

Fact Sheet 3

How municipal workplaces are tackling the issues

What are the signs of low literacy and a lack of Essential Skills in your workplace?

Review this list to see how many of these apply in your workplace.

<i>Generally</i>	<i>Health and safety</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover is high • Many workers are often absent from work • Workers have low motivation and /or low productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More on-the-job accidents occur • Your workplace has many health and safety issues • Your own staff and the public may be at risk because signs and instructions are written at a level too difficult to read or understand
<i>Certification, promotion, and transfer</i>	<i>Resistance to change</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many staff fail written certification tests • Some staff are denied a promotion or transfer because of low literacy or lack of Essential Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers resist change and training • Workers are not keen to use new technologies • Workers are not keen to problem solve and/or make decisions

What can you do?

Create a positive learning culture for all employees.

Municipalities that support Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills programs enjoy a more loyal, confident, and dependable workforce. Since the early 1990s, results from workplace programs in Canadian municipalities show that these types of programs also support worker creativity and promote high performance levels within the organization.

“People who thought it was too late to learn are completing high school and now feel that they can be a role model for their children. Those who had little access to training are now hooked on lifelong learning. They are pursuing promotions and completing certificate programs.”

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



Creating a positive learning culture in the workplace benefits both the employer and employee in many ways:

- Workers have more options for promotion and transfer within the workplace.
- Workplace health and safety improves.
- Teamwork is enhanced and improved.
- Less on-the-job supervision is needed.
- Workers stay longer in their jobs (higher staff retention).
- A vibrant and engaged workforce copes well with change in the workplace.

To create a successful Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills program, act to put these three key building blocks in place.

1. Introduce policies to:

- create new management approaches
- encourage empowerment of all staff
- ensure better communication between management and workers
- help staff prepare for new challenges
- support diversity
- create a learning culture

2. Enter into partnerships that:

- enhance management/labour relations
- create stronger links with literacy and education groups in the community
- raise awareness about Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills with all municipal stakeholders

3. Introduce a process to:

- encourage all levels of management to get involved in the process
- create a communication plan to inform everyone in your workplace about the program
- set up a joint committee of managers and union representatives that will create terms of reference for the tasks ahead, such as the needs assessment
- develop roles and responsibilities for both management and unions
- make the program worker-centered (focused on people's needs as workers, parents, citizens, and union members)
- embed Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills training into current training programs or courses



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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