

**Municipal Literacy and Learning for the Workplace
and the Community**

**Status Report
September 2006**

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Municipal Literacy and Learning for the Workplace and the Community: Status Report, 2006

A Brief Look Back

In 2000, as part of its “*Our Legacy for the Millennium*” project, the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA), commissioned “**Workforce Literacy in Canadian Municipalities: A Status Report in the year 2000**”. The report examined the following areas:

Literacy in the Municipal Workforce. An overview of the reasons for the creation of what were known as workforce literacy programs, beginning in the late 1980s. Original programs were driven by the need to see municipal employees at all levels of the organization upgrade existing skills, manage more complex information systems, learn new skills with the arrival of new technology in the workplace and react to the increased concentration on quality of service to the public. Later programs shifted focus to deal with such issues as major internal reorganizations, downsizing, the emergence of new partnerships for program delivery, privatization of service delivery and the issue of governance.

A Review of Municipal Literacy Programs. A survey of municipal governments across Canada outlining program design and management, barriers encountered and overcome, and resulting best practices

Canadian Municipal Literacy Programs by Province and Territory.

A listing of some thirty municipalities that had either completed a program, currently had a program in place or was considering implementing a program in the near future.

Municipal Workplace Literacy Profiles. A detailed description of three municipal governments that introduced and tested three differing program models.

Literate Cities 2025 – A Road Map to the Future

A series of proposals and methodologies outlining ways to ensure the growth and sustainability of municipal workplace programs into the future along with some ideas for the expansion of the role of municipal government to act as an advocate for broad-based community literacy programming in the larger community.

The Current Scene

Today, more than ever, the need is evident for municipal governments to prepare for and organize to meet the demands of future provision of service to the citizens they serve. An insightful report prepared for The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), “*At the Crossroads of Change, Human Resources and the*

Municipal Sector”,¹ described a series of new challenges facing municipal governments. The list included:

- Formal and informal downloading of federal/provincial/territorial programs
- Mandatory amalgamations
- Voluntary amalgamations/consolidations
- Increased service delivery expectations
- The adoption of business operating principles to municipal public service
- Downsizing as a result of cost saving reviews
- Privatization of some services
- The implementation of an alternative service delivery approach

The report noted that urban as well as both rural and northern municipalities have to develop new strategic directions to meet these challenges. These strategies fall into several categories:

- *Economic Development*
Canadian Municipalities are searching for new ways to encourage economic development in their regions. To achieve these ends, they look at quality of life in municipalities along with the availability of skilled workers.
- *Sustainable Communities*
In spite of decreasing resources and increasing issues with aging and/or inadequate physical and transportation infrastructure, Canadian municipalities are moving toward more progressive approaches to economic and social development. In particular, larger cities face the social and development challenges resulting from the influx of immigrants and refugees.
- *Municipal legislation*
The increased power and authority placed on municipalities as a result of the updating of municipal legislation highlights the need for human resource capacity required to deal with liability and legal issues.
- *Accountability*
The public is demanding regular and ongoing input in policy development and service delivery and up-to-date and accurate information about how their tax dollars are managed. Municipal governments are expected to be increasingly transparent in their dealings with their citizens as well as with all other levels of government.

Municipal governments addressing these issues in a timely and cost effective manner have recognized the importance of creating and maintaining a literate and well-trained workforce, and increasingly recognize the need to support access to life-long learning for both municipal employees and citizens at large. Municipal governments are tackling the literacy/learning challenge in a variety of ways. This report will examine the status of a number of current and completed municipal workplace literacy/learning programs and initiatives, review the progress being made in creating a blueprint for a Learning

¹“At the Crossroads of Change: Human Resources and the Municipal Sector”, The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA), The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

Community and report on the many initiatives that CAMA is undertaking to support the development and sustainability of municipal workplace and community literacy programs.

A. Canadian Municipal Literacy/Learning Programs by Province and Territory²

In the early 1990s there were only approximately eight municipalities that supported a policy/program on literacy for their employees. By the year 2000 there were approximately thirty locations that had a program in place, had completed a program or were seriously considering implementing a program in the near future. Current statistics are contained below.

