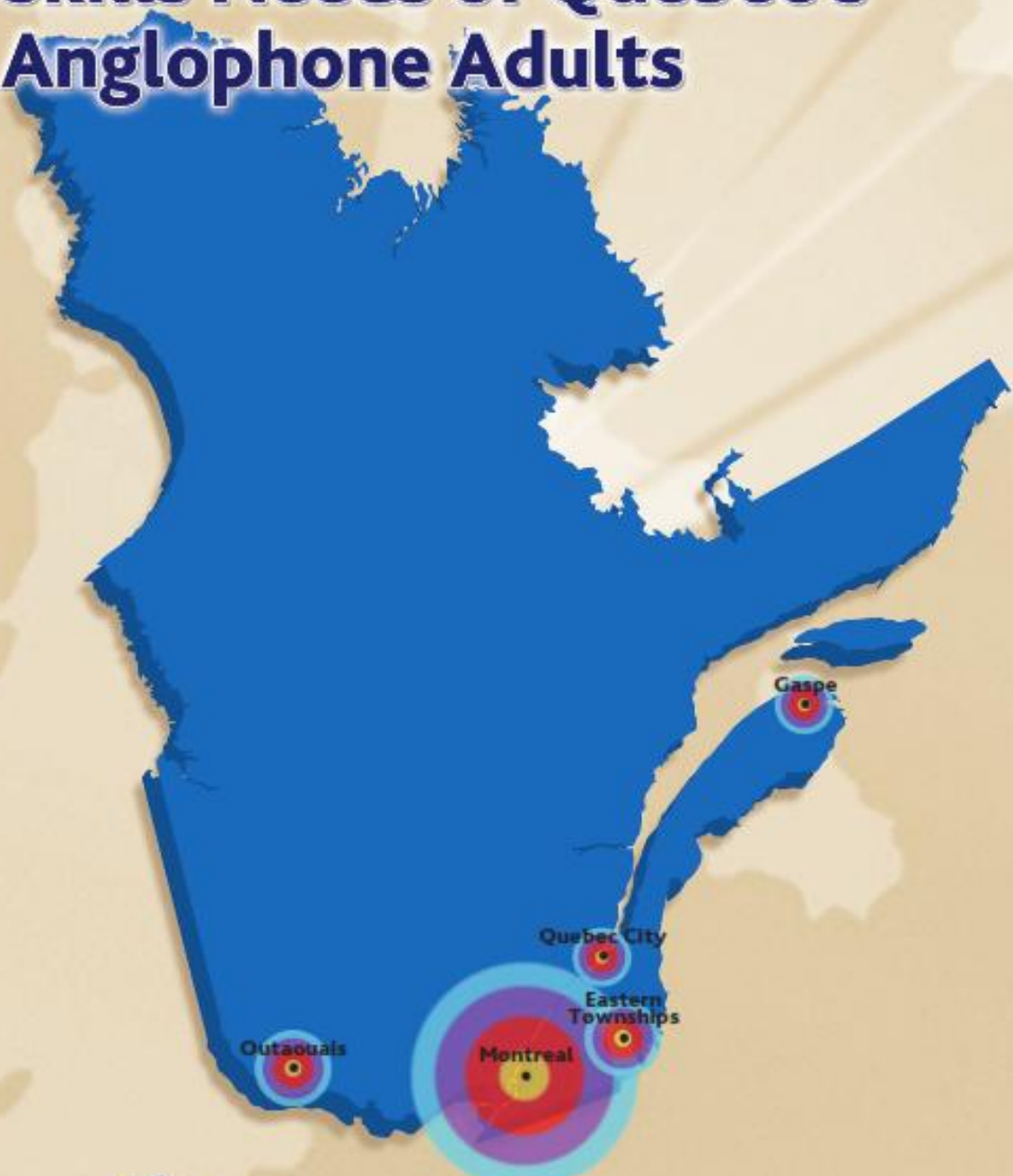


# The Literacy and Essential Skills Needs of Quebec's Anglophone Adults



**The Centre for Literacy**  
Le centre d'alphabétisation  
[www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca](http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca)

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978-0-9876933-3-4 (Print)

978-0-9876933-4-1 (Online resource)

**Canada**

This project is funded by the Government of  
Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills,  
Human Resources and Skills Development  
Canada

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project was carried out by The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, with funding from the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Research consultants Maria Salomon and Anna de Aguayo conducted the original research and produced a first draft of the report. Additional research was done at The Centre for Literacy by Jocelyn Charron, who also edited the text with Linda Shoheit. The Centre would like to thank the individuals who provided feedback on earlier drafts: John Buck, Executive Director, CEDEC; Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director, CHSSN; and Stephen Thompson, Director of Policy, Research and Public Affairs, QCGN. The Centre would also like to thank all those who agreed to be interviewed and those who took part in the focus group.

## **Disclaimer**

This is a revised edition of the report. Typos and omissions have been corrected in this edition and appendices added.

## INTRODUCTION

*Understanding the Literacy and Essential Skills Needs of Quebec's Anglophone Adults*,<sup>1</sup> Phase 1, was a project designed to deepen knowledge and understanding of the literacy and essential skills (LES) needs of Anglophone adults living in Quebec as a basis to more effectively serve English-speaking communities across the province. The issue was first identified in a publication by Statistics Canada of the 2003 IALSS results for Canada's official language minorities (discussed in detail in Sections Three and Four) which showed large disparities in literacy performance among Quebec Anglophones (Corbeil 2006: 20). The findings suggested differences in needs from one community to another that may require targeted services.

This project set out to fill this knowledge gap and to insert LES into the ongoing discussion about the demographics and needs of Anglophones in Quebec. The project investigated the LES needs of and services available to English-speakers in Quebec through formal and community-based education channels. Research was conducted in two stages between October 2010 and August 2011.

### *Literature/Data Scan*

In the first stage of the project (October - December 2010), researchers collected, summarized and analyzed existing literature, surveys and unpublished data on the Anglophone community in Quebec, with particular reference to LES and related issues. Further sources were added in July-August 2011. The scan included work since 2000, but concentrated on studies and data produced since 2006. Among the sources consulted (see *Bibliography*), twenty-two were selected as "key documents" and summarized. They are posted online. The findings from the literature review are reported in PART ONE.

### *Qualitative Research*

In the second stage (January - May 2011) a researcher conducted interviews and focus groups with key informants to gather informal input and to validate findings. Informants were interviewed as individuals and in focus groups. Nineteen individuals were interviewed, in person, in Montreal, Quebec City, or by telephone in the regions, one-on-one. They were encouraged to reflect on what they considered the most important changes in Quebec Anglophone literacy over ten years. There was also a focus group of nine English-language literacy workers, brought together for a one-hour discussion. The results of this qualitative investigation are reported in PART TWO.

Based on the literature review and the input from interviews and focus groups, the report includes the contexts of health, family life, financial management and civic engagement, areas that touch the daily lives of individuals and communities, and that demand some degree of literacy. It intersperses excerpts from the interview and focus group summary to illustrate how some of the key issues are perceived by front-line providers.

### *Limitations*

Although numerous studies look at the recent evolution of English-speaking communities in Quebec, there is limited data on this subject. The Census typically provides the most detailed picture of minority-language groups in Canada, but the most recent Census results are five years old. We have included results from the most recent datasets we could find, but many of them are not up-to-date. In addition, since other recent datasets are more limited in scope, we have sometimes used different datasets to compare the various groups that make up the English-speaking

<sup>1</sup> The project was funded by OLES under the title: "Understanding Literacy and Family Literacy Needs of Anglophone Adults in Quebec". The title employed in this report reflects a broadening of the scope of the project's research as the study progressed.

community in Quebec. We invite readers who know of more recent datasets not used in this project to inform The Centre for Literacy.

We hope that the findings in this report can help Quebec's English-language umbrella groups propose better policy, plan new services and use resources more efficiently. It may also suggest opportunities for new partnerships to develop solutions to some challenges not previously seen as linked to literacy and to improve supports and services to English-speaking aboriginal groups and cultural communities whose literacy and essential skills needs appear not to have been adequately served.

Given the many knowledge gaps identified over the course of the project, we hope that a second phase of the project may be designed.

## PART ONE: LITERATURE SCAN

### SECTION 1: DEFINITION OF TERMS

#### 1.1. Anglophones – two definitions

In Quebec today, identifying Anglophones is not straightforward. Etymologically, the designation refers to people who speak English. However, depending on who is writing — provincial or federal authorities, academics, or community groups representing English-speakers — the literature reveals two definitions. Choosing one or the other has implications for determining the size of the group, understanding needs on a range of issues and assessing the degree to which services adequately meet needs. These, in turn, influence the group’s “legitimacy” as well as the manner and extent to which governments provide institutional support and allocate resources to support the group and its development ([Jedwab 2008](#): 1-2; [GC 2011](#): 77).

#### *First Official Language Spoken - English — FOLS Anglophones*

Statistics Canada historically gathered information on Anglophones — one of the country’s two official-language minority groups, the other being Francophones outside Quebec— based on the criterion of mother tongue defined as “the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood at the time of the census”. In the past two decades, the federal government has shifted towards using First Official Language Spoken (FOLS), a definition that takes into account *both* mother tongue and actual knowledge and daily use of language at home and in society. The FOLS category was introduced in the 1991 census as a way to more accurately gauge the potential number of persons who might use minority language services, English or French; it therefore includes individuals of neither English nor French mother tongue who use one or both of the two official languages ([Jedwab 2002](#): 22).

The shift reflects awareness of, and acknowledges, population changes linked to heavy immigration since the mid-1980s. There is a “significant” and growing number of people in Canada, including Quebec, whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, often referred to as allophones, but who use English or French “predominantly or commonly in their daily lives”. Using the FOLS definition, the Anglophone population in Quebec is estimated as follows [See Table 1]:

TABLE 1: HOW THE FOLS DEFINITION WORKS

	Included	Excluded
Individuals with mother tongue English who report they can conduct a conversation in English.	√	
Individuals with mother tongue English who report they cannot conduct a conversation in English.		√
Individuals with a mother tongue other than English or French who speak English most often at home.	√	
Individuals with a mother tongue other than English or French who can conduct a conversation in English but not in French.	√	
Half the persons who can conduct a conversation in English and French and who speak an “other” language or both official languages most often at home.	√	

Based on [Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira \(2010\)](#): 8-9.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> FOLS is not determined by a census question, but is derived from responses to the questions on knowledge of official



The federal government and community groups and networks in Quebec that represent English speakers now use FOLS to define Anglophones. It became a departmental standard in 2009. It is also used in academic studies on official-language minorities (as reflected in the recent collection, [Bourhis 2008](#)).<sup>3</sup>

### *Mother Tongue Criterion*

The Quebec government does not use FOLS. It defines the size and make-up of the Anglophone group in the province based on the traditional mother tongue criterion. According to Jack Jedwab ([2008: 3](#)), an authority on Canadian official-language minorities who has written extensively on demographic and linguistic issues, Quebec’s use of the marker of mother tongue means that, “...a significant number of persons of diverse ethnic backgrounds or those who have dual identities (English and French) that either acquired English as their first official language or adopted it as their home language are not considered part of the English-speaking communities”.

Official figures for the Anglophone community in Quebec depend on the choice of linguistic identity marker [See Table 2]. Quebec’s use of the mother tongue criterion reduces the size of the group and indicates a smaller increase over time.

**TABLE 2: SIZE OF THE ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITY IN QUEBEC (2006)**

CRITERION	NUMBER (1000s)	% OF QUEBEC POPULATION	GROWTH BETWEEN 2001-6 (# OF PERSONS)
1. FOLS, including <i>half</i> the population with both English and French as FOLS*	995,000	13.4	76,000
2. FOLS	885,000	11.9	57,000
3. Mother tongue	607,000	8.2	16,000

\*According to the 2006 census, Quebec has 218,560 persons with both English and French as FOLS.

Source: [Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira 2010: 13](#).

Figures and percentages cited in this report are based on the FOLS definition, unless otherwise indicated.

## **1.2. Anglophones in Quebec**

Studies in the past decade have explored many aspects of Quebec’s Anglophone population. A significant body of literature — survey data and analyses, academic articles and books — constructs a detailed demographic profile with data that include population size and distribution, age, educational attainment, language use, employment and income levels, mobility, health status, and consider regional variations, as discussed below in *Section Two*. These studies have been conducted by university academics, by associations, by networks serving Anglophones in Quebec, as well as by various ministries and government departments, Quebec and federal. They have not explicitly investigated the issue of literacy or essential skills. This knowledge gap was the launching point for the project.

