



CASAE  ACÉEÉA

Canadian Association for the Study  
of Adult Education  
260 Dalhousie Street  
Suite 204  
OTTAWA, ON K1N 7E4

**Re: Current reforms to adult literacy in Canada**

June 02, 2014

Dear Minister Kenney:

We are writing to express our deep concern about the **current dismantling of the adult literacy infrastructure system across Canada**. As co-presidents of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE-ACEEA), we write on behalf of CASAE to express our outrage at the recent turn of events that will affect the **nine million adults** who are struggling with literacy issues. CASAE represents the sole national association of professors, graduate students, and practitioners in the field of adult education. Our membership includes literacy instructors, program coordinators, workplace educators and counsellors. The recent decisions of the federal government through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) will have a tremendously negative impact—not only on the ability of adult learners to access essential programs, but also on the erosion of the professional expertise that has accumulated in the literacy field over many years.

We believe that it will be impossible to raise the literacy levels of adults living with lower literacy if access to—and the coordination of—literacy programs is further eroded through the **termination of core funding agreements with key literacy groups and coalitions**. Our Association is dismayed by the government's decision to terminate these agreements on June 30, 2014 without timely notice of these intentions to the organizations that were once your partners. We not only support the delivery services of these literacy groups and coalitions but also value the research being conducted by these national literacy organizations as they show tremendous promise in providing insights and solutions for the multiple challenges faced by some nine million Canadian adults in a rapidly changing, digitizing economy.

We appreciate the support that the Government of Canada has played in placing adult literacy levels and competencies on an international stage through participation in the recent PIAAC and previous international surveys; however, these expensive investments will bring little return if not followed by a comprehensive literacy strategy. The current policy directions we now see can only lead to the decline of our nation's standing in the international community. We have been watching with great concern the unfolding of your government's social innovation agenda, and strategies of social financing and social impact bonds. We are not convinced that these strategies, emerging policies, and funding mechanisms will resolve the longstanding problem of inequality in access to adult literacy and learning opportunities, particularly in a world that values creativity and social and economic sustainability.

We also note the directions your government is taking in developing new partnerships with employers through the Canada Jobs Grant. While we concur that good jobs must accompany adult literacy programs, we must ask how Canadians seeking employment without the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy can possibly move to mastery of technical and job-specific skills, or how underemployed or unemployed adults will benefit from this initiative.

At present, the majority of practitioners in the literacy field are either volunteers or part-time instructors. To see meaningful increases in the basic skills of adults, we must increase educational capacity, enhance educators' professional skills, and bring stability to the entire area of adult literacy practice. **For both economic and social reasons, Canada must take the issue of adult literacy seriously.**

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Our CASAE Secretariat is located in our nation's capital and we welcome arranging a timely meeting with you and your officials to discuss the government's recent decisions.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely,



Jude Walker, PhD      Kaela Jubas, PhD  
Co-presidents, CASAE-ACÉÉA