



For immediate release

Advancing Workplace Learning Summit Celebrates the 5th Annual Essential Skills Day with Cross-Sector Leaders in Toronto, Ontario

Business, government, unions and the literacy and essential skills sector shine the spotlight on skills for employment and investment in skills and training

(Toronto, ON – September 26, 2014) – Today, in celebration of the fifth annual Essential Skills Day, ABC Life Literacy Canada and Canadian Literacy and Learning Network are hosting the Advancing Workplace Summit in Toronto, Ontario to shine the spotlight on skills for employment and to encourage investment in skills training.

Leaders from business, government, unions and the literacy and essential skills sector will join forces to discuss essential skills in Canada, looking at the latest research, the impact on the economy, the changing business environment and opportunities to make Canada competitive on a global scale through building a better trained, higher skilled, more literate workforce. Delegates include Rhiannon Traill, President and CEO, The Economic Club of Canada; Craig Alexander, Senior Vice-President and Chief Economist, TD Bank Group; Hassan Yussuff, President, Canadian Labour Congress; Shaun Thorson, CEO, Skills Canada and Linda Shohet, Executive Director, The Centre for Literacy.

“Employers must recognize the urgent need for essential skills training in the workplace,” says Gillian Mason, President of ABC Life Literacy Canada. “The education system cannot solve the problem for the current population of working-aged adults. Nor can the nation’s school systems account for foreign-educated adult immigrants, the skills of older workers relative to the changing needs of workplaces, which are often driven by technological change.”

Canada must continue to make essential skills training a priority. Essential skills training in the workplace can provide solutions for: fundamental changes in the business, health and safety concerns, paperwork and document use problems, communications, teamwork and leadership needs, and errors and waste.

“Essential Skills are an integral part of any successful education and career in the skilled trade and technology arena,” says Shaun Thorson, CEO of Skills / Competences Canada. “Promoting the importance of the nine essential skills is part and parcel of encouraging the pursuit of skilled trades, and raising the profile of these foundational skills in classrooms can only build a stronger Canadian workforce.”

Literacy and essential skills are the foundation for all learning, and involve, not only reading, but also interpreting information in all forms. Businesses increasingly require employees to have strong literacy, numeracy and essential skills. But almost half of Canadians are ill-equipped to be their best at their jobs. In a 2013 OECCD survey of twenty-three countries, it was revealed that 2 out of every 5 employed Canadians fall below a high school level for literacy and numeracy skills. Yet companies continue to devote little money to supporting and training their employees. Imagine where Canada would be if our workforce was performing at the top of their game.

"Working together to find manageable ways to help workers and business owners enhance workplace practices is a win-win," say Lindsay Kennedy, President and CEO of Canadian Literacy and Learning Network. "Often, using an essential skills lens in workplaces allows us to identify opportunities to refresh, learn or grow foundational skills. Many employers have found building essential skills learning into the everyday work environment can help address the safety, business and people issues and challenges they are facing, and improve the workplace against core goals and metrics at the same time."

Essential Skills Day is a nationwide initiative celebrated annually in September to raise awareness about the importance of skills training and the nine essential skills. The day aims to demonstrate to employers and employees the importance of workforce training to create a more productive workforce, a more competitive economy and an improved bottom-line.

Visit www.EssentialSkillsDay.ca for resources, tools and case studies profiling successful workforce training programs across Canada.

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About ABC Life Literacy Canada:

ABC Life Literacy Canada is a non-profit organization that inspires Canadians to increase their literacy skills. We mobilize business, government and communities to support lifelong learning and achieve our goals through leadership in programs, communications and partnerships. ABC Life Literacy Canada envisions a Canada where everyone has the skills they need to live a fully engaged life. For the latest news and information on adult literacy please visit www.abclifeliteracy.ca, follow us on [Twitter](#) or join our [Facebook](#) page.

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