## **1.3. Literacy**

There is a large literature on the meaning of literacy, and while the definition is not universally agreed upon,<sup>4</sup> western industrialized countries and Canadian organizations generally accept an understanding of literacy informed by the 2003 *International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey*

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languages (taken into consideration first), mother tongue (second) and language spoken most often at home (third) (Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira (2010: 9); <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/language-langue05-eng.htm>).

<sup>3</sup> The FOLS derivation was approved as a Statistics Canada [departmental standard](#) on April 20, 2009. For details, see: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/language-langue05-eng.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> See [CFL 2008: 2-3](#) for a concise overview of the issue.

(IALSS). This project uses the IALSS definition ([HRSDC and SC 2005](#): 13-14) that divides literacy into four domains, comprised of “the knowledge and skills” required to:

- to understand and use information from a variety of texts [*prose literacy*]
- locate and use information contained in various formats [*document literacy*]
- effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations [*numeracy*]
- engage in goal-directed thinking and action in new situations by effectively integrating knowledge and skills connected to literacy and numeracy [*problem solving*]

#### 1.4. Essential Skills

Like literacy, the term “essential skills” (ES) is defined differently in different contexts, and other terms are sometimes employed interchangeably, for example, “competencies”, “foundational skills”, “key skills”, or “basic skills” ([Salomon 2010a: 11-12](#)). In Canada, and for this project, ES refers to the specific set of nine skills defined by HRSDC, “...the skills needed for work, learning and life ... [that] provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to evolve with their jobs and adapt to workplace change”.<sup>5</sup> These Essential Skills include a sub-set associated with literacy. The remaining skills are inter-connected with and/or complement literacy in terms of how people function in everyday life.

In Quebec, the term “compétences de base” is widely used. In its 2002 *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuous Training and Education (Politique gouvernementale d’éducation des adultes et de formation continue)*, the Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS)) defined *compétences de base* as those “general and common skills normally acquired over the course of nine years of schooling” ([ME 2002a](#): 9-10; [MESS/1 2005](#): 6). They divide the skills into two groups. The first includes the skills traditionally associated with literacy. The second refers to skills more recently identified as necessary or essential in knowledge-based societies.

Comparing the two lists [See Table 3], the HRSDC list includes “continuous learning” and “working with others”, but the Quebec list includes “active citizenship” which has some relationship to civic literacy. “Thinking skills” is not listed explicitly in the Quebec framework, but could be equated with the ability to “resolve problems” and “adapt to changes in one’s environment”. It became clear in the interviews that English-speaking LES providers in Quebec draw from both sets of concepts in different circumstances.

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#### ***From the Field***

*“[Literacy workers] felt that topics such as mastering French, social and life skills, and confidence/self esteem were as important as earlier literacy definitions and should have been included [in the list] rather than some of the newer categories..”*

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential\\_skills/general/understanding\\_es.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general/understanding_es.shtml)

**TABLE 3: LES DEFINITIONS USED BY HRSDC AND MELS**

ESSENTIAL SKILLS (HRSDC)	COMPÉTENCES DE BASE (MELS)
	TRADITIONAL LITERACY
• reading text	• read
• document use	• write
• numeracy	• count
• writing	SKILLS NEEDED IN THE MODERN WORLD
• oral communication	• understand and use written information in daily activities at home, in the workplace and in society in order to achieve goals and expand one’s skills and abilities
• working with others	• communicate effectively with others and with society
• continuous learning	• use information and communication technologies in various contexts
• thinking skills	• resolve problems
• computer use	• adapt to changes in one’s environment
	• participate in the development of society through active citizenship

**SECTION 2: PROFILE OF THE ANGLOPHONE COMMUNITY IN QUEBEC**

The investigation of the LES needs of the Anglophone community begins with an overview of the demographic characteristics of Quebec’s Anglophones from studies, surveys, official government reports, and the academic literature (see *Bibliography*).

**2.1. Regional Distribution**

The Anglophone population of Quebec is both scattered across the province and highly concentrated. It is comprised of many and various types of communities, urban, rural, and remote, spread unevenly over a latitudinal distance of 2,000 km ([OCOL 2008Q](#): vi). Three regions account for about 92% of the total, or 911,000 persons:

- the Montreal Census Metropolitan Area, or Montreal CMA<sup>6</sup> — 81%
- Outaouais — 6%
- and Estrie and south of Quebec (including the Eastern Townships) — 5%

The remainder are in Quebec City and surrounding area, east of Quebec City, and in “the rest” of the province, where they barely exceed 4% of the population of their respective regions. Still, about half of Quebec Anglophones make up between 30% and 49.9% of the population of the municipality in which they live; 20% live in municipalities where they constitute the majority ([Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira, 2010](#): 14-15).

*The Weight of Montreal*

The Montreal CMA stands apart. Home to about half the entire provincial population, 81% of English-speakers in Quebec (801,000 people) are concentrated here where they comprise 22% of the population ([Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira, 2010](#): 14). Montreal is also unique in the extreme diversity of its Anglophone population, with a large proportion of “ethno-cultural communities”,

<sup>6</sup> The Montreal CMA is comprised of nearly 100 municipalities, including Montreal, Laval and Longueuil. Its boundaries extend from Mont St-Hilaire in the east to Mirabel in the west, and from Beauharnois in the south to St-Jerome in the north. See: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-551/p20-eng.cfm>.

i.e. communities of immigrants or people of immigrant background. Unlike the regions, Montreal's English speakers are relatively well-served in terms of English language educational institutions and options at all levels, as well as access to health care and social services, employment services, media, and arts and culture in English. Nevertheless, there are still disparities in services in parts of Montreal ([GC 2011](#): 14-15).

## **2.2. Impact of Geography — Assimilation, Dispersal, Isolation**

A 2008 study on community vitality among Anglophones in Quebec focused on three communities as a representative sample of the demographic and geographic make-up of English-speaking Quebec outside Montreal — the city of Quebec (urban), the Eastern Townships (rural/regional) and the Lower North Shore (remote). The “evident impact” on each community of its geography or location emerged as a theme. English-speakers in the city of Quebec have the advantage of being in an urban setting in the provincial capital, but are challenged by “a small and diminishing demographic base and the risk of assimilation”. In the Eastern Townships, while the Anglophone community is “substantial”, it is “scattered over a vast area and subject to several regional and administrative jurisdictions”. In the Lower North Shore English predominates in all local communities, but is offset by isolation and extremely limited transportation and infrastructure ([OCOL 2008Q](#): ix).

A 2011 report by the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages which surveyed all English speaking communities supports these findings. For example, population dispersal and isolation are also problems in the Gaspé. The community in the Îles-de-la-Madeleine grapples with remote location. The smallest Anglophone population in the Lower St. Lawrence region is served by a single primary school and has inadequate infrastructure. In the Outaouais region, the pull of nearby Ontario is strong because of the availability of services in English and options for English-language post-secondary education. ([GC 2011](#): 14-15).

## **2.3. A Shrinking Population**

While in Quebec as a whole, the size of the Anglophone population has generally held steady between 1971 (992,368) and 2006 (994,723), in the regions, where immigration is not a factor, the population is in decline ([Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira](#), 2010: 13; Pocock 2006: 16).<sup>7</sup> Between 1996 and 2001, the Anglophone community in Quebec “experienced the largest decline in absolute numbers (6,873 persons) of any of the other official language minority communities in Canada” ([Nouvet and Maldoff 2007](#): 24). This is evident in 14 of 17 administrative regions, with five regions experiencing “dramatic” drops of more than 13% over a five-year period (Nouvet and Maldoff 2007: 24):

- Capitale-Nationale (Quebec) — by 13.2%
- Chaudière-Appalaches — by 20.1%
- Centre-du-Québec — by 19.5%
- Mauricie — by 18.6%
- Abitibi-Témiscamingue — by 16.5%,

A series of 2008 studies underscored a slow and steady decline in the Anglophone population of three representative communities ([OCOL 2008Q](#); [OCOL 2008ET](#); [OCOL 2008LNS](#)).

<sup>7</sup> According to the latest statistics, among immigrants in Quebec, or the “foreign born”, those speaking English tend to opt for the large urban centres as their destination. They are therefore much more concentrated in the regions of Montreal (40%) and Quebec and its surrounding area (26%), than elsewhere in the province. In the other regions, percentages range between 4% and 17%. See: Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira, 2010: 47.

#### **2.4. An Aging Population and “Missing Middle”**

The Anglophone community in Quebec is aging. According to the 2006 census, seniors over the age of 65 account for 13.3% of the entire Anglophone population ([Pocock and Warnke 2010](#): 6). However, the proportion is higher in certain regions. The English-speaking population is aging at a faster rate than the French-speaking majority in thirteen of seventeen administrative regions. Anglophone communities across the province also have smaller proportions of youth, ages 5 to 19, and adults, ages 40 to 59, compared to Francophone communities. The latter group, the so-called caregiver generation, is “a missing middle group from many English-speaking minority communities” ([Nouvet and Maldoff 2007](#): 25; [Pocock, 2006](#): 17).

#### **2.5. A Growing Aboriginal Population**

Quebec is home to eleven Aboriginal nations. Among these, five — Inuit, Algonquin, Cree, Micmac, Mohawk — are English-speaking, i.e. they speak English, with varying degrees of knowledge of their mother tongue. As of 2009, the total Aboriginal population in Quebec was about 83,000, the majority (63%) of whom resided on reserves. This is a higher proportion than in the rest of the country. The population is concentrated largely in northern Quebec, in areas both less urbanized and relatively isolated. Increasingly, however, as across Canada, members of Aboriginal communities have been gravitating to cities. (RCAAQ 2009: 6-7). In Quebec, Montreal has the strongest drawing power. Unlike in other provinces, the move to the city is recent, and many urban Aboriginal people still have close ties to their own Aboriginal communities and territories in the regions (RCAAQ 2009: 7, 26).

#### **2.6. Unemployment**

During the last decade, the unemployment rate among Anglophones in Quebec has remained consistently higher than among Francophones in Quebec. According to the 2001 Census figures, the unemployment rate among Anglophones was 9.4% while the rate for Francophones was 8% ([Floch and Pocock 2008](#): 38). The unemployment data from the 2006 Census shows that the gap between Anglophones and Francophones increased between the two Census periods with the Anglophone unemployment rate at 8.8% and Francophone rate at 6.6% ([Pocock and Warnke 2010](#): 29; [Carter 2008](#): 93)<sup>8</sup>. Within the group, certain communities fare worse than others, specifically aboriginals, immigrants and visible minorities, and the Black community. However, for all three groups, there is lack of data by language.

##### *Aboriginal Population*

According to 2009 figures, the urban employment rate for Aboriginal people in Quebec is 23 percentage points below that for the province’s non-Aboriginal population (RCAAQ 2009: 7). Moreover, unemployment has historically been a greater problem in the regions on reserve ([Tremblay and Mahfoudh 2005](#)).

##### *Immigrants and Visible Minorities*

Many immigrants in the Montreal CMA, particularly visible minorities, struggle with unemployment and under-employment. The 2001 census showed the unemployment rate for individuals born in Quebec was 7.4%, but 17% for visible minorities. The 2006 Census showed the rate in the Montreal CMA had dropped to 13.2%, but was still nearly five percent higher than the rate for immigrants who were not part of a visible minority community ([Jedwab 2008](#): 1). In 2010, the unemployment rate for landed immigrants living in Québec was significantly higher than that of Quebecers born in Canada (11.7% versus 5.9%)<sup>9</sup>. Among the province’s immigrants generally,

<sup>8</sup> It was impossible to find more recent data, as Census data seem to be the only source for comparing employment indicators between the two groups.

<sup>9</sup> Labour force characteristics by immigrant status of population aged 25 to 54, by province (Atlantic, Quebec, Ontario),

those from Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa were most “vulnerable” in this respect, followed by immigrants from Algeria, Morocco and Turkey ([Tremblay and Mahfoudh 2005](#)).

