

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Is Canada making the grade?

*Frontier College comments on Canada's "composite learning index"*

**TORONTO, Ontario** – Monday, May 15, 2006 – Today, the Canada Council on Learning released its CLI, or composite learning index, for Canada.

The report measures "the state of learning in Canada" through an examination of a set of indicators, much like the CPI or the Canadian Index of Wellbeing. Inevitably, the study will build on data already uncovered last May when Statistics Canada and the OECD released the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. While the CLI promises to look more at education than at learning, per se, it will undoubtedly come to very similar conclusions.

Literacy skills, or lack thereof, define an individual's ability to succeed in our society. Literacy levels are the foundation of every indicator measured in the CLI and are the basis upon which we rely, as Canadians, for quality of life.

"How can you possibly separate high school drop out rates, for instance, from a person's level of literacy at the time he or she drops out or, more importantly, later on in life?" wonders John O'Leary, President of Frontier College. "We already know that students who score lower on standardized literacy tests are more likely to leave school early, take lower paying jobs, and live closer to the poverty line."

42% of Canadians are in literacy levels 1 and 2 as defined by Statistics Canada. This group of people does not have the literacy skills necessary to thrive in today's knowledge-based society. Frontier College has been working with Canadians who need literacy help for over 100 years.

"While the findings of the report are unique, it's no surprise to those of us who have been working for years in the literacy field to learn that the issue very serious and must be on the agendas of Canada's private sector and governments at all levels," says O'Leary.

Frontier College works with Canadian children, teens and adults to improve their literacy skills and enhance the quality of their lives. We know that improving literacy levels necessitates a significant collective response: public, private, individual and corporate, because if Canada wants to compete in the global economy, we need to invest in literacy.

**John O'Leary (President of Frontier College and well-known spokesperson for literacy in Canada) is available for interviews on the literacy underpinnings of the CLI and on education and learning in Canada.**

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Literacy is an essential skill in today's world. At Frontier College, we believe it's a fundamental right. Low literacy skills are directly linked to poverty, poor health and high unemployment. 42% of adult Canadians have trouble with everyday tasks that involve reading. That's millions of Canadians who are not reaching their potential. Through a network of thousands of volunteers, Frontier College is helping people to realize their potential and seize the opportunities that come their way. [www.frontiercollege.ca](http://www.frontiercollege.ca)

If you are interested in an interview with John O'Leary, one of Canada's leading literacy thinkers and "do-ers," please contact: Sandi Kiverago, Director of Communications, Frontier College, 416-923-3591 x318  
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