BC	AB	SK	MB	ON	QC	NB	NS	PE	NF	NT	NU	YK
34	21	13	5	48	4	15	25	2	15	2	2	1
TOTAL: 187												

B. A Review of Municipal Literacy/Learning Programs

A survey was administered to a cross section of municipal governments listed in the database that supports the CAMA Literacy/Learning project. The survey was designed to obtain updated information on the status of municipal Literacy/Learning programs. It included questions obtaining data on the current status of a program, the reasons for the status, steps taken to introduce, evaluate and maintain programs, and an examination of best practices developed.

Survey respondents were asked to provide information on their current, planned or failed ability to be involved in a program. The results indicate that the majority were solidly involved in a program while a smaller group has had to postpone entry into a program assessment and design at this time. Those still uncommitted stated similar reasons for the delay.

- Current training priorities elsewhere
- Lack of resources to move forward
- Need to overcome some Management reluctance to prioritize a comprehensive program

A series of questions that looked at the many steps involved in launching a program evoked the following responses:

Q: How was a need identified to introduce a program?

A:

- Identifying issues attending a CAMA workshop/Conference on Workplace Literacy/Learning

² Our research and networks have indicated that there are workplace literacy/learning programs in place, completed or planned in the numbers shown by province and territory. There may be others that are unknown to us at this time.

- Need to get employees to a GED level of education
- HR recognizing requirement to obtain training for both legislated and developmental needs
- Employees identifying needs
- Municipal training needs not being met
- Search for literacy/upgrading skills matched with access to provincial funding
- Performing a Needs Assessment supported by provincial Department of Education
- CAMA Quebec Study

Q: What were the first steps taken to get started?

A:

- Applied for provincial funding, sought support from City Council and Management, hired a facilitator
- Performed a Basic Skills Development Survey
- Performed an Organizational Needs Assessment, presented results to Senior Management, established a joint union/management pilot project team
- Prepared a jointly developed action plan, terms of reference, obtained Senior Management support
- Sought information from provincial Literacy representative, sought funding from the province, established a Joint Committee, performed a needs assessment, hired 2 instructors
- HR obtained support from City Council and Senior Management to fund both Corporate Training and Departmental Training budgets
- Workshop with CAMA, Provincial representation, HR and management and union representatives
- Meetings with Senior Management to communicate program benefits

Q: How/when was a joint labour/management planning committee formed?

A:

- It was a joint initiative from the outset
- It was a first step
- Existing joint committee mandates were expanded to include the new program
- A joint board was formed with the territorial government and the territorial Association of Municipal Administrators with input from Technical Advisory Committees

Q: What steps were taken to design a program?

A:

- Obtained Corporate support, Mayor Council, Senior Management
- Set up a joint labour/management initiative
- The union approached its membership
- Formed a Workplace Education Committee
- Performed an organizational needs assessment
- Hired a Workplace Education facilitator, used local Community College to assist in program design and implementation

- Formed focus groups to discuss course content

Q: What successful communications strategies were implemented?

A:

- Frequent communications from management through HR to all stakeholders
- Meetings with focus groups, project team members
- On-line training calendars
- Emails to supervisors to encourage registration of staff
- Information in pay cheques and by mail
- Employee newsletter
- Workplace presentations, 'tailgate' meetings
- Gift draw for entry into program
- Interest forms
- Face-to-face interviews with employees
- Posters
- Website information

Q: When was the program implemented?

A:

Programs began as early as 1990. The next phase began in the late 1990s and the current wave of programs started to get established beginning in 2002.

Q: What resources did you use for advice etc.?

A:

Program startups received advice from such sources as CAMA, CUPE, provincial literacy organizations, provincial education departments, local community colleges, and other local municipal and public partners.

Q: If your program no longer exists, what were the main reasons for its cessation?

A:

- Participants wished to speed up their learning and found Community College programs to meet that need.
- After some time, Senior Management failed to support further work in the area

Q: How and when are program evaluations conducted?

A:

- Continuously and always at the end of each program
- Every three months during a program
- Annual evaluation, and as part of a research project in 2005

Q: What program barriers were encountered?