### *The Black Community*

Among visible minorities, the Black community is the largest, with roots in Quebec for many generations ([SC 2008](#): 18-19; [Torczyner 2010](#): 27). According to the 2006 census, 12.5% of the province’s Black population are unilingual Anglophones and 21.3% use English as their home language (Torczyner 2010: 4, 28). The community, comprised of both an immigrant and Canadian-born component largely concentrated in Montreal, has traditionally struggled with high unemployment. In 2006, Black unemployment in Montreal was double that of non-Blacks (Torczyner 2010: 33).

## **2.7. Language Use – Bilingualism and “Dual Linguistic Identity”**

Increasing bilingualism is an important feature of the Anglophone community in Quebec. Data show that the community’s rate of bilingualism rose from 37% in 1971 to 67% in 2001, and continues to rise. Among young Anglophones (15-24 years), the rate is more than 80% ([Lamarre 2007](#): 111). Surveys also point to a steadily growing “dual linguistic identity” among English-speakers. For example, 25% of respondents to a 2005 CROP *Community Vitality Survey* of more than 3,100 people who speak English most often in their homes claimed they belong to both Anglophone and Francophone linguistic groups ([Jedwab 2006](#): 2, 7). The follow-up 2010 survey reported 30% ([CROP/a 2010](#): 20). Statistics Canada’s 2006 *Survey on the Vitality of Official-Language Minorities in Canada* (SVOLM) found that 37% of Quebec Anglophones identify with both linguistic groups. These findings suggest a certain comfort among Quebec Anglophones, particularly the young, with a “hybrid linguistic identity” (Lamarre 2007: 126). Again, there are regional differences, with Quebec and its surrounding area at 54% dual identification, east of Quebec City at 50% and the Montreal CMA at 35% ([Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira, 2010](#): 90-91).

## **2.8. A “Mixed” Community**

In the past three decades Quebec has undergone “a sort of makeover” that has produced “mixed” multi-ethnic, multi-racial population ([Jedwab 2004](#): 55). The recent literature on the Anglophone community in Quebec underscores the diversity, in terms of ethnic origin, place of birth, religion, visible minority status, and aboriginal origins ([ABEE 2010](#): 6; [Lamarre 2007](#): 13-14; [GMCDI 2007](#): 7). A report prepared for the Community Health and Social Services network notes:

When we compare Official-Language Minority Communities ...across the Canadian provinces, the heterogeneous composition of Quebec’s English-speaking population stands out as a unique feature ...[T]he Quebec Anglophone population is composed of a much greater percentage of members of visible minorities (20.8%), a greater percentage of individuals of non-Christian religious affiliation (15.6%) as well as non-Catholic (31.2%), and more individuals born outside of Canada (30.9%) than other Canadian Language Minorities. This is also the case when Quebec Anglophones are compared with the Francophone majority with whom they share the same territory (Pocock 2006:5).

Between 2001 and 2006, the number of mother tongue English speakers in the province grew by 16,000, but by almost 76,000 for FOLS Anglophones ([Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira, 2010](#): 13).

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CANSIM table 282-0102 retrieved: August 19, 2011.  
<http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a05?lang=eng&id=2820102&paSer=&pattern=282-0102&stByVal=1&csid=>



## 2.9. An “Urban-Rural Divide” — Montreal and the Immigrant Effect

The growing diversity of the English-speaking population presents a strong dichotomy between Montreal and the rest of Quebec that has been termed an “urban-rural divide”. The heterogeneity of the Anglophone community is largely a Montreal phenomenon, linked to immigration ([ABEE 2010](#): 6, 11). Jedwab ([2008](#): 10) notes that in official statistics, “[m]ore than 90% of those reporting the use of English and another language (other than French) at home are concentrated in the Montreal region . . .”. While “Anglo-Montrealers are often of “mixed” multicultural ancestry and have diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, in the rural areas, Anglophones tend to share a common history and ancestry”. In the regions, when “blending” or “hybridity” happens, through intermarriage — increasingly common among Anglophones outside Montreal — it tends to involve marriage to a Francophone ([Lamarre 2007](#): 13-14; [Jedwab 2004](#): 55). The data tell us that, although it has been recognized that immigration plays a “critical role ...in supporting Quebec’s Anglophone communities” ([Jedwab 2002](#): 55), the greatest benefit is to Montreal (81%). In the regions, the pockets of Anglophone populations are not experiencing the same demographic boost and regeneration. However, the diversity of Montreal also presents challenges. Since Anglophones “make up a disproportionate share of visible minority and immigrant groups” in Montreal, certain segments of the English-speaking population struggle with poverty, unemployment and under-employment ([GMCDI 2007](#): 9).

## SECTION 3: POLICY CONTEXT: CANADA

While this project focuses on the LES needs of the Anglophone community in Quebec, it begins by looking briefly at LES trends for Canada as a whole to provide some points of comparison. As well, there are areas of funding and policy where the complementary nature or dissonance between federal and provincial orientation has implications for services to Anglophones.

### 3.1. General Findings from the IALSS

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) scores show that literacy levels vary across Canada and groups.<sup>10</sup> Overall, 48% of the Canadian population over the age of 16 scored below Level 3, the level defined as the one needed to “function well in Canadian society”, i.e. to cope with the increasing skill demands of the emerging knowledge and information economy.

#### *Canada-wide*

- Among *seniors*, or Canadians 66 years or older — 82% are below Level 3
- Among *Aboriginal populations* — literacy scores are generally lower than for non-Aboriginal populations, with variations across territories and regions
- *Immigrants* tend to have fairly low levels of literacy compared to those born in Canada — the proportion of immigrants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French at Level 1 (the lowest level) was more than three times that of the Canadian-born population

#### *Quebec*

- Among the entire population — 55% of adults are below Level 3
- Among mother tongue Anglophones in Quebec — 42% are below Level 3

Certain groups seem to demand more attention: seniors, aboriginal communities and immigrants. In regions with large and/or growing numbers of these three groups, the challenge is more urgent. This project looks at the size of these groups among Quebec Anglophones.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=31#M\\_3](http://www4.hrsdc.gc.ca/.3ndic.1t.4r@-eng.jsp?iid=31#M_3). For details, see: HRSDC and SC 2005: 9-10.

### 3.2. LES and the Economy

Governments worldwide are increasingly concerned about the literacy and essential skills levels of their populations after more than a decade of international surveys and studies proposing “a strong plausible link between literacy and a country’s economic potential” ([Merrifield, 2007](#): 10). The Canadian workplace, like other industrialized economies, is experiencing changes that demand stronger LES among workers. The universal drivers of workplace LES policy and initiatives include:

- *demographic shifts* — an aging population, a shrinking workforce, an increasing number of immigrants in the workforce;
- *changes in work practices* — for example, a greater emphasis on quality control, customer service, health and safety; stricter auditing and compliance requirements, more team work;
- *introduction of new technologies* — computers, the Internet and Internet-based communications and information-gathering, digitized machinery and equipment; and
- *an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy.*

### 3.3. Literacy Policy

In Canada, adult literacy is part of Education and therefore falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. ([Folinsbee 2007a](#): 11). Thus the mandate of the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) “complements provincial and territorial responsibilities for education and delivery of training and the work of service providers of this training”, and allows groups and organizations to apply directly for project dollars through occasional Calls for Proposals.<sup>11</sup>

Toward the end of the last decade, several economic forecasts warned of an impending Canadian worker shortage and suggested that the workforce would “lack the skills and knowledge that the global economy demands” ([CCL 2007](#): 2). Consequently, although the federal government recognizes the connection between literacy skills and broad issues that affect the social inclusion of individuals and “overall societal... performance” ([HRSDC 2007](#)), it has linked recent calls for proposals for literacy to labour market connections. Despite this shift in focus, LES has still suffered federal funding cuts in the past few years and further reductions are expected as a result of the current program expenditure review that the federal government has recently launched.

In 2006, the Adult Learning Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESP) lost \$17.7 million in funding over two years. These cuts had implications for federal-provincial cost-shared projects. For Quebec, prior to the cuts, a federal-provincial entente had supported shared project funding for literacy through a stream called Initiatives fédérales-provinciales conjointes en matière d’alphabétisation (IFPCA) that had been in place since 1988. Through IFPCA, the federal government financed projects by Quebec groups other than school boards and community-based literacy groups which are supported by the provincial government. The agreement lapsed in 2008 and has not been replaced by another framework. Current federal funding for literacy in Quebec is “very limited” ([GC 2011](#): 63).

#### *Spotlight on the Workplace*

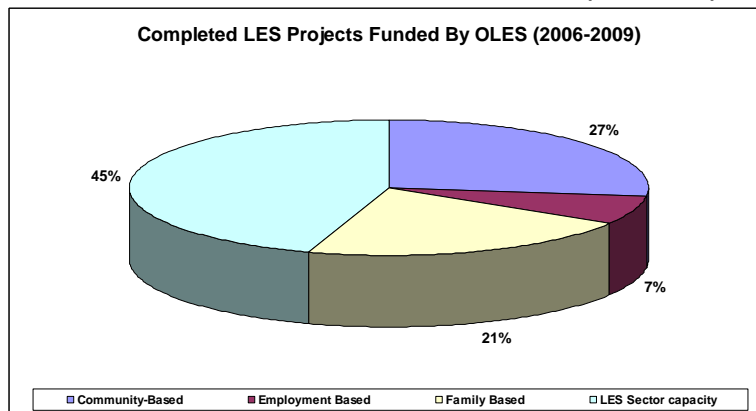
The reduced federal funding shifted priorities more to literacy in the workplace than to family and community literacy. The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES), established in 2007, “aims

<sup>11</sup> Through this mandate, OLES “builds knowledge and expertise about what works in upgrading adults” literacy and essential skills, supports the development, testing and dissemination of literacy and essential skills tools and supports and works to develop and maintain effective partnerships and networks. See: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2010-2011/inst/csd/st-ts01-eng.asp>. Those eligible for funding include: NPOs, professional and workplace organizations, including sector councils, unions and business associations, voluntary sector organizations, provincial/territorial institutions, including Crown corporations, universities, colleges and other educational and training bodies, and municipalities. See: [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/callforproposals/article2.shtml#article2\\_1](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/callforproposals/article2.shtml#article2_1).

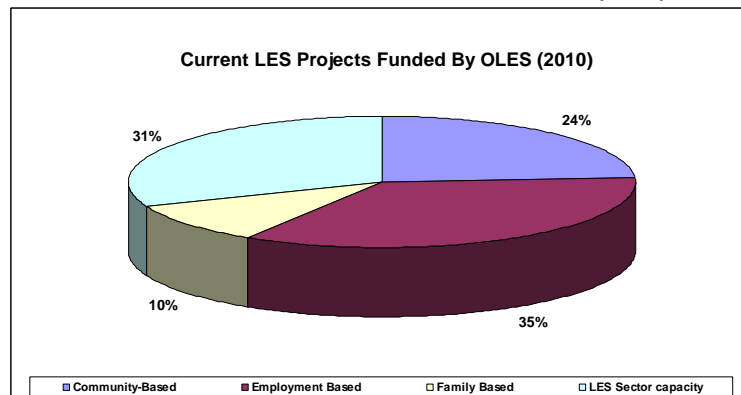


to help Canadians have the skills they need to get a job, stay in the job market and contribute to their communities and families”.<sup>12</sup> It “has a particular focus on the workplace since research has shown that the majority of Canadians with low literacy and essential skills are already in the labour market”.<sup>13</sup> As the two charts below make clear, OLES currently gives priority to projects and initiatives connected to workplaces LES, specifically 1) the development and application of new tools and models that help improve LES in the workforce; and 2) the adaptation, distribution, promotion and application of existing workplace-focused LES tools and models.

**FIGURE 1: COMPLETED LES PROJECTS FUNDED BY OLES (2006-2009)**



**FIGURE 2: CURRENT LES PROJECTS FUNDED BY OLES (2010)**



### *Supporting the Family*

In the same period there has been continued federal support to official language minority communities for early childhood and family literacy that might appear to counterbalance the prioritization of workplace LES. A 2008 federal policy document on linguistic duality states:

Literacy is fundamental to the social and economic development of official-language minority communities and to the vitality of families in them. In view of this, the [government] has put in place programs to improve access to family literacy services, mainly by building networks and partnerships among various community groups... [providing] access to community-based services for early-childhood development and family literacy, which provide the tools for lifetime success in society and on the job market (GC 2008: 12).

