on literacy in Ottawa brings together key people in the field and leads to the creation of the Movement for Canadian Literacy to advocate for the cause. (See Exhibit 6.2 for more details.)

1979 Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Educational Leave and Productivity (for the federal labor minister) is released and includes recommendations on adult illiteracy, calling for incentives and establishment of an adult literacy education fund that would offer grants to employers, trade unions, educational organizations, and individual workers to upgrade basic skills (report cited in Adams, Draper, & Ducharme, 1979). Although this fund did not materialize, the recommendations contributed to setting the stage for a federal response to adult literacy.

1980s The decade was characterized by an increasing number of federal government department reports on adult illiteracy as a social and economic issue. Provinces studied the issue, developed policies, and expanded provision of innovative services (in the community-based and institutional sectors), although there was little coordination within different provincial departments funding different types of services.

1981 Laubach Literacy of Canada is established to coordinate and represent the Laubach Reading Councils across the country. (See Exhibit 6.2.)

1983 Adult Illiteracy in Canada-A Challenge, an occasional paper for the Canadian Commission for UNESCO, written by Audrey Thomas, is released. It was the most comprehensive national assessment yet produced in Canada, contextualizing the problem in relation to world literacy and characterizing the Canadian situation as one of undereducated adults. Thomas described provincial and federal activities as well as those in the volunteer sector and pointed out the fragmentation of services. The juxtaposition of data on labor force participation, educational attainment, and training activities was effective in making connections between the social justice and economic motives of literacy advocates. The paper also identified groups in need of specialized response-the incarcerated, indigenous people, the disabled, immigrants, women, the elderly, and school dropouts-thus emphasizing that adults with literacy problems were not a homogeneous group.

1986 On October 1, in the Speech from the Throne, the occasion on which the government announces its focus for the coming year, the federal government pledges to "work with the provinces, the private sector and the voluntary groups to develop resources to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the prerequisite for

participation in our advanced economy" (Selman & Dampier, 1991, p. 168). The task of developing a national strategy within the jurisdiction of the federal government was given to the Department of the Secretary of State, which began a lengthy process of consultation with all possible stakeholders.

In a December meeting at a site called Cedar Glen, a coalition of national groups promoting literacy in the volunteer sector crafted a public policy statement. They called it the Cedar Glen Declaration and published it as an open letter to the prime minister and provincial and territorial premiers and leaders. This declaration marked the beginning of a public awareness campaign and a new point in the literacy movement when national organizations could speak with common cause.

1987 The Southam newspaper chain, one of the largest publishers in the country, undertook a survey (Creative Research Group, 1987) and published a series of articles on adult illiteracy in Canada. (The articles were reprinted in Calamai, 1987.) This was the first assessment in Canada to test literacy using "real tasks" rather than by extrapolating literacy levels from years of schooling. The Southam survey sent shock waves across the country and brought the issue to public attention.

The National Literacy Secretariat was founded to fund literacy initiatives.

1988 A study by the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy estimates the annual cost to business of illiteracy in the workforce at $4 billion and the cost to society at $10 billion. The group did not use scientific methods to reach these estimates but hypothesized that many errors required work to be redone and that many accidents in the workplace resulting in loss of life or property could be attributable to illiteracy. Although the text contained a disclaimer about the accuracy of the estimates, very few people read the disclaimer; only the figures made headlines. Accurate or not, publicity about the costs of illiteracy, added to all the other discourse, contributed to government's decision to take action (Darville, 1988).

The Council of Ministers of Education, the association that brings together all provincial and territorial education ministers to share information, aware of some potential loss of provincial prerogative, responded to the 1986 Throne Speech by commissioning its own survey of literacy and ABE. The resulting report, Adult Illiteracy in Canada, published in February 1988, outlined provincial programs and policies where they existed (Cairns, 1988). These descriptions were taken directly from provincial government documents. The analysis updated and expanded the themes of the 1976 and 1983 Thomas reports. Lifelong learning was a theme.

The prime minister announces a federal national literacy strategy with funding of $110 million over five years.

1989 The National Adult Literacy Database, ABC Canada, and the FÈdÈration canadienne pour l'alphabÈtisation en franÁais are created. (See Exhibit 6.2.)

The National Literacy Secretariat funds the national Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Life, a well-respected and widely read report on literacy in Canada and the first official document to focus on the concept of literacy as opposed to illiteracy, as reflected in its title.

1990s The decade was characterized by the creation of an infrastructure to support literacy activities across the country, including resource centers, electronic networks and communication systems, and provincial and territorial coalitions, all funded partially or entirely by the NLS. Through the funding of more than forty-five hundred projects, the NLS also supported the creation of teaching materials and increased support for academic and community-based research. While most provinces and territories increased spending on adult literacy education, provision of services to students has remained inconsistent from one part of the country to another (Hoddinott, 1998). The decade ended with attempts to assess, consolidate, and share the best of what had been developed (Barker, 1999), with repeated references to a future model of lifelong learning.

1994 The International Adult Literacy Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada in partnership with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in seven countries, including Canada, provides an updated profile of literacy in Canada.

1997 The federal government increases the annual allocation of the NLS to $30 million and targets the additional money to family literacy, workplace literacy, and new technology. The move was seen as a sign of continuing federal commitment, which some in the literacy field had feared might end at the close of the decade when the UNESCO International Decade of Literacy came to an end.

