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# **Adult Literacy: An Imperative for Economic Success and Social Cohesion**

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# Introduction

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- ❑ Effective policy development is critical in addressing significant adult literacy issues
- ❑ Ontario views literacy as central to the development of human capital and the reinforcement of social cohesion

# Current Labour Market Context



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**A knowledge-based economy needs an extraordinary diversity of skills**

**Knowledge and skills represent the information, capabilities and expertise required for success in the labour market and daily life. These include:**

- ❑ Foundation skills (literacy and numeracy)
- ❑ Generic skills (communication, teamwork, problem solving etc.)
- ❑ Trades and technical skills - career oriented and often occupation-specific (apprentices, technicians, technologists etc.)
- ❑ Professions and management skills, both academic and career oriented

**Knowledge and skills are the great equalizer, and the key to Ontario's prosperity**

- ❑ A powerful lever for reducing poverty and increasing meaningful employment
- ❑ Vital to good citizenship, civic engagement and well-being
- ❑ Basis for innovation and talent to attract investment in the knowledge-based economy

# Current Reality – Literacy in Ontario

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## Level of Literacy

- ❑ 42% of adult Ontarians function at a literacy level below that required for today's knowledge based economy (IALSS 2003)
- ❑ Most important determinant of employability and wage rates
- ❑ Most important determinant of access and persistence in secondary and post-secondary education
- ❑ Good foundation critical to learning at all ages
- ❑ Central role in the acquisition and application of ICT that underlie productivity growth
- ❑ Marked impact on individual health, including health and safety and independence

# Strategic Policy Response – Early Thinking Ontario

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- ❑ Increase the percentage of secondary school students and graduates with functional levels of literacy
- ❑ Increase the percentage of adults who can achieve level 3 and above according to international standards and design program approaches accordingly
- ❑ Focus on differentiated literacy instruction through:
  - ❑ Formative assessment of learning needs to ensure a good fit between the program offering and the needs of individuals
  - ❑ Summative assessment of learning gains to demonstrate program efficiency and effectiveness
  - ❑ Address programming that fails to deliver results

# Initiatives Underway

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- ❑ Outcome-based policy and program design
  - ❑ Currently implemented for Job Connect, Literacy and Basic Skills, Ontario Basic Skills, Academic Upgrading and Academic Career Entrance
  - ❑ Ongoing development work for other programs/services
    - ❑ Work with the college sector and non-profit groups to design and deliver an adult literacy curriculum

# Outcome-based Program: Literacy and Basic Skills

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## □ Literacy and Basic Skills program

- Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program provides literacy, numeracy, and essential skills services, based on its vision:
  - To establish a training system relevant to the needs of workers and employers, one that will help Ontarians find and keep jobs in increasingly competitive world markets. Ontario's training system will be more focused, streamlined and cost-efficient to provide people with the skills and knowledge that they need to find and keep jobs.
- Objective of the LBS program is to help move Ontario towards a seamless adult education system that provides quality service to those who need it the most, guided by clear accountability principles.

# Outcome-based Program: Literacy and Basic Skills

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## ❑ Learner Skills Attainment

- ❑ The LBS program is currently developing a means of assessing learner skill attainment that responds to the need among adult literacy learners to transition more easily between literacy programs to high school, post-secondary, apprenticeship, or employment.
- ❑ This initiative is based on the core skills defined as Essential Skills by Human Resources & Social Development.
- ❑ When fully implemented, specific standards and a common language will be used to assess, track and acknowledge learners' achievements, and will support new forms of recognition for literacy learning.

# Moving Forward

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- ❑ Measurable, agreed upon outcomes:
  - ❑ Individual learners and workers
  - ❑ Employers/Sectors and Labour
  - ❑ Community-based organizations
  - ❑ Institutions
  - ❑ Society and the economy
  
- ❑ Need to build stronger partnerships – shared responsibility