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex\\_en.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2010-2011/inst/csd/st-ts01-eng.asp>

In 2000, the *Early Childhood Development Agreement* signed between the federal government and the provinces and territories provided funding for family literacy that focuses on the development of early childhood literacy skills. The shift away from addressing the literacy needs of adults in favour of young children persists until today.

However, the federal government does not fund specific initiatives in early childhood development for Quebec's English-speaking communities. According to a Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages, HRSDC explains that this is because the problem of "young kids being inadequately prepared to start school and perform in school seem[s] much more prevalent in the [F]rancophone minority communities than in the [A]nglophone minority communities". As well, according to this report, Anglophone communities have tended to "not see this problem as a priority..." ([GC 2011](#): 62-3)

#### *Supporting Official Languages*

The *Official Languages Act* (1988) commits the federal government to provide "support to official language minority communities and the promotion of official languages in Canada through cooperative efforts with provincial and territorial governments, minority-community organizations and other volunteer organizations dedicated to promoting linguistic duality", thereby ensuring their "vitality" ([Lord 2008](#): 6-7). In its latest policy commitment for 2008-13, the federal government highlighted five "priority sectors" to benefit from an investment of \$1.1 billion: health, justice, immigration, economic development, and arts and culture ([GC 2008](#): 6).

## **SECTION 4: POLICY CONTEXT: QUEBEC**

### **4.1. IALSS Data in Quebec**

The IALSS figures for Quebec indicate that the aggregate need for literacy improvement in Quebec is higher than for the rest of the country, but considerably lower among mother tongue Anglophones. According to a study produced by the Institut de la statistique du Québec, among Quebec residents aged 16 to 65, approximately 50% of Francophones and 60% of Allophones do not have Level 3 literacy skills, compared to 40% for Anglophones ([Bernèche and Perron, 2006](#) : 173). Unfortunately, the study does not present separate results for Allophones who chose to do the test in English and in French. However, when the level of schooling is taken into account, Francophones and Anglophones obtain similar results. The same observation is true of Allophones who have a university diploma, but not for Allophones who have other education credentials ([Bernèche and Perron, 2006](#): 173).

Although the IALSS used mother tongue language, not the FOLS definition, 51.4% of Allophones in Quebec chose to use the English task booklets while 48.6% opted instead for the French task booklet. Table 4 offers a summary of the Quebec sample used for the IALSS (See Table 4 on next page).

**TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF IALSS SAMPLE IN QUEBEC**

BASE SAMPLE AND SUPPLEMENTARY SAMPLES IN QUÉBEC (IALSS 2003)						
	Base Sample	Supplementary sample				Total
		16-24 Age Group	25-64 Age Group	Anglophones	Immigrants	
<b>Initial Size</b>	1586	1444	2796	985	516	7327
<b>Target Sample</b>	1110	815	1885	570	270	4650
<b>Out-of-Scope Cases *</b>	52	389	197	205	96	939
<b>Number of Respondents</b>	1002	693	1737	465	269	4166
<b>Response Rate (%)</b>	65.3	65.7	66.8	59.6	64	65.2

\* "Out-of-scope cases are those that were coded as residents not eligible, unable to locate the dwelling, dwelling under construction, vacant or seasonal dwelling, or duplicate cases". (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005: 327).  
(Source: Bernèche and Perron, 2006: 35)

Despite the supplementary sample for Anglophones, Quebec did not survey a large enough sample of its minority language population to draw out regional differences between the various Anglophone communities. These differences were corroborated by a Statistics Canada analysis of census data on Canada's minority language groups ([Corbeil, 2006](#)). That analysis used data on nine years of schooling or less from the 2001 Canadian census on levels of educational attainment. This measure is considered a fair way to estimate literacy proficiency of a given population. MELs, for example, defines ES or "compétences de base" as those "general and common skills normally acquired over the course of nine years of schooling". The report found the literacy profile of Quebec's English speaking population is not homogeneous. [See Table 5, below]. The figures show a significant degree of regional variation, a consideration in trying to determine the LES needs of English speakers in Quebec. The needs of English-speaking Aboriginals and immigrants and a large and aging senior population would contribute to the variance.

**TABLE 5: PERCENTAGE OF MOTHER TONGUE ANGLOPHONES IN QUEBEC WITH LESS THAN 9 YEARS OF SCHOOLING**

REGION	% OF MOTHER TONGUE ANGLOPHONES WITH LESS THAN NINE YEARS OF SCHOOLING (%)
Montreal CMA	6.2
Eastern Quebec	25.6
Outaouais/Pontiac/Abitibi	10.0
Estrie	13.7
Saguenay	7.8

Source: [Corbeil 2006](#): 20.

### *Aboriginal English Speakers*

Aboriginal communities whose mother tongue is a native language, but who speak English, were not included in the Corbeil analysis for MELS. However, relatively low educational attainment and low literacy proficiency are common in the entire group across Canada, in regions and cities ([ME 2004a](#): 18-20; [Battiste 2005a](#): 5). For cities in Quebec, 27% of the urban Aboriginal population, mostly in the Montreal area, do not hold a diploma or certificate, compared to 21% of the general population (RCAAQ 2009: 6; RCAAQ 2006: 8-10). Including English-speaking members of the Aboriginal community in the analysis could be expected to increase LES needs.

### *Montreal and immigrants*

If the IALSS data were based on FOLS, the figures would have the greatest effect for the Montreal CMA, where Anglophones of immigrant background are concentrated. This assumption is supported by data from the 2001 Canadian census showing that, while only 5% of working age (15-64 years) mother tongue Anglophones in Quebec had less than nine years of schooling, compared to 10% for the entire Quebec population, the figure for Allophones in the same age group was 14% ([Coulombe and Roy 2005](#): 6). Even educated immigrants, i.e. with nine years of schooling or higher, including those with university degrees, might have low proficiency in English. The IALSS highlighted, “Among those at the same level of educational attainment, there are large differences in literacy performance between immigrants and the Canadian-born” ([HRSDC and Statistics Canada, 2005](#): 70). Among those who scored at Level 1 in prose proficiency, 59% of the Canadian-born had less than upper secondary education, compared to 46% of “established” immigrants (those in Canada for more than ten years), and 26% of recent immigrants. Since recent immigrants have had higher educational attainment, a key question is the extent “to which low literacy scores of recent immigrants reflect a lack of proficiency in English or French, rather than low literacy in their mother tongue”. (HRSDC and SC 2005: 65, 70). The question remains unexplored until today.

## **4.2. Policy on Literacy**

Adult literacy in Quebec is the responsibility of MELS, in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity (MESS) and the Ministry of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC). Since 2002, they have worked together to implement Quebec’s *Government Policy on Adult Education and Continuous Training and Education (Politique gouvernementale d’éducation des adultes et de formation continue)* ([Folinsbee 2007a](#): 19-20).<sup>14</sup> The goal is to promote a culture of lifelong learning in Quebec, presented as “urgent” and of “strategic importance” for the province. Lifelong learning is understood to have numerous social benefits:

... to develop the autonomy and the sense of responsibility of individuals and communities, to enable them to deal with changes in the economy, in culture and in society as a whole, and to promote coexistence, tolerance and the informed and creative participation of citizens in society, in short to enable individuals and communities to take control of their destiny and that of society in order to face the challenges ahead ([ME 2002a](#): v, 1-2).

<sup>14</sup> See also: <http://www.literacyandaccountability.ca/File/Quebec%20Profile.pdf>.

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### ***From the Field***

*“A few literacy groups mentioned having clients of Aboriginal background. However, none mentioned on-reserve projects or clients. All wished they could help, several had begun projects but all stated that complex funding issues on reserves made it very difficult.”*

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Lifelong learning is also critical to the health and growth of Quebec's economy, which "depends in large part on maintaining and enhancing the competencies of its active population". Basic education, beginning with literacy, is presented as the foundation for lifelong learning ([ME 2002a: 8-9](#)).

#### *Funding for Literacy*

Through MELS, the government of Quebec funds literacy instruction provided by French and English school boards in adult education centres<sup>15</sup> and by community-based literacy providers through local literacy councils and other organizations.<sup>16</sup> These sectors are described in detail in sections below.

#### *Support for Workplace LES*

"Manpower training", described as "a determining variable of economic development", is a fundamental component of Quebec's mission to develop a lifelong learning culture (MELS 2006: 14-15). Bill 90 (*Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training/Loi favorisant le développement de la formation de la main-d'œuvre*) in 1995 gave employers both an incentive and a revenue source to provide training to their workers. The law requires employers with a total payroll of over \$1 million to invest at least 1% annually towards personnel training, including LES, in order to "improve [their] qualifications, skills and performance". Employers in this category who do not do so must pay into a special fund to support manpower training in the province. In 2007, the policy applied to about 85 percent of Quebec's workers ([Folinsbee 2007a: 20](#); [MESS 2005a: 1](#)). There is no break-down by language, and more recent figures were not available.

#### *Family Literacy*

In 1997, Quebec introduced new social policies to support families. One was the promotion and provision of quality early childhood education and care (often called ECEC in the literature), to ensure the development and academic success of all children in the province (Tougas 2002: 1-2). This new policy revolved largely around constructing a province-wide network of government-subsidized, affordable (\$7/day) educational (pre-kindergarten) childcare services (Centres de la petite enfance/CPEs). Government statements on early childhood education also acknowledge an important role for families, especially for parents as allies of the school and supporters of their children's learning ([ME 2003](#)). Despite government commitment, sustained financial support for programs and initiatives — provided largely by community-based groups and, to a more limited extent, by educational institutions, including school boards — has not been strong. An environmental scan of family literacy services in Quebec in 2006 characterized the sector as "poorly funded and, where funded, predominantly by short-term project money." (Sheedy 2006: 7)

### **4.3. LES Needs of Anglophones**

#### *Info-Alpha Line*

One source of information on the LES needs of Anglophones is the Info-Alpha Line, "a bilingual, province-wide telephone referral service, which connects individuals to appropriate literacy and basic education services in their region".<sup>17</sup> Initiated by the Quebec government in 1990, the service keeps annual figures on its callers that point to where literacy needs in the province are concentrated and indicates the types of literacy service sought.

<sup>15</sup> There are currently twenty-eight adult education centres connected to Quebec's nine English school boards. They are listed at: [http://procède-lifelonglearning.ca/english\\_centres.php](http://procède-lifelonglearning.ca/english_centres.php)

<sup>16</sup> These are members of a coalition called the Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LVQ). For a list of LVQ's members, see : [http://literacyvolunteersqc.ca/lvq\\_membergroups.php](http://literacyvolunteersqc.ca/lvq_membergroups.php)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.fondationalphabetisation.org/en>

According to Info-Alpha, calls to the line by English-speaking potential learners average between 10-15% annually. In 2009-10 the figure was 10% of a total of 2,931 calls. Calls by “allophones” — defined as “other cultural communities” — was 49% in 2009-10, with 70% of all calls coming from Montreal and Laval ([Ligne Info-Alpha 2010](#)). Among the 26% of callers who sought assistance in literacy, as distinct from language training, i.e. ESL or FSL, a certain number requested “literacy in English”, just as a certain number of the 28% who sought assistance in language training requested ESL (Info-Alpha 2010). In a telephone interview, an informant from Info-Alpha noted that it is not possible to extract information on the proportion of allophones seeking literacy service in English, given the way it currently processes its data. The informant said that of calls from English speakers (narrowly defined), “relatively few” come from outside the Montreal area. Therefore, Info-Alpha cannot provide a complete picture of Anglophone needs in Montreal or in the regions<sup>18</sup>

As noted in the Introduction, LES services in Quebec are offered formally, through the school boards, and informally, through community-based organizations. The following sections look closely at the available pathways and LES services offered to Anglophones in these sectors.