A:

- Understanding and awareness of the program
- Communicating to those most needing it
- Scheduling training sessions; snow storms and snow season schedules requiring back-filling of positions
- Finding funds to support all the initiatives and prioritizing
- Buy-in from Senior Management
- English as a second language, variation in beginning literacy levels, geography

Q: How were they resolved?

A:

- Partnership between members of the Workplace Education Committee
- Rest periods between programs when participation drops
- Improved communication to groups as required
- Discussions, shop steward meetings, focus group meetings
- Flexibility 'in-house' and consultation with other resources
- Keeping City Council "on board" for funding support
- Modification of learning materials for program participants, face-to-face delivery, institute pre-requisite literacy assessment & training

Q: Can you describe best practices used in your program?

A:

- Programs focused on learners schedules
- Building on existing employee strengths
- Use of audio books
- Project-based learning – assuring expected course outcomes
- Strong project team
- Celebrating successes
- Strong relationship with union partners
- Family attendance
- Easy staff registration – supervisors ensure staff are encouraged to take courses and email staff registrations
- Ensuring continued buy-in
- Joint union/management approach and taking the time to do things right
- Focus on employee needs – adult learning as part of the workplace culture
- Delivering courses to identified needs
- Use of peer tutors
- 50/50 split of learning time between City and employee
- Learner/work directed sessions
- Program designed as a 'ladder' with courses laying foundation for the next
- Materials specific to workplace environment, relevant to participant experience, face-to-face delivery, course delivered in home communities and regional centres

Q: How are program results celebrated?

A:

- Certificates
- Discussions to identify "fun" workshop sessions, games nights
- Celebration gatherings
- An Annual Celebration of Learning Event
- Report to Council
- Annual staff BBQ that acknowledges employee successes
- Presentation attended by Mayor
- Recognition of individuals in newspapers
- Accreditation and credit transferability to college and a university

Q: What impacts have been noted?

A:

- Improved communications and morale

- Greater labour/management cooperation
- Increased employee self esteem
- Employees able to perform current work related skills
- Employees able to meet requirements for future advancement
- Improved computer literacy and technical skills
- Joint Committee has developed a continuous, life-long learning attitude
- Legislative learning/certification requirements achieved
- Positive impacts on employees personal life; i.e. interaction with family and friends and communicating experiences and feelings more easily
- Continued interest in learning

Q: What, if any, organizational changes have been noted?

A:

- Employees are more open to applying for new sectors of work within the Corporation
- Able to add a teacher funded by the City
- Attitude to learning has changed, and the culture of learning is becoming more obvious
- Effective maintenance and enhancement of good working relationships between the City and the union
- Improved succession planning and technological workplace change

Q: What are future plans for the program?

A:

- Organizational needs assessment will determine future directions
- New session for Fall 2006
- Maintain program that meets the needs of staff
- On hold awaiting assessment
- Establish a true basic skills program
- Online/distance delivery

Q: What additional material/resources would assist you in assessing the opportunity to introduce/refine a program?

A:

- Information on literacy programs for employees of diverse cultural backgrounds
- Funding to proceed with online project with Nunavut Literacy Council as a partner
- Additional information on online literacy/workplace essential skills assessment tools, especially in an ESL environment

C. Three Municipal Workplace Literacy/Learning Program Profiles

In order to tell the story of the vigorous and healthy status of some established workplace literacy/learning programs, we offer profiles of three municipalities, each with similar goals but differing approaches to obtaining positive results.

“From Vision to Reality” Halifax, NS

Since 1997 when the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) began offering workplace education programs the project team had a clear vision of what they are working towards:

- Commitment to continuous learning as a corporate priority and part of workplace culture
- Involvement and input from employees, union and management in the project
- Diversified learning opportunities at permanent learning resource centres in all HRM regions
- Recognition of employees’ achievements
-

HRM has come a long way to reaching its goals and has learned a great deal along the way.

Workplace continuous education has become part of HRM’s culture; it is supported by management, union and employee partnerships. Ongoing support from external partners such as the Nova Scotia Department of Education and CAMA has reinforced HRM’s commitment to continue HRM has also benefited from linking with a wide network of other municipalities to share knowledge and experience. The HRM has created unique learning opportunities, throughout the municipality, to meet the diverse needs of our employee groups.

