

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



On International Literacy Day Canadians demand literacy advances right here at home

Thousands of Canadians sign petition to federal government

OTTAWA, Ontario – September 8, 2005 -- To mark International Literacy Day, September 8, and the launch of International Adult Learners' Week, members of the literacy community delivered thousands of literacy petitions to Parliament Hill today. More petitions are on the way.

Close to 20,000 Canadians signed the petition, launched by Frontier College and the Movement for Canadian Literacy. The petition calls on the federal government to move ahead on a pan-Canadian literacy strategy and to ramp up literacy funding.

The petitioners understand that the need for action is great. Literacy is an essential skill in today's world. Low literacy skills are directly linked to poverty, poor health and high unemployment. In May, the International Adult Literacy Survey reported that 4 in 10 Canadian adults don't have the literacy skills necessary to thrive in today's knowledge society. What's more, these statistics are virtually unchanged in the ten years since a similar survey was last released.

Now, finally, the community has reason to hope. The last federal budget promised the creation of a "comprehensive strategy in support of literacy and essential skills development." In the spring, Minister of State Claudette Bradshaw was tasked with moving a federal literacy agenda forward. Since then, the Minister has been criss-crossing the country canvassing the literacy community and has also asked Canada's seven national literacy organizations to coordinate their efforts on a pan-Canadian plan of action for literacy.

"This petition campaign shows that Canadians from every walk of life recognize that more must to be done to improve the literacy skills of our citizens," said Frontier College President John O'Leary. "We hope that these thousands of names will help to fuel the growing momentum towards action."

"With the commitment and resources in place, in ten years – perhaps less – we'll all benefit from the positive difference that literacy advances will have on our society and economy," added MCL Executive Director Wendy DesBrisay.

For copies of the petition look to www.frontiercollege.ca or www.literacy.ca.

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Frontier College is strengthening Canada's social fabric by engaging and mobilizing volunteers across Canada to take action in the cause of literacy and learning. Through a network of thousands of volunteers, Frontier College is helping people to realize their potential and seize the opportunities that come their way.

The Movement for Canadian Literacy is a national non-profit organization representing literacy coalitions, organizations, and individuals from every province and territory. Our mission is to be a national voice for literacy for every Canadian.

For more information or to arrange an interview:

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