#### **4.4. School Board Sector**

School boards annually each receive from the MELS a set sum (a closed envelope) for adult education, including a literacy component or “service”, based on previous years’ enrolment figures. The literacy service is financed through a complicated formula with a specific, “alpha” rate and minimum class-size requirement... Based on these requirements, each board decides whether to offer literacy classes ([MELS 2010](#)).<sup>19</sup>

##### *Assessing Literacy Needs among Anglophones*

A 1999 study commissioned by the Provincial Organization of Continuing Education Directors, English (PROCEDE) investigated the literacy recruitment potential among the Anglophone (FOLS) populations in each of Quebec’s English school boards. The study tested a literacy targeting procedure based on three indicators:

1. potential literacy students (population with less than grade 9 education)
2. the literacy student recruitment ratio (ratio of the population with less than grade 9 education to the total population)
3. potential literacy student density (total population with less than grade 9 education per square kilometre)

The study identified a potential need for literacy training among 12% of the province’s Anglophone population at that time. The Montreal region was found to have “the highest quantity of potential literacy students in all of Québec ... with the English Montreal School Board and the Lester-B. Pearson School Board accounting for approximately 55% of the potential population” (Warnke

<sup>18</sup> This takes account of the reality that many people with literacy needs, regardless of language or background, do not seek assistance and are therefore invisible in figures from help-lines or school board enrolments. The weak participation of the population with literacy needs in available services is a preoccupation of the Quebec government that surfaces repeatedly in documents. For example, MELS’ reference document profiling individuals availing themselves of literacy services in the province in 2002-2003 observes that the number of people who participated in that year (through school boards or community literacy organizations) remained much lower than the number of people targeted by the government’s adult education policy, taking into account 2001 Canadian census data showing that 9.5% of Quebec adults between the ages of 15-64 possess fewer than nine years of education. Only 4.5% of the latter cohort participated in a literacy service in the year under review ([Coulombe 2006](#): 5). The Quebec Education Advisory Council’s concerns and recommendations in this area appear in Gobeil 2006. For an interesting discussion of why “the expression of need” is not higher, that connects the phenomenon to a “culture of poverty” that dissuades the neediest individuals from seeking help, see Perreault 2006.

<sup>19</sup> See also: <http://www.literacyandaccountability.ca/File/Quebec%20Profile.pdf>.



1999: 2), connected to the literacy needs of a growing immigrant population in the Montreal CMA.

#### *Literacy Enrolments in English School Boards*

Using MELS data, a 2005 report constructed a profile of services used by adults in Quebec’s English school boards in general education and vocational training ([Coulombe & Roy 2005](#)).<sup>20</sup> Of students enrolled in adult general education in the English school boards in 2001-2002, almost 80% (about 15,000 students) were concentrated on the island of Montreal, in the English Montreal (10,420) and Lester-B. Pearson (4,225) school boards. The largest group enrolled in adult general education was comprised of allophones, or non mother tongue Anglophones (61%), followed by mother tongue English speakers (32%).

The literacy instruction service offered in the adult general education program had the largest percentage of enrolled students in the English school boards (38%, and as high as 57% at English-Montreal), and the report notes that, “...this service was used by a large number of allophones, primarily enrolled in Montréal”. It also points out that the 12% increase in enrolment in adult general education in the English sector between 1999 and 2002 was “mainly the result of increased enrolment in literacy services” ([Coulombe and Roy 2005](#): 12) such as those experienced in three school boards (English Montreal, Lester-B. Pearson and Western Quebec). [See Table 6]

**TABLE 6: ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION POPULATION  
ENROLLED IN LITERACY IN THE ENGLISH SCHOOL BOARDS, 1999-2002**

YEAR	1990-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	DIFFERENCE (%)
# of STUDENTS	2 957	5 230	6 972	136

Source: [Coulombe and Roy 2005](#):13

In the same period, the increase in literacy enrolment overall in the province, i.e. including the French school boards, was “much smaller”, at 36% ([Coulombe and Roy 2005](#): 13).

However, not all English school boards offer literacy classes. Reasons could include insufficient enrolment, or very low literacy proficiency or complex literacy needs among learners that might be better addressed by community-based literacy providers who can customize instruction and offer one-on-one tutoring. For example, in 2008-2009, the Central Quebec School Board did not offer literacy, but in an arrangement with the board, the Quebec City Reading Council offered services on school grounds. In the same year, literacy classes were also not offered in the Eastern Townships School Board, but lower level students with needs were accommodated by placement into a pre-secondary program.

## **SECTION 5: LES SERVICES OFFERED BY ENGLISH SCHOOL BOARDS**

### **5.1. The Literacy Service**

The literacy service offered by school boards is part of the first phase of adult general education. This phase, the *Common Core Basic Education* (CCBE), corresponds to the first eight years of schooling. The CCBE has thirteen programs of study, divided into courses over three levels: *Literacy, Pre-secondary and the Secondary One Cycle*. The Literacy level includes the first two stages of the literacy training course; the Pre-secondary level covers the third and fourth stages ([MELS 2007](#): 5). The literacy courses:

<sup>20</sup> The profile does not include data relating to services offered in English by the Cree and Kativik School Boards and the Commission scolaire du Littoral, by private-sector vocational training providers, or by community literacy organizations.

...focus on consolidating the *basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic* and the *use of information and communications technologies*. Their aim is to help adult learners develop greater autonomy in their everyday communications and they are based on the integration of learning in English as the language of instruction, mathematics and computer science (MELS 2007: 7).

All CCBE courses are intended to relate to everyday lives and are organized around four broad areas of learning as family member, employee, customer/client/consumer, and member of a community. The four areas include health and well-being, environmental and consumer awareness, world of work and citizenship (MELS 2007: 21-2).

CCBE courses target a diverse group of people with less than eight years of schooling, including: “men and women under 30 with no diploma, people with disabilities, immigrants who have not mastered the language of instruction, native people, and people aged 45 or over who are in the job market or looking for a job”. According to estimates in 2007, the number of people taking the CCBE is only a small fraction of the targeted population ([MELS 2007](#): 8).

### **5.2. French as a Second Language (FSL)**

The CCBE program of the English school boards includes a second language component, i.e. French as a second language, or FSL. FSL instruction is important to Anglophones. As currently structured, the CCBE program offers 400 hours of instruction over the pre-secondary and secondary one cycles, compared to 1,600 hours of instruction in English across all the levels of the program (MELS 2007: 48). In Quebec, the ability to read and write well in French, in addition to being able to speak the language is increasingly perceived by Anglophones as essential to their work and life prospects in the province [See discussion in *Section Seven*].

### **5.3. Literacy versus ESL Needs — A Question to Investigate**

The enrolment data do not reveal the extent to which the literacy service provided by the English school boards is serving literacy versus ESL needs among the large allophone or immigrant cohort of the adult education clientèle. The IALSS posed a related question when asking if the relatively lower scores of immigrants compared to Canadian-born respondents are attributable to a lack of literacy proficiency, or to not knowing how to read and write well in English (or French). To answer these questions, one would have to know the mother tongue proficiency of these learners.

The boundary between literacy and ESL is not clear-cut. The concept of “ESL literacy”, which suggests a combination of needs straddling the two domains and requiring a specialized form of instruction, has been relatively little studied, understood or agreed upon to date ([CFL 2008](#): 9-10). Thus, while the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks understands ESL literacy to apply to people who are “not functionally literate in their own language”, key informants in a 2007 Canadian study offered varying definitions. The study observed:

Overall, there is not ...systematic, detailed, and formalized knowledge about immigrants and

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### ***From the Field***

*“...a number of volunteer-based literacy councils described how literacy clients were referred to them by well-paid staff at adult education centres run by school boards for basic skills development. This was due to the board being unable to fill a class with Level 1 learners but being able to fill a class with Level 2 learners.”*

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refugees with low education and literacy in their own language in Canada. ... [We] do not know what literacy skills and learning strategies people bring in their own language. We do not know the proportion of those immigrants and refugees who have high oral skills in English or French but limited literacy skills. Additionally, the particular needs of refugees with ESL literacy needs are not reflected in the literature (Folinsbee 2007b: 12).

This project could not determine what type of background information English school boards gather on allophone students, and, if they do, to what extent they tailor literacy classes to the varied needs.

In the English boards, ESL, although not part of the CCBE program in the English sector, is currently offered by the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) through an arrangement with Le Centre d'appui aux communautés immigrantes (CACI), a non-profit organization that works to integrate new arrivals and other members of cultural communities in the boroughs of Ahuntsic-Bordeaux Cartierville and Greater Montreal. CACI helps immigrants acquire language skills, including French, English and "technical English" (for engineers of immigrant background). They have partnered with the Marymount Adult Education Centre and the EMSB to provide English courses to "francophone members of cultural communities, refugees and Canadian citizens who master French". The courses are designed to perfect the oral and written language skills of learners and improve their chances of finding employment "in an area of competence where knowledge of English is required to fulfil the functions of a particular position sought by a learner".<sup>21</sup> The program in "technical English" is also offered in partnership with the EMSB.<sup>22</sup>

#### **5.4. Aboriginal School Boards**

Learners of Aboriginal background as defined by MELS ("Native language" mother tongue), comprised only 0.3% of enrolments in the adult education sector for English school boards in 2001-2002 (Coulombe and Roy 2005: 8). Given the recent research on Aboriginal LES needs, this very small figure suggests that English-speaking Aboriginal learners are either seeking service elsewhere or not being served.

In more remote areas, three school boards serve Aboriginal communities (Kativik, for the Inuit in Nunavik; Cree, for the Cree in northern Quebec; and Littoral, for the Lower North-Shore region, from Kegaska to Blanc-Sablon, including Anticosti Island), offering a choice and combination of instruction in native mother tongues, English and French. Data on the activities in the area of literacy or LES more broadly was limited.

## **SECTION 6: LES SERVICES OFFERED BY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS**

This section surveys the activities of community organizations funded through the Ministry of Education (MELS) as well as other funding sources. It includes local literacy councils, Community Learning Centres, organizations and associations serving cultural communities and specific populations, and libraries.

### **6.1. Community-Based Literacy Funding Structure**

Community-based literacy providers are funded through the MELS PACTE stream (*Programme d'action communautaire sur le terrain de l'éducation/Program for Community Action in the Area of Education*), established in 2003-4. This program supports "independent community action organizations" that offer alternative services to those provided through the official education

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.caci-bc.org/index.php?page=348>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.caci-bc.org/index.php?page=346>

network and that address specific needs, the first of which is literacy. To be funded, an organization must meet eight admissibility criteria, and receive official accreditation (MELS 2006: 1-7). Community-based literacy providers must “focus primarily” on individuals who have decided not to return to school, and who wish to pursue their education without necessarily obtaining official certification (diploma, attestation, certificate, etc.).(ME 2002b: 11). Government supports the activities of these organizations through three mechanisms:

- core funding — to accomplish the overall mission
- service agreements — to implement specific government objectives
- project funding — to accomplish specific, short-term objectives<sup>23</sup>

### *Literacy Councils*

Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LVQ) is a coalition of eleven local literacy councils and three community organizations that offer some literacy programming [See Table 7].

Of the fourteen organizations in LVQ, half serve only the greater Montreal area. Of these, two target specific groups, i.e. the hearing impaired and women. It is difficult to determine the exact number of individuals served by LVQ organizations at any given point in time; however, based on information from a 2010 survey by the Quebec English Literacy Alliance (QELA), they serve a much smaller number of learners (totalling several hundred per year) than do the school boards (totalling several thousand).

**TABLE 7: LIST OF LVQ MEMBERS**

LITERACY COUNCILS
▪ Reclaim
▪ South Shore Reading Council
▪ Chateauguay Valley Literacy Council
▪ Literacy Unlimited (Western Montreal, stretching to the Quebec/Ontario border)
▪ Learning Exchange (Laval)
▪ Western Québec Literacy Council (Outaouais)
▪ Gaspésie Literacy Council (Gaspésie)
▪ Quebec City Reading Council
▪ Yamaska Literacy Council (Eastern Townships, western sector)
▪ Literacy in Action (Eastern Townships, Estrie)
▪ Laurentian Literacy Council
OTHER MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS
▪ Deaf Anglo Literacy Centre
▪ Women’s Y of Montreal/YMCA
▪ Frontier College (national organization), serving Montreal, Quebec and Sherbrooke
<i>Source: QELA 2010 and the web pages of LVQ members</i>

The LVQ web site defines the role of its members<sup>23</sup> to provide an alternative service where a government service is lacking or insufficient. They describe a more flexible approach than public institutions, being closer to the population they serve, offering innovative practices in popular education, and being better able to reach marginalized, excluded sectors of the population. The programs offered by LVQ suggest that Anglophone LES needs are mainly basic or “traditional” literacy — reading, writing, arithmetic, computers, and family literacy. About a third of these community-based literacy organizations, on their web sites, identify a link between literacy and “essential skills”, “workplace skills”, or “employment”.