Appendix B: Agencies, Organizations, and Programs

National Literacy Organizations and Agencies

- ABC CANADA
  333 King Street East
  Toronto, Ontario
  Canada M5A 4N2

Phone: (416) 350ñ6270 or 1ñ800ñ303ñ1004
Fax: (416) 350ñ6262
Web site: http://www.abc-canada.org/

- FÈdÈration canadienne pour l'alphabÈtisation en franÁais
  235, chemin Montreal, bureau 205
  Vanier, Ontario
  Canada K1L 6C7
  Phone: (613) 749ñ5333 or 1ñ888ñ906ñ5666
  Fax: (613) 749ñ2252
  E-mail: alpha@facf.franco.ca
  Web site: http://www.franco.ca/alpha

- Frontier College
  35 Jackes Street
  Toronto, Ontario
  Canada M4T 1E2
  Phone: (416) 923ñ3591 or 1ñ800ñ555ñ6523
  Fax: (416) 923ñ3522
  Web site: http://www.frontiercollege.ca/

- Laubach Literacy Canada
  70 Crown Street, Suite 225
  Saint John, New Brunswick
  Canada E2L 2X6
  Phone: (506) 634ñ1980 or 1ñ877ñ634ñ1980
  Fax: (506) 634ñ0944
  Web site: http://www.laubach.ca/

- Movement for Canadian Literacy
  180 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300
  Ottawa, Ontario
  Canada K2P 1P5
  Phone: (613) 563ñ2464
  Fax: (613) 563ñ2504
  Web site: http://www.literacy.ca/

- National Adult Literacy Database
  Scovil House
  703 Brunswick Street
  Fredericton, New Brunswick
  Canada E3B 1H
  Phone: (506) 457ñ6900 or 1ñ800ñ720ñ6253
  Fax: (506) 457ñ6910
  Web site: http://www.nald.ca

- National Literacy Secretariat
  Learning and Literacy Directorate, HRDC
  Jos. Montferrand Building
  170 Hotel de Ville, Eighth Floor
  Hull, Quebec
  Canada, K1A 0J9
  Phone: (819) 953ñ5280
  Fax: (819) 953ñ8076
  Web site: www.nald.ca/nls.htm

Other National Organizations Supporting Literacy Projects or Programs

- Canadian Labour Congress
  2841 Riverside Drive
  Ottawa, Ontario
  Canada K1V 8X7
  Phone: (613) 521ñ3400
  Fax: (613) 521ñ4655
  Web site: http://www.clc-ctc.ca/

- Canadian Public Health Association
  400ñ1565 Carling Avenue
  Ottawa, Ontario
  Canada, K1Z 8R1
  Phone: (613) 725ñ3769
  Fax: (613) 725ñ9826
  Web site: http://www.cpha.ca

- CONNECT
  c/o Diane McCargar
  LBS/ESL/LINC Department
  Ottawa-Carlton School Board
  515 Cambridge Street South
  Ottawa, Ontario
  Canada K1S 4H9
  Phone: (613) 239ñ2583
  Fax: (613) 239ñ2324
  Web site: http://www.nald.ca/connect.htm

- Learning Disabilities Association of Canada
  323 Chapel Street, Suite 200
  Ottawa, Ontario
  Canada K1N 7Z2
  Phone: (613) 238ñ5721

Fax: (613) 235ñ5391
Web site: http://www.ldac-taac.ca/

Selected Provincial Programs

- AlphaPlus
  2040 Yonge Street, Third Floor
  Toronto, Ontario
  Canada, M4S 1Z9
  Phone: (416) 322ñ1012
  Fax: (416) 322ñ0780
  Web site: http://alphaplus.ca/index1.htm

- Centre for Literacy of Quebec
  3040 Sherbrooke Street West
  Montreal, QC
  Canada H3Z 1A4
  Phone: (514) 931ñ8731, ext. 1415
  Fax: (514) 931ñ5181
  Web site: http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

- SkillPlan BC
  4303 Canada Way
  Burnaby, British Columbia
  Canada V5G 1J3
  Phone: (604) 436ñ1126
  Fax: (604) 437ñ7539
  Web site: http://www.skillplan.ca/

Notes

1. Figures for all dollar amounts throughout the chapter are in Canadian dollars; as of year-end 1999, $1.00 Canadian was the equivalent of about $0.68 in the United States.
2. The term formal as used in this chapter refers to programs offered and accredited through academic institutions, public and private. While some volunteer and other "informal" community-based programs are also recognized, many offer educational services needed by their clientele without official accreditation. Increasingly, the lines between these categories are blurring.
3. It is worth knowing that some provinces requested and paid for the oversampling of subpopulations. For example, Ontario and New Brunswick oversampled minority-language French speakers; Quebec, however, did not oversample minority-language English speakers. Consequently figures for Quebec's English-speaking

population are unreliable.

4. Joyce Fairbairn, a Liberal senator, was for several years the special minister responsible for literacy, until the position was dropped in 1997. She has been a personal champion and literacy advocate since the 1980s and is considered by many to have been instrumental in building much of the parliamentary support accorded to literacy in the past twelve years. She has worked tirelessly behind the political scenes and taken on a public profile, traveling from coast to coast to preside over literacy events, always dressed in a signature red suit. In any full history of literacy in Canada, her name will figure prominently. She remains an important voice on Parliament Hill.

5. I thank Mary Norton and Audrey Thomas for their comments that helped shape this segment of the chapter.

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