Learning Resource Centres are now operating in locations where traditional libraries are not available. Most of these centres have developed independently and they are sustained by the employees themselves with support from HRM. One very successful example is the Transit Fleet “library” which hosts workplace education programs for staff who find it difficult to attend corporate programs because they work on shifts.

In working toward its goals HRM has learned two essential lessons:

- **Be flexible about where, when and how programs are offered.**
- **Listen to the needs of your employees and support their development.**

Halifax Regional Municipality has attained much of what it wanted to accomplish and has been recognized nationally for its programs. HRM has been awarded on several occasions with CAMA Awards of Excellence for Municipal Workplace Literacy Achievements. The ongoing support and dedication of various partners has allowed HRM to build the program. But the successes and the true strength of the programs come from HRM employee’s commitment to continuous learning and personal growth.

“Try, Try again..... Initiating a Workplace Education Program” Bathurst, NB

The City of Bathurst Workplace education Center began in the summer of 1998 when Mr. Tracy Branch, Director of Human resources, was successful in obtaining provincial government funding. The City Manager and Council approved the program and a facilitator was hired.

Although all the steps to creating and implementing the program were positive and funding was in place, something was wrong. No one in the Corporation really understood what the program was about. Low enrollment and lack of support brought things to a halt, resulting in a review of the whole process.

Rather than shelve a project that could have such a positive impact, Mr. Branch tried a new approach, he enlisted the help of CAMA and Literacy New Brunswick to develop the following six-step plan of action:

1. **Obtain corporate support and endorsement.** All the players – employees, unions, supervisors and management, as well as the Mayor and Council – had to be involved. It took a lot of meetings but was vital to the success of the program.
2. **Make the program a joint initiative of Labour and Management.** Meetings were first held with the executive of each union local to find out what they specifically wanted in a program. Next, meetings were held with the executives of all the locals together to identify what was required for employees of all departments.
3. **Ask the Unions to present the concept to their membership.** Letters were sent to all employees seeking their input and support.
4. **Gain support of Department Heads, Supervisors, and Managers.** Human resources met with each Department to outline the program and get feedback and suggestions.
5. **Seek support of the Mayor and Council through an information meeting.** Council support was granted immediately and a resolution in favour of the program was adopted unanimously at Council’s next public meeting.
6. **Form a Workplace Education Committee to implement the program.** The Committee included representatives from each union local, from management (including HR) and the Workplace Education Facilitator.

Once the support structure was in place, a Needs assessment was initiated. This crucial step had been overlooked in developing the initial program. A consultant was hired to interview employees and identify what courses were required.

The interview results were tabulated and focus groups formed to identify specific course content and scheduling issues for each employee group. An offshoot of the Needs Assessment was the development of an Employee Talent Pool. Employees identified workshops they were willing to host, based on their interests and expertise.

Another unique feature of the program offered by the City of Bathurst is that it is offered in both English and French. The learner just has to specify their language preference and the courses are available in that language. In addition to offering the various courses in both official languages, the Bathurst program offers language courses which provide the learner with the opportunity to improve their writing skills, grammar and communication skills in either language.

The program remains active today by virtue of its adaptability. When the new City Hall Pavilion was constructed following the 2003 Canada Winter Games, a Workplace Education Center was incorporated into the Human Resources Department. Shortly afterwards however, the funding for the Workplace Education Facilitator was abolished. The City had to be very creative to keep the program operating. When a position opened in the Human Resources Department, the job description was modified to include the duties of the Workplace Education Facilitator. This necessitated some changes to the program but it continued to operate.

Fifty-six (56) different workshops have been presented over the years ranging from introductory computer courses, reading and letter writing to vehicle maintenance, oil painting and dealing with conflict.

The City of Bathurst measures program success not by enrollment but by what learners are achieving.