### *Family Literacy*

According to information gathered by QELA, as well as the descriptions on the web pages, about

half the LVQ organizations offer some form of family literacy. As noted earlier regarding the minimal activities of English school boards in this area, federal funding cuts in 2006 may have had an impact on the offer of family literacy services.

A small number of organizations located almost exclusively in the greater Montreal region offer

<sup>23</sup> [http://literacyvolunteersqc.ca/community\\_literacy\\_quebec.php](http://literacyvolunteersqc.ca/community_literacy_quebec.php)

health and financial literacy. One organization explicitly addressed civic literacy through the production of law manuals. It was not clear if these were used as teaching tools.

### *Community Learning Centres*

The education and learning landscape for Anglophone adults in Quebec has broadened since 2006 with the establishment of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in selected schools, largely outside Montreal. The CLCs were created as part of “An English Minority-Language Initiative” project, to help English schools in Quebec “serve as hubs for education and community development and as models for future policy and practice”. One expected key result is “better access to educational services and lifelong learning opportunities for English-speaking communities”. In the first phase of the project in 2006, fifteen schools were chosen to develop CLCs. Subsequently, eight more schools were added. The twenty-three CLCs now in place represent every English school board in Québec, as well as the Littoral school board and the Association of Jewish Day Schools. In 2011, in the final phase of the project that runs to 2013, an additional fourteen centres are scheduled to open.

According to the first published description of CLC activities, most of the centres (15 of 23) offer some sort of LES service (class, information session, activity) or resource (materials or library). Among the various types of LES support in these CLCs ([LEARN Quebec 2010](#)):

- just over half provide some component of *adult education/basic skills/essential skills* —computers
- just over half address *family literacy*
- between 40-67% offer services related to health and well-being

The CLCs LES services mirror those offered by the LVQ organizations, but also explicitly address the health issues of the English-speaking populations they serve. Services related to financial literacy and civic literacy are offered in a small number of CLCs. Several centres offer some form of French language instruction or upgrading, an area not covered by the community-based literacy organizations.

### *Technology to offset isolation*

A recent report on a federal consultation on linguistic duality and official languages highlighted how new technologies to support education and learning are “outstanding tools” for organizations serving communities and for many, “represent the future”. It discussed how the new technologies could help offset community isolation, a lack of information and limited resources faced by official language minorities (Lord 2008:14). Access to video-conferencing equipment and hook-ups, which are used to feed tele-health information sessions and workshops to the centres,<sup>24</sup> appears to be crucial to health, information and education especially in CLCs in isolated communities ([Lacireno-Paquet et al 2008](#)).

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### ***From the Field***

*“...a number of literacy workers noted that CLCs have not been as successful in meeting their needs as initially hoped. Only one CLC stated that they had a relationship with the local community literacy group, but it was “very informal and tentative” and they only communicated for referrals. No literacy group said that they used a designated school itself, however ideal it seemed at first.”*

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<sup>24</sup> According to the CLC information page: “The CLC initiative provides technical training and support to teachers to enable them to employ videoconferencing technology as a teaching tool. Each school in our network received state-of-the-art videoconferencing technology as part of the funding package.”  
<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/clc/EducVideoconf.html>

### *Funding for CLCs*

With federal funding for the CLC project set to expire in 2013, there is uncertainty about the future of these centres. However, the Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages has (March 2011) recommended that the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages “commit, under the Canada-Quebec Agreement on Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction, to providing the support needed to provide for maintaining and developing the Community Learning Centres in the long term ...and continue the commitment to the Community Learning Centres beyond 2013” ([GC 2011](#): 87).

## **6.2. Libraries**

Libraries play a role in providing literacy and essential skills services to Anglophones. The Fraser-Hickson Library, a privately funded institution that opened in 1885 was one of Montreal’s first libraries and offered free public access courtesy of substantial bequests. In the 1990s, it was among the first libraries to engage actively in adult literacy support and promotion, stocking a collection of easy-to-read materials and forming partnerships with literacy providers to provide space for tutoring and computer use. Facing severe financial difficulties, it has been closed since February 2007 after negotiations with the City of Montreal for funding broke down. It currently operates a home delivery service for the homebound in NDG and Montreal West, but most of its collection is in storage. While it still hopes to re-open, its closure was a loss to the Anglophone population in West-end Montreal.

The Centre for Literacy used its final IFPCA-funded project in 2007-8 to set up satellite literacy libraries (“Lifelong Learning Collection”) in several Anglophone communities. Outside Montreal, two collections were customized and installed in CLCs—in Gaspé and in Bury. The materials were chosen based on literacy needs assessment. Communities identified needs in various literacy domains besides basic reading, writing and counting—health, family/parenting, finances, employment preparation and citizenship. The Gaspé collection included materials specifically on senior health issues and a number of resources on Aboriginal themes.<sup>25</sup>

Lifelong Learning Collections were also set up as part of the same project in two Montreal libraries serving the Anglophone population: the *Atwater Library and Computer Centre* and the *Eleanor London Côte Saint-Luc Public Library*. The collections included books covering the same literacy domains as in Gaspé and Bury, but had more materials on *civic literacy*, to address the needs of the growing immigrant constituency. The literacy library at the Atwater Library supplements other LES services provided here, including a *digital literacy program* geared to the Anglophone population that “encourages youth and community groups to discover new and creative ways to use digital technologies in order to discuss issues important to them, develop skills, and build community”. The library also offers *computer courses*.<sup>26</sup> At Côte Saint-Luc, in addition to the literacy collection, the library offers *family literacy* programs and *parenting* information activities, references and resources.<sup>27</sup> Family literacy programs are also provided at the *Montreal Children’s Library* and the *Westmount Public Library*.<sup>28</sup>

### *Library Resource Trunks*

The CLCs have been helped to support LES services by another initiative of The Centre for Literacy that aims to get resources to the “many English-speaking communities in Quebec where English reading materials are scarce”. Begun in 2008, The Centre, in consultation with user groups,

<sup>25</sup> For details on the project, see: <http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/projects/lifelong-learning-collections-2007-2008>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.atwaterlibrary.ca/>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.elcslpl.org/index.aspx>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mcl-bjm.ca/>; [http://www.westlib.org/library/main.cfm?Section\\_ID=1](http://www.westlib.org/library/main.cfm?Section_ID=1)

customizes trunks of non-academic, adult appropriate materials that are sent to CLCs for a six-month loan period. The trunks circulate to other sites “providing ‘fresh’ materials at regular intervals”. To date, resource trunks have been loaned to CLC libraries in Netagamiou, Mecatina, Gaspé-Percé and St. Paul’s.<sup>29</sup> For this report, we could not gather more information from libraries.

## **SECTION 7: ANGLOPHONE LES NEEDS, EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE LES TRAINING**

### **7.1. Policy Context**

Employment and adult education and training are important areas of concern to Anglophones in the province, as a number of recent studies and surveys have highlighted.

A study published by Quebec’s Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity in 2003 using data from Statistics Canada’s monthly *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) estimated that 6% of Quebecers in the workforce, aged 15 and over, had less than nine years of schooling. This is a category of individuals expected to have low literacy. The study found that the percentage was higher for men and older workers ([Lalande 2003](#): 44). Industries found to have a “very significant” proportion of low literacy employees, included: agriculture and stock-raising; forestry; mining; construction; transport; and manufacturing (textile, clothing, wood and furniture, products made of non-metallic minerals, plastics and rubber). Regions with the highest proportion of workers with low literacy were outside Montreal in the North Shore/Northern Quebec, Gaspé/Îles-de-la-Madeleine and Abitibi-Témiscamingue. Montreal, Outaouais and Quebec City had the lowest proportion.

Although this study does not provide separate data for Francophone and Anglophone workers, its findings suggest that older English-speaking men in the regions, particularly those working in the industries identified are probably in need of some LES training. As noted earlier, Anglophones (mother tongue) in Eastern Quebec and Estrie have particularly low levels of educational attainment, compared to those in other regions. One would therefore expect need to be strongest here, as well as in Northern Quebec with the majority of the province’s Aboriginal communities.

#### *The unemployed*

The 2003 study does not capture the proportion of individuals with low literacy among working-age *unemployed* adults. If included, the LES needs of Anglophones in the regions and of Aboriginal English-speakers would be greater, as would those of Anglophones in the Montreal region with its large immigrant component. Among the unemployed, we would expect to find needs among both young and older workers.

Data collected by Info-Alpha confirm that the unemployed have important LES needs. In 2009-10, regardless of language group, almost 70% of callers were unemployed. Most callers say that they are trying to get a job or a better job, but others want to return to school, improve their language skills or learn computers. A 2007 study on callers to Info-Alpha and Info-Apprendre followed up with 180 callers to both services, focussing on those who undertook some form of instruction or training<sup>30</sup>. It concluded that, the “main motivation” for seeking assistance was “the improvement of one’s socio-economic status through work” ([Perrault 2006](#)).

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/projects/library-resource-trunks-2008>

<sup>30</sup> Info-Apprendre is another telephone referral service set up to assist adults in the broader area of “education”, rather than only “literacy and basic training”.



### *Workplace LES and Bill 90*

For Anglophones with a job, LES training can be an option through the workplace, in programs funded by Emploi Quebec through Bill 90, *Act to Foster the Development of Manpower Training*. According to a study from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, a majority of Quebec workers are employed by companies subject to this law. (HRSDC, 2008: 8) The data is not current, however, and it is not clear the extent to which the option is real for English-speaking workers since workplaces in Quebec with more than fifty employees are legally required to operate in French while all workplaces need to conduct at least some of their activities in French. “Admissible” training under Bill 90 includes activities that “allow the worker to develop his/her professional competencies or qualification and, ultimately, benefit employment, adaptation to the job market, professional integration or worker mobility” (Emploi Québec 2009: 7).

In theory, this definition should allow for LES training in English in those workplaces where use of English, in addition to French, can be shown to be necessary for certain positions. Nevertheless, English is being used by Anglophones at work in Quebec. The 2006 census reports that for mother tongue Anglophones, more than two thirds use English in the workplace “exclusively” or “mainly”, and 17 percent “on a regular basis”.<sup>31</sup>

The workplace LES needs of mother tongue and FOLS English-speakers are not reflected in the literature, although the data suggest that English-language workplace LES support might be warranted for some. According to the 2006 census, 72% of people in Quebec with a mother tongue “other” than English or French use English at work; 47 percent “mainly” use English and 15 percent use it “exclusively”.<sup>32</sup>

The latest published figures on training covered by Bill 90, for the period 2000-2005, show that among employers who reported workplace training in 2002, only 16% offered some type of LES program for their workers, i.e. training in the area of “essential skills/literacy, oral and written communication skills” (MESS 2005a: 47-8). The government finds the low figure “worrying”, given official policies that prioritize skills development among immigrants and visible minorities, “notably in *francisation*”, or knowledge of the French language (MESS 2005a: 51). The English language needs at work of Anglophone immigrants, or of Anglophones generally, do not figure in official documents collected for this study. It is an area that requires further investigation.

### *Essential Skills and Employment Needs*

The Quebec English Literacy Alliance (QELA), a provincial umbrella group funded through HRSDC as the English-language literacy coalition for Quebec brings together the English school boards, two of the Aboriginal boards (Kativik and Littoral) and LVQ.<sup>33</sup> QELA highlights the nine essential skills and workplace LES prominently on its web site, in its masthead, key navigating points and resource sections.<sup>34</sup> In addition, it has put out a promotional bilingual brochure targeting employers to highlight the benefits of workplace LES to business and the economy, and its members’ ability to “help people and businesses succeed through learning.”

### *Mature Workers in the Greater Montreal Area (GMA)*

A recent study from the Community Economic Development and Employability Corporation (CEDEC) confirms several of the issues identified thus far in this report. CEDEC’s *Mature Workers Initiative* conducted a qualitative study of 684 English-speaking Quebecers aged 45 years or older,

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/lo-ol/pubs/npc/c-g/c-g46-eng.cfm>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.pch.gc.ca/pgm/lo-ol/pubs/npc/105-eng.cfm>

<sup>33</sup> As well as associate members: The Centre for Literacy of Quebec and the Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG)  
See: <http://qela.qc.ca/contact-us/member-groups/>

<sup>34</sup> <http://qela.qc.ca/>

who are either underemployed or unemployed and living in the Greater Montreal Area. While this study does not use a random sample, it constitutes a rich source of information on a population that has received scant attention from social scientists. Although these people face a variety of life situations that defy easy simplifications, it is possible to identify common obstacles and barriers to employment:

- Poor skills in speaking and/or writing French;
- Age discrimination, which becomes more prevalent when workers reach the age of 50 or more;
- Poor computer skills.

