

# Fact Sheet 2

## *Why municipalities are involved in Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills*

Across Canada, municipalities are seeking employees with more sophisticated skills than the basic job requirements.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the kinds of Essential Skills needed in municipal workplaces include reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use. Other important and required job skills are decision-making, problem solving, entrepreneurship, leadership, knowledge of information and communication technologies, and a desire to learn.

### **Today's business world**

Canadian municipalities are being challenged to find better ways to manage change in the workplace. Today's business world is marked by a strong demand for skilled labour and technological expertise. It is clear that the Canadian workforce needs to be highly skilled and able to adapt if it is to compete in a global economy.

Municipal employers need to develop a greater awareness of the need for skills upgrading. They need to ensure that all employees have the Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills to perform tasks in a safe, accurate, and efficient way.

### **Did you know?**

- 42 percent of adult Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need to succeed in today's workforce.
- 16 percent of Canadian adults are not able to deal with most of the written material they encounter in daily life.
- A further 22 percent do not have the literacy skills to cope with words that are not familiar or complex reading tasks.

**“There is no doubt that CUPE members and their employers benefit from workplace education programs, but so does the public who relies on the important services we provide.”**

**–Paul Moist, National President, Canadian Union of Public Employees**



## **Why this matters to municipalities**

Municipal corporations already require high levels of literacy. Jobs that only require low literacy skills are less-and-less common as work environments become more challenging.

Municipalities must also deal with the changing nature of Canada's workforce. Here are the facts:

- Retirement of the Baby Boomers will lead to a shortage of workers.
- Low birth rates have marked recent decades and are likely to continue.
- Fewer young workers are entering the labour market.
- Greater numbers of minorities and immigrants are entering the workforce.

Population trends suggest the Canada of the future will be made up of aging citizens and a smaller number of youth. Employers will experience a talent crunch when they try to replace retiring employees.

## **What are the main challenges?**

- Doing business better in difficult economic times
- A shrinking labour market in many parts of the country
- Managing downsizing and restructuring
- Implementing new management approaches
- Introducing new technology
- Managing complex information systems
- Ensuring smoother functioning of internal systems
- Meeting health and safety requirements
- Addressing the need for extra supervision time
- Improving and enhancing customer service.



This series of fact sheets is produced by the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators. To learn more about our work in support of Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs, visit our website:

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