“Champions for Workplace Learning – Commitment and Continuity” Kingston, ON

Hosting the CAMA *Literate Cities* conference in November 2002 sparked the City of Kingston’s interest in workplace education. Following up on the conference the Director of HR and the Manager of Employee Relations and Development proposed to the City’s senior management in December 2003 that a workplace education component be developed in cooperation with CUPE and integrated into the Corporate Employee Education and Development program. However, a decision on this proposal was deferred.

In 2004, CAMA requested that Kingston host a pilot workshop for labour and management participants from Cornwall, Peterborough, Belleville and Kingston. This workshop raised awareness about municipal workplace learning and provided management and labour with suggestions for planning a workplace learning project. Key union and management representatives from the City of Kingston were convinced that they needed a joint labour –management committee. They drafted guiding principles, goals and terms of reference for a joint committee.

The Director of HR and the Manager, Employee Relations and Development took the idea back to senior management, but, once again, conditions were not right for the proposal to go forward. It was deferred until 2005.

The idea did not die however. The focus of the initiative and the name was changed – it was clearly going to be a ‘joint’ project, headed by the Joint Employee Education and ***Municipal Leadership: Investing in Literacy and Learning for the Workplace and the Community Project*** 11
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Development (JEED) Committee. The group identified and clearly communicated the benefits of a collaborative approach – great buy-in from stakeholders, better results, broader communication, a broader knowledge base and improved labour and employee relations.

HR personnel also made sure that establishing the JEED was included in the HR goals for 2005. Once these goals were approved, the committee was formed. It includes 4 management reps, 4 union reps and several reps from HR who deliver training courses. Several committee members have been involved since the first conference in 2002 and their participation provides valuable continuity for the process.

The JEED Committee finalized the principles, goals and terms of reference for the project. A sub-committee oversaw the Needs Assessment and developed a communication plan. The goal was to offer a pilot program before the end of 2005 and incorporate results in the 2006 corporate training budget.

The program got underway with a pilot computer literacy program. This pilot program was completed and they are planning another for the Fall of 2006 based on the valuable feedback received from participants, managers, facilitator and course organizer. For 2006 the program also includes:

- Clear Writing
- Introduction to keyboarding
- Restart your education – a program in partnership with a local school board for employees to earn their Grade 12 Diploma through Maturity credits and on-the-job credits recognizing workplace skills, training and experience.
- Technical skills pilot – in-house certification on obtaining A or DZ licenses; and CAD (Auto Cad)
- Stress management and Seasonal Affective Disorder
- Personal Learning Plan pilot – Using a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition tool, we are piloting a program which assists employees in developing a Personal Learning plan to help them identify job-related skills they have and the gaps (training and development required) to determine what they need to change careers.
- Reading Efficiency – being developed for the fall of 2006

Obstacles identified:

- Resistance to change
- There is a strong feeling that a training program means staff replacement and staff shortages; manager would have to find a way to cover workload or else work would be left undone.

Lessons learned to date:

- It is important to demonstrate the return on investment for a training program or any new proposal.
- The workplace is always a very busy and hectic place. Taking on a new project over and above regular work is often seen as creating more stress and problems. It

takes time and patience to convey the benefits and convince those who can affect change.

- The process demonstrates how management and union working together can be effective and produce worthwhile results.

D. CAMA Municipal Leadership: Investing in Literacy and Learning for the Workplace and Community

Since the last status report in 2000, CAMA has continued to provide strong, tangible support to the growth and sustainability of Canadian Municipal Literacy/Learning Programs both in the workplace and the community. These initiatives and undertakings will do much to ensure the essential movement toward lifelong learning continues to flourish in the municipal sector.

Building Sustainability through Partnerships and Actions at the Municipal, Provincial and National Levels

Expanded Partnerships

The partnership model that the CAMA Literacy project uses can be defined as one that involves municipal managers, union representatives and community representatives, nationally, provincially and locally in all of its work. CAMA promotes this partnership approach in all of its products, events and projects.

For example, there are fourteen national committees that oversee the work of the present CAMA Literacy Project. Committees generally have representation from municipal management, CUPE and community partners. Each committee facilitates the work of a specific area of the CAMA Literacy Project. Two of the committees reflect joint projects with the CUPE National Literacy Program.