For recent immigrants, these issues are compounded by racial or religious discrimination, as well as a lack of knowledge that prevents them from identifying and using resources available in the communities where they reside.

People living in the GMA, but outside the city of Montreal, also tend to have a lower level of education and are less likely to have enrolled in a training program to upgrade their skills.

## **7.2. School Boards and Workplace LES**

School boards play a large role in workplace LES provision. A 2005 Quebec study commissioned by the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) for its *Municipal Leadership: Investing in Literacy and Learning for the Workplace & the Community Project* found that Quebec's seventy-two school boards (sixty French, nine English, and three with special status, i.e. Cree, Kativik and Littoral) provide adult education in 170 locations across the province and "generally respond promptly to employer needs", in fact, compete "fiercely" to meet the demand ([RAC 2005](#): 12-13). This finding echoes those of a 2003 *Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation* brief on adult education in the context of local and regional development. The brief described educational institutions in Quebec having been drawn into the province's drive to promote social and community development, with the "main focus" on the economy, job creation and business competitiveness and productivity ([Gobeil 2003](#): 4-5, 9). It reported that school boards and other providers work with regional development councils, local development centres, regional councils of labour market partners, Emploi-Québec and the network of local employment centres to develop adult education offerings ... in which "... training related to employment and business growth is clearly predominant". ([Gobeil 2003](#): 11-12). The brief cautioned that the diverse learning needs of individuals are at risk of being marginalized and inadequately served as the educational sector focuses more on meeting the demand of employers and business.

### *Vocational and Technical Training*

Emploi Quebec and the network of local employment centres emphasize vocational and technical training over other forms of adult education for Quebecers. The *Conseil* emphasized taking account of "the educational needs of the adults themselves... [and] all the dimensions of personal and vocational development" and reaffirmed "the importance of providing a broad range of educational services" ([Gobeil 2003](#): 14-15, 22). Three years later, in another brief on adult education and social equity, the *Conseil* noted that its enquiry had "... revealed that in most educational institutions, [...] the supply of educational services largely determine[s] needs. Interested adults only enrol in courses and programs that are available. In general, with the exception of on-the-job training, educational activities are seldom organized to meet individual or collective needs" ([Gobeil 2006](#): 16).

### *Challenge for English School Boards*

English school boards are important providers of vocational and technical training, although the dispersion of English-speaking communities and the huge areas they serve restrict the degree to

which they are able to meet the needs of the Anglophone population (Lamarre 2007: 117-18). The government's closed envelope in funding adult education and the cap on the literacy service act as disincentives to offer more LES classes. Recognizing the importance of this issue, the *Conseil* recommended that the government provide "open resource envelopes for basic education" (Gobeil 2006: 29). It is unclear from the research for this study whether the English school boards, in the adult educational services, have prioritized learning connected to jobs and professions at the expense of more general LES instruction.

Quebec's school boards through a provincial organization, the Table des Responsables de l'Éducation des Adultes et de la Formation Professionnelle des commissions scolaires du Québec (TRÉAQFP), actively reach out to and serve business (services aux entreprises/SAE). However, only two of nine English school boards (Montreal-English and Sir Wilfrid Laurier) and one of the three Aboriginal boards (Cree) (CCL 2009c: 7)<sup>35</sup> belong to TRÉAQFP. A 2009 report noted that a TRÉAQFP survey showed that only 10% of school boards in Quebec do *not* offer adult education and/or professional training services to workplaces. (CCL 2009c: 7).<sup>36</sup> We do not know how much of this 10% is made up of the English sector.

#### *Workplace LES and aboriginal populations*

According to data from the Aboriginal Human Resource and Development Agreements funded by HRSDC, about 9% of Aboriginal people in Canada aged 25-64 "...received some sort of job-related training in 2008, such as literacy and essential skills training, skills development and employment assistance services". Provinces and territories also have Labour Market Agreements that aim to improve access to training for both individuals who are unemployed and low-skilled people with jobs who need essential skills training and/or credentials (CCL 2009b: 56). This study could not ascertain how much of the Aboriginal workforce is served by these agreements in Quebec, in English.

### **7.3. The Challenge of Bi Literacy**

Recent research on community vitality by the Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), the Greater Montreal Community Development Initiative (GMCDI) and the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN), and the federal government, note concerns among English speakers about their employability as well as competitiveness in the workplace vis-à-vis native French speakers. These studies reveal that Anglophones feel a literacy need in relation to their abilities in French, not English.

#### *The Need to Read and Write Better in French*

Two CROP surveys for the CHSSN (2005, 2010) show that, although almost 70% of Anglophones can speak French, their ability to read and particularly write is much weaker. This is especially so among older English-speaking adults and more pronounced in the regions, outside Montreal. (Jedwab 2006:1; CROP 2010/b: 31-2). Analyzing the 2005 study, Jedwab found that, "Despite the significant percentage of Anglophones able to speak the French language it

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### ***From the Field***

*"Quebecers, particularly in the regions, require the ability to read and write in French in all these spheres, not just speak. If the literacy support available to them is in English only, they will not be able to achieve their life goals. One provider described the dilemma in the rural regions: "If we just do English literacy, then our clients can only find work outside Quebec and they want to stay here"."*

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.treaqfp.qc.ca/101/101e.asp>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.treaqfp.qc.ca/101/101e.asp>



is language training to which they accord the highest degree of importance” ([Jedwab 2006](#): 4). A report by the GMCDI in 2007 echoed these findings for the Greater Montreal area, noting “insufficient second-language skills among some young people, older adults in career transition, professionals-in-training and new arrivals”. They recommended enhancing second language through a lifelong learning approach to improve the employability of Montreal’s Anglophones ([GMCDI 2007](#): 9-10, 23).

### *Employability*

More generally, the 2010 CROP survey found that 44% of respondents believe that they have not been “prepared for success” by the French language instruction they received ([CROP 2010](#)/b: 78). Concern in this area is high among younger Anglophones, as was recently demonstrated by a QCGN survey of English-speaking youth (aged 16-29). The study found “almost universal” agreement that the educational system, at both the elementary and secondary levels, is not producing “sufficiently bilingual” graduates. This report underscored the desire of English-speaking youth to be “biliterate” on graduating from high school “... so that being an English-speaker does not pose a barrier to fully entering the job market, French-language educational institutions or society” (QCGN 2009: 20).

The Advisory Board on English Education notes that from an employability perspective, “Achieving a high level of bilingualism is not merely a priority: it has become a necessity”. In its recent Brief to MELS, the Board recommended the establishment of “a collaborative table to promote bilingualism and biliteracy amongst English-speaking students and to establish ways of supporting initiatives to promote bilingualism and biliteracy” ([ABEE 2010](#): 18). It also recommended that MELS “make available and promote French instruction to adult learners, regardless of how long they have been living in Québec or their level of education ([ABEE 2010](#): 20).

Federal consultations on linguistic duality and official languages in Canada have also revealed that Anglophones in Quebec place great value on bilingualism, which they consider to be “an asset in terms of employment and economic development”. A 2008 report recommended greater support from government for “literacy training programs to improve the level of French and increase the language skills of Anglophones...” ([Lord 2008](#): 13). The Senate Standing Committee on Official Languages recently concluded that the quality of French is “a determining factor in the occupational success of young English speakers”. The report also noted that some organizations serving Anglophones are calling for more funding to support French-language training for English speakers in business and in the workplace ([GC 2011](#): 57, 64-5).

### *Anglophone Youth Retention*

The GMCDI and QCGN reports link biliteracy or bilingualism to the retention of youth in Anglophone communities, especially in the regions, where holding on to the younger cohort is seen as “essential to community vitality” ([OCOL 2008Q](#): viii-ix). Discussing Montreal, the GMCDI study called for the promotion of French among Anglophones “as a foundation strategy for retaining the English-speaking youth of the Greater Montreal Area” ([GMCDI 2007](#): 14). The challenge is greatest in the regions, where French-language instruction for Anglophone adults (i.e. FSL) is not easily accessible and where support for English speakers in French-language programs is lacking (QCGN 2009: 20, 26).

Beyond workplace literacy and essential skills issues, other literacy needs have attracted the attention of community organizations in Quebec. The next section provides an overview of the many LES activities and services offered by organizations that are not typically identified primarily as LES service providers.

## SECTION 8: NON-EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

### 8.1. Context

Until recently, very little has been known about community-based organizations in Quebec that provide services to Anglophones, including how many such organizations actually exist. The Centre for Community Organizations (COCO) is currently mid-way through a three-year study exploring the sector, to better understand its scope, profile, and challenges it faces. The initial findings of this project (available on the COCo web page) are drawn from a survey of 217 English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural community groups located in Montreal, Laval and the Eastern Townships (out of a total of 559 organizations located in these regions). According to the survey, these groups generally work with *families, seniors and youth*, in that order. They tend to be small and “hardy” and “meet diverse social needs in many languages”. Almost 80% of those groups surveyed “...identified more than one area that they work in, indicating a complexity of needs they work on”.<sup>37</sup> While the number of organizations serving the literacy needs of English speakers has not been investigated to date, it appears that a significant number of them are involved in some way.

#### *Challenges to Service Provision*

Preliminary results of the COCo study suggest that the work done by community-based organizations to serve the LES needs of Anglophones in Quebec appears to be hampered by several factors. The study found that most do not adequately promote their existence (e.g., through a web site). Organizations with less capacity to work in French (speak, read, and write) seem to have greater difficulty securing funding from the Quebec government. At the same time, many of these organizations do not seem to “talk the same language” as the government, i.e. not only in terms of fluency in French but “in the understanding and use of words and concepts” — for example, in the way they define the sector groups they serve compared to the funding streams defined by the government (health and social services, immigrant and cultural communities, education, the arts, and so on).

### 8.2. Literacy Services Identified

There is general consensus that while many people are comfortable seeking help with employment, housing, social services, integration, and other areas of every-day life and personal development, they shy away from going to literacy organizations or signing up for literacy classes. A small recent study by Info-Alpha showed that people with literacy needs who do not seek help tend to have had negative experiences with education and/or the educational system, and tend to believe that their basic needs to put food on the table and take care of their families are more “urgent” than learning how to read and write better ([Perreault 2006](#)). These findings suggest that community-based organizations that address one or more of these areas, rather than literacy alone, might be well-positioned to serve English speakers with LES needs. Particular groups have traditionally been drawn to their own communities for support.

This project conducted a broad Internet scan to ascertain whether LES services might be available to Anglophones outside of the obvious venues. The scan found that such services are offered by a variety of Anglophone and bilingual organizations and groups serving Aboriginal people, historic Anglophone populations and cultural communities. The scan is not exhaustive, and further research would be required to complete the picture provided here [See Table 8].

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.COCO-net.org/en/node/237>

**TABLE 8: SELECTED COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

**ABORIGINAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- Native Friendship Centres (Chibougamau, Lanaudière, La Tuque, Montréal, Québec, Saguenay, Senneterre, Sept-Îles, Val d'Or)
- *Quebec Native Women Inc. (FAQNW)*
- *Native Women's Shelter of Montreal*
- *Native Para-Judicial Services of Québec*
- *Quebec First Nations Human Resources Development Commission (FNHRDCQ)*

**ORGANIZATIONS SERVING HISTORIC ENGLISH-SPEAKING POPULATIONS**

- 4 Korner's Family Resource Center
- Megantic English-speaking Community Development Corporation (MCDC)
- Jeffrey Hale Community Partners
- Vision Gaspé - Percé Now
- Family Ties New Carlisle
- Townshippers' Association
- Lennoxville and District Women's Centre (LDWC)

**ORGANIZATIONS SERVING ANGLOPHONES IN MONTREAL**

*Disadvantaged, Immigrant*

- Catholic Community Services (CCS)
- NDG Community Council
- Project Genesis
- Tyndale St-Georges Community Centre

*Cultural Communities*

- The Canadian-Italian Community Services of Quebec Inc. (SCCIQ)
- Multi-Écoute Centre

*Families, Youth, Women*

- Batshaw Youth and Family Centres
- H.I.P.P.Y. Québec
- The Mosaik Family Resource Centre
- Elizabeth House
- Head & Hands
- The Women's Centre of Montreal

*Employment*

- Carrefour Jeunesse Emploi Côte-des-Neiges (CJECND)
- Centre Génération Emploi
- ERS Youth Development Corporation
- EPOC Montreal
- Youth Employment Services (YES)

*The Black Community*

- The Quebec Board of Black Educators (QBBE)
- Black Community Resource Centre (BCRC)
- Côte-des-Neiges Black Community Association
- Council for Black Aging
- Jamaica Association of Montreal
- Jamaican Canadian Community Women's League of Montreal

*Aboriginal Organizations*

Research shows that Aboriginal people in an urban setting are drawn to Aboriginal organizations to help meet their needs on every-day issues and challenges.

According to a recent study, just over about 54% of urban Aboriginal people make use of or rely on the services provided by Aboriginal organizations in their city. Moreover, among the various Aboriginal populations, the Inuit and First Nations (whose number include English speakers) are the most likely to rely on these organizations ([Environics 2010](#): 68). Employment centres and health centres are especially valued ([Environics 2010](#): 71).

*Organizations serving Historic English-Speaking populations*

A number of organizations work to foster the development and vitality of English-speaking communities in the regions and promote awareness of local services and resources, as well as of Anglophone history and heritage. Among these, several offer some literacy support. Reflecting the growing numbers of seniors in the regional Anglophone demographic and the large number unemployed, much of this support revolves around health (and access to health and social services in English).

*Organizations Serving Anglophones in Montreal*

The Greater Montreal area offers a wide array of services to English speakers through numerous groups that target specific populations or intervention areas. In terms of LES-related services in particular, all domains are addressed, and a number of organizations also offer support in life skills.

*The Black Community*

For the Black population in Quebec, churches and congregations have played a critical role in addressing the social, economic and cultural needs of their communities by providing “culturally and physically accessible services”. They have been, and continue to be, especially important in integrating immigrants and refugees, as well as in supporting seniors ([Torczyner 2010](#): 12-15). The community-based organizations serving Black English speakers listed above are often linked in

some way to Black churches. This project did not identify the types of LES services possibly provided by the churches. The question requires further investigation.

#### *Reaching the Hard-to-Reach*

A 2008 report by the Canadian Council on Learning on Canada's literacy needs, recommended efforts to reach these people via a "multi-channel marketing campaign" (including print and on-line materials, in mother tongue languages as well) through diverse organizations, including ([CCL 2008a](#): 8, 47-8) employment resource centres, libraries, cultural organizations, community centres, local coffee shops, food banks, schools, parenting groups, health-care providers, and others who come in contact with these individuals, such as hospital and social workers, and religious leaders.

#### *Immigrants, Refugees and Health Literacy*

Cross-Canadian consultations in 2007 on health and learning among adults with low literacy, immigrants and refugees found that these groups tend to get health information from "people they know and trust", including friends and members of the community, rather than from information provided by governments or the health care system. Moreover, they prefer to learn about health issues and services by interacting with others, not necessarily with health professionals who might be intimidating ([Folinsbee et al 2007](#): 22). Community-based organizations that bring people together in a setting where they feel comfortable are therefore promising sites for improving health literacy, in particular if they provide interpreter services or documents translated into various languages besides French and English.

There is some consensus that community-based organizations can help promote LES services among those not likely to seek it out directly. Using these channels could work well in the context of Anglophone Quebec.

#### *Funding*

Limited funding is an overarching challenge for community organizations, in particular irregular, project-based funding that is not conducive to continuity in service, rather than global mission funding that provides core support over time.<sup>38</sup> This concern was reiterated in recent consultations with Anglophone communities and organizations by the Standing Senate Committee on Official Languages. Participating groups emphasized the need for long-term funding, especially from the federal government, as well as for an expansion of services in English across sectors. According to the report, recent changes to federal (Canadian Heritage) funding methods introduced to address some of these issues do not appear to be known to English-speaking communities. The report recommended more effective communication ([GC 2011](#): 15).

#### *Helping Immigrants*

In these same consultations, community groups also indicated that English-speaking immigrants need more tailored services, particularly around employability. They pointed out that, even if immigrants have gone to French school because of the requirement of Bill 101, many nevertheless "attach to the English community", which is where services are needed. The Senate Standing Committee concluded from this input that English community organizations that work to help and integrate immigrants need more financial support, including funding for English language training ([GC 2011](#): 69-70).

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.COCco-net.org/en/node/237>

## SECTION 9: EMERGING LES ISSUES

### 9.1. Anglophones and Health

A number of recent reports discuss health as a critical issue for Anglophones in Quebec. Most of these reports do not discuss health literacy explicitly. They generally focus on issues of access to service, information and education and analyze needs in terms of the social determinants of health. The Canadian Council on Learning ([CCL 2008](#)) study on health literacy produced a map of Canada that shows the distribution of health literacy by IALSS levels in each province without distinguishing between language groups or sub-populations. The hypotheses in this section make a link to health literacy that does not appear in the literature but that may be reasonably inferred from other research.

#### *Seniors*

The English-speaking population in Quebec has a large proportion of seniors who face serious and chronic health issues. The latest baseline data report on Quebec's Anglophones prepared for the CHSSN underscores:

.... an increased tendency towards health needs that are more characteristic of individuals in their later years. For example, chronic diseases such as arthritis, rheumatism, diabetes, and heart disease are more prevalent among older individuals as well as are activity limitations that ... are due primarily to mental health and osteoarticular (bone/joint) problems ([Pocock and Warnke 2010](#): 12).

The “missing middle” phenomenon (between the ages of 40-59), or relative absence in many communities of potential care-givers would likely contribute to greater health literacy challenges for older people without advocates or supports. At the same time, where such care-givers are present, they are less likely than their francophone counterparts to be linked to a social network that includes health professionals. Consequently, the quality of the informal health care, knowledge and information they are able to bring to the elderly and sick is probably not optimal ([Pocock 2006](#): 61).

#### *Immigrants*

For immigrants, language can create a barrier to access to health information and services. Low health literacy is particularly damaging to certain sub-groups which include the elderly, women with young children, the poorly educated and, particularly among refugees, individuals who have experienced traumatic events and suffer from psychological disorders ([Bowen 2001](#): 4-5).

#### *The Unemployed*

The poor health literacy score reported among the unemployed ([CCL 2008b](#): 22 and [Ng and Omariba 2010](#): 5, 39-40) has implications for Quebec's Anglophones, as the unemployment rate for the group is particularly high in some regions outside Montreal and for some sub-groups within the population (Aboriginals, immigrants and visible minorities, Blacks). Black seniors, who are more likely to have been immigrants and to function only in English, are often very isolated within the relatively youthful and increasingly francophone/bilingual Black community ([Torczyner 2010](#): 11).

#### *Two Hospital Projects — Montreal*

Two Montreal hospitals traditionally serving the Anglophone population investigated the health education needs of their clientele because of the general aging of the Quebec population as well as growing ethnic and cultural diversity. The Herzl Family Practice Centre at the Jewish General Hospital found evidence of low literacy ([CFL 2001b](#): 23). At the Montreal General Hospital/McGill University Health Centre, a joint project with The Centre for Literacy of Quebec evaluated the health education and information needs of patients that nursing staff found “hard-to-reach”,



including seniors, many of immigrant background, in three hospital units. Patients in the study were dissatisfied with their oral communication with medical staff, made minimal use of written materials and did not use computers for health information. They recommended a number of ways to improve communication.

#### *Cross-Canadian Consultations —Montreal input*

The Canadian Council on Learning published a report on consultations in 2006-7 across the country with 1) adults who have low literacy skills, 2) immigrants and 3) refugees, as well as with service providers “to identify what is working well and what are the barriers to health and learning for these population groups” (CCL 2008b: 31). A Montreal component explored health literacy among immigrants and refugees specifically. It found that these three groups, regardless of location, have difficulties navigating the health care system and accessing health information and services, especially if they have poor language or literacy skills. They also find it hard to understand written information about health — either in print, or online via the Internet among those who actually own a computer, which many did not (Folinsbee et al 2007: 19). The suggestions from immigrants and refugees in Montreal were similar to those made in the 2001 CFL study (Folinsbee et al 2007: 38-41).

#### *Access to Health Services in English*

More specific data about the health literacy needs of Quebec’s Anglophones was not found. However, studies on the general health needs of the province’s Anglophones, seniors in particular, have emphasized inadequate access to health services in English in regions outside of Montreal. This is an important focus of the CHSSN. Their most recent community action plan corroborates that Anglophones in Quebec fare worse than French-speaking Quebecers, French-speaking minorities outside Quebec and Anglo-Canadians on all key health accessibility indicators, including (CHSSN 2008) having a regular doctor, satisfaction with the quality of care, use of hospital services, and access to health information, testing services and medical specialists. Inadequate access to health services in English also tops the list of concerns repeatedly expressed by Anglophone communities in Quebec in recent years, particularly among the elderly (GC 2011: 18, 36-9; Corbeil, Chavez and Pereira 2010; Pocock and Warnke 2010; CROP 2010b; QCGN 2009; Blaser 2009; Carter, 2008; Lord 2008; OCOL 2008; RCAAQ 2008; GMCDI 2007; Nouvet and Maldoff 2007; Jedwab 2006; Pocock 2006; Bowen, 2001).

#### *The IALSS AND Health Literacy*

IALSS data has also been analyzed with reference to health literacy defined as the ability to access, understand and use information for health, for example, making healthy lifestyle choices, finding and understanding health and safety information, and locating proper health services<sup>39</sup>.

Reports show that about 60% of adult Canadians, 16 and older, lack this capacity. (Ng and Omariba 2010: 5). As with general literacy, three groups stand out as “most vulnerable”: seniors, immigrants and the unemployed (CCL 2008b: 22). About 75% of immigrants lack basic literacy skills relating to health, compared to 55% among non-immigrant Canadians “even after adjusting for numerous factors including age, sex, literacy practices at home and work, own and maternal education, concordance between mother tongue and test language, employment status, household income [and] participation in adult education and training ...”. (Ng and Omariba 2010: 5, 39-40).

## **9.2. Aboriginal Learning and Needs**

A study on the state of Aboriginal learning in Canada by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL), although it did not look specifically at Quebec, suggests needs that may be generalized across the

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.ccl-cca.ca/ccl/Reports/HealthLiteracy.html>

country ([Battiste 2005a](#)). The report on the Inuit identified English and ESL training as a “priority need”, the foundation for further skills training, career development or trades training ([ITK 2005: 5](#)). The study underlined that “getting a job” was only one piece and that “Inuit need skills of various natures to build healthy communities” (ITK 2005: 5). These include nutrition, and parenting especially in connection with young children and their health problems, including hearing impairment and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; home management, family budgeting; and school readiness, early childhood education. Again, all relate to areas addressed through literacy and essential skills. The report on First Nations communities identified similar needs with some variations ([Battiste 2005b](#): 11, 15).

A report on the 2009 *Summit on Aboriginal Learning* held by the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada underscored the need for early childhood education programs, “important building blocks for lifelong learning”, to address persistent education-achievement gaps experienced by the Aboriginal population across the country ([CMEC 2010](#): 17). The CCL study highlighted the challenge of service provision for the majority who still live beyond the cities. Many Inuit who need skills training and career development or trades courses do not have access to these services and must leave their communities. In the area of language and literacy proficiency, there is a need for more Inuit-specific documents and material, as well as more funding for community programs (beyond single year, proposal-based grants that do not allow for continuity) and more “coherent or consistent planning and design”. Funding and staffing shortages and inadequate infrastructure have made it difficult to offer early childhood services, including family literacy, beyond existing daycares ([ITK 2005](#): 5-6, 9). The case is similar for the *First Nations*. Early childhood education programs are not offered in most communities. First Nations adults who wish to complete their education or upgrade skills have few options outside urban centres which are often far from home and/or dependent on unstable funding. The report points to the need for “culturally sensitive” adult education programs and materials ([Battiste 2005b](#): 11, 15, 17, and 19).

In Quebec, inadequate access to services in English in the regions where French is the majority language adds another challenge.

#### *The Urban Aboriginal Community of Montreal*

The *Montreal Urban Aboriginal Needs Assessment Project* (2006-2007) offers data regarding needs among Aboriginal English speakers in Quebec. As noted, while most of the province’s Aboriginal population