At the provincial level, an example of the partnership model is the *Ontario Clear Language Forum hosted by CAMA*. The planning committee for the forum includes representatives from municipal management, CUPE and the literacy community in Ontario. Delegates to the forum will also represent municipal management, labour and the literacy and educational community from across Ontario.

At the local level, CAMA offers workshops on how to develop a municipal workplace learning program. In this case, the planning and content of the workshops and the attendees reflect a joint union- management approach and the role of the community as a resource to management and labour.

Conferences and Regional Workshops 2001-2004

Two Conferences, “Municipal Excellence through Partnerships and Education” were held in Richmond, BC, Kingston ON 2002. The goals of the conferences were to:

- strengthen networks in workplace education/literacy programs in municipal workplaces

- raise awareness about workplace education programs, their impacts, and encourage development of new programs
- provide an opportunity and forum for communicating/networking, sharing information and experiences
- highlight the joint labour-management process for developing a successful workplace education/literacy program
- provide information about key tools and resources to complement programs

A series of regional workshops for municipal managers and unions in a geographically close area designed to raise awareness about municipal workplace learning and to assist management and labour in planning municipal workplace learning projects were held across Canada in May/June 2004. The City of Kingston hosted the pilot testing of the proposed format workshops and the revised format was hosted by the City of Vancouver, the City of Regina, the City of Moncton (in partnership with the City of Bathurst and the City of Charlottetown), the City of St. John's, Nova Scotia Partners with Halifax Regional Municipality and the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia.

Provincial Workshops for Municipal Stakeholders 2005

It was determined that opportunities to develop deeper partnerships with municipal associations be pursued. As a result, in 2005 the City of Grande Prairie partnering with CAMA and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) hosted a workshop in Alberta. The Town of Fort Erie, ON, as a precursor to the introduction of the pilot project to create a Learning Community in the region, hosted a workshop in the Great Niagara Region of Ontario. The workshops brought together municipal managers, unions, literacy practitioners and administrators and representatives of governments.

Regional Forum

In order to support opportunities for literacy partners and practitioners to explore workplace literacy and learning options and curricula they can use in the field, a partnership between CAMA and the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) was formed to create the idea for a Regional Forum in a specific region of Ontario for Provincial and Local Practitioners. The Forum partners (CAMA the City of Toronto and CUPE) agreed to co-host a forum called Clear Language: The Municipal Challenge in September 2006. The forum was an opportunity to 'test' the clear language tool that the CAMA and CUPE team developed, called The Clarity Kit: Effective Communication for Municipalities.

Municipal Learning Resource Network

Past experience dictated that there was a need to put in place a network of committed literacy advocates to offer targeted awareness and outreach to new and struggling workplace literacy/learning programs. At the outset, two national advisory committees were struck to look at creating both a Resource Bank of Literacy/Learning Champions and another to oversee the development of a Network of Literacy Advocates. Early on in separate development processes strong similarities were identified by both groups in the goals and objectives of each initiative. Subsequently it was agreed that the Committees should merge and work toward creating a single comprehensive outreach network at the national, provincial and municipal levels to promote workplace literacy/learning. A group

of more than forty volunteer advocates was recruited from national and provincial literacy organizations, municipal governments, unions, and literacy practitioners. They were given on-line training with a specially designed toolkit to aid them when responding to a CAMA request to provide assistance to a potential municipal workplace literacy/learning initiative.

The Learning Community Process

At the May 2000", CAMA Conference on "Literate Cities" in Bathurst NB, there emerged a vision to create 'literate cities, later to become known as 'learning communities'. Based on this vision CAMA prepared a roadmap titled "The Learning Community: Creating a Blueprint" by which to define the potential for such a venture. The CAMA National Committee for a Learning Community was established in 2003 to validate the blueprint as a viable direction for CAMA's members to consider. The Committee concluded that the time was right for municipal governments to step forward to act as a catalyst for such a far-reaching ideal. A workable plan, "Blueprint for a Learning Community: A Guide for the Municipal Stakeholder" was developed by the Committee to assist municipal governments interested in championing the development of a learning community in its region.

In late 2004, armed with this guide, plans were laid to support a pilot project in which CAMA would partner with a municipal government to test the process to create a learning community. In January 2005, building on its strong involvement in and commitment to the issue of literacy and learning, the Town of Fort Erie, ON stepped forward to accept the challenge of becoming the site for the two-year pilot project.

The Town of Fort Erie, lead by its Mayor and Council, brought together a widely diverse group of local and regional organizations representing literacy agencies and advocates, educators, libraries, and special interest groups to form a Learning Community Advisory Committee. It has met regularly to determine the vision, values and goals of a learning community for the Fort Erie region.

Commencing in the late Fall of 2006, the Committee with financial and administrative support from the Town of Fort Erie will oversee the design and implementation of a formal Needs Assessment based on the vision, values and goals developed. The Needs Assessment will allow for a comprehensive action plan to be created that will lead Fort Erie through the long-term steps to become a true 'learning community' in the future.

Support to New Municipal Literacy and Learning Initiatives

An on-going activity of the CAMA literacy projects is to interact and communicate with the established literacy networks and do follow-ups with and provide on-going support to delegates of previous conferences and workshops. Functions include facilitation with joint committees, outreach to local and provincial stakeholders, distribution of information and resources, communiqués to networks, presentations to workshops/conferences, etc.

Research and Development

Clear Language Assessment Tool

CAMA established a strategic partnership with the CUPE Literacy Project to develop and test a clear language assessment tool. In Phase 1, an environmental scan was performed to identify what tools and resources are currently available, who is using clear language in the municipal sector and other sectors, and how. It outlined recommendations for actions in Phase 2.

In phase 2, a clear language tool, *The Clarity Kit: Effective Communication for Municipalities*, was developed and tested in a forum, held in Toronto ON in September 2006. After the test and revision it was put on both the CAMA and CUPE websites. Print copies were produced in a binder format. The content includes:

- Promotional material (10 clear writing tips, examples, resources, Q &A, definition, slide presentation)
- Advocacy and strategies
- The Clarity Audit

The product is an innovative approach to clear language, especially the Clarity Audit, developed for municipal governments.

Quebec Municipalities Status

CAMA undertook a review of the status of workplace literacy and learning in the Province of Quebec. Specifically CAMA wanted to know what is happening at present in the area of municipal workplace literacy and learning programs, what is needed and what can be done to promote and communicate to municipal stakeholders in that province. A final report in December 2005 recommended that the CAMA Literacy Project move forward with actions in Quebec and develop key linkages and partnerships. To this end, contact has been established with both Ville de Gatineau and Ville de Montréal. The Ville de Gatineau has set up a joint union-management committee and will be starting to plan a needs assessment process.

Project Evaluation – Role of CAMA in the Future

An evaluation of the Municipal Leadership Project was undertaken to help in assessing CAMA's progress and to make recommendations for CAMA's on-going role in the area of municipal workplace and community literacy and learning. The evaluation looked at every component of the current project in order to produce a series of recommendations to guide CAMA in its future work. The CAMA Board has met with the evaluator twice to discuss results and determine its future directions.

Communications and Promotions

CAMA Awards of Excellence

In 2001, a national Committee was set up to recommend the goals and award categories. The Committee is composed of municipal managers and unions, CAMA Board of Directors Member, a teacher/practitioner and the CAMA Project Director. The original categories awarded were:

- Learner Achievement
- Organizational Commitment to workplace Literacy and Education

- Development of Effective and Successful Partnerships
- Creative Design of Workplace Literacy Programs

In 2003, a new category was added:

- Recognition of new workplace education and literacy initiatives

In 2006, Category 3 was revised to:

- Recognition of educators, practitioners or organizations/municipal partners.

The awards are presented at the annual CAMA conference. To date approximately 30 municipal workplaces and partner organizations have received the awards. In 2006, we saw a new trend emerge. Over 50% of the submissions were from new program initiatives.

Literate Cities Link

In partnership with CUPE, CAMA co-chairs a Literate Cities Link initiative, an electronic communication vehicle through the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). A variety of approaches such as listserves and forum/bulletin boards have been used since its inception to develop the tool to maximize its effectiveness. In September 2005, the Committee decided to pilot test an on-line discussion with learners in the City of Winnipeg. In 2006, this pilot program was extended to teams of instructors and learners in the Cities of Bathurst, NB, and Halifax, NS, for duration of 4-6 weeks.

A survey of instructors was conducted in the Spring 2006. It identified interest in developing the concept for an instructor's on-line discussion that would cover professional development topics on workplace education.

The CAMA Connection Newsletter

In 2005, a National Steering Committee designed and oversaw the development of The CAMA Connection: Linking Municipal Partners-Promoting Literacy and Learning newsletter. Designed in a clear communication format, its focus is on workplace literacy initiatives, activities and information. It is distributed electronically to CAMA members, provincial and territorial partners and networks, etc. It also acts as a promotional tool in paper form at forums, workshops the CAMA annual conference etc. There have been three editions of the newsletter.

CAMA Website

The CAMA website is regularly updated to reflect the latest developments in the literacy project development including providing access for municipal managers and unions to the most recent reports and publications. All the tools and resources developed by the projects are on the website, as well, links are provided to kindred organizations for further current information. Current events and information are added when appropriate.

E. Tools Development and Publication

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A list of tools developed since 2000 to support the investment in literacy and learning in the workplace and the community is listed in Appendix A. The tools listed are all available through the CAMA website: www.camacam.ca .

CONCLUSION: The Road Ahead

It is evident from the data available that workplace literacy/learning programs are well established across Canada and municipally launched ‘learning community’ projects are continuing to emerge. The reasons for their existence and the nature of their operations are multiple and diverse, but successful ventures are all reacting to similar stimuli. Many of these are outlined in the report “At the Crossroads of Change: Human Resources and the Municipal Sector”³:

- The effect of recent restructuring initiatives, including amalgamations, downloading, realignment, downsizing and, in the North, the effect of land claims settlements and emerging self-governing needs.
- The effect of recent and upcoming amendments to municipal legislation and regulations.
- The increase in the number and complexity of types of service municipal governments are expected to deliver.
- The need to re-think what skill competencies are required for municipal government.
- The lack of human and financial resources to deliver municipal services.
- An aging workforce.
- Lack of recruitment and retention strategies to address labour supply and demand issues.
- Deteriorating labour relations.
- Lack of resources to deliver training and professional development.
- Lack of understanding of what impact alternative service delivery arrangements will have, both on the workforce and on the services delivered.

The immediate future poses major challenges for Municipal Governments. Some of the most critical to resolve are:

- Becoming more strategic in planning and building for the future.
- Taking into account long-term HR requirements.
- Providing management with the skills needed to manage strategically in a changing environment.
- Ensuring the workforce has the capability to support municipalities as they respond to new demands like alternative service delivery and the arrival of new technology.

It is easy to understand why programs and initiatives that address the ability to upgrade skills, acquire new ones and move into an environment of life-long learning will continue

³ “ At the Crossroads of Change: Human Resources and the Municipal Sector”, The Canadian Federation of Municipalities (FCM), The Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA), The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

to be of vital importance. Failure to examine the issues and introduce solutions in the area of workplace education, and the broader “learning community”, may prove costly. A municipal government’s ability to control some of the factors outlined above through investing in literacy and learning for both the workplace and the community will be critical to its success as an efficient manager of future economic and social development in the region it serves.

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Michelle O'Brien
Ottawa, September 2006

Appendix A

List of Tools developed by CAMA since 2000

- 1. Literate Cities 2002. Municipal Excellence through Partnerships and Education Conference Report**
- 2. A Guide for Planning and Conducting an Organizational Needs Assessment fro Municipal workplace Literacy Programs**
- 3. After the Pilot Projects – Revisiting the Process**
- 4. Municipal Workplace Learning and the Community: Bridges to the Future – Guide for Introductory Workshop**
- 5. The Learning Community – Creating A Blueprint**
- 6. Blueprint for a Learning Community – A Guide for the Municipal Stakeholder**
- 7. The Clarity Kit – Effective Communication for Municipalities**
- 8. Report – Quebec Study**
- 9. Guide for the Municipal Learning Resource Network**

Each of these publications is available on the CAMA website: www.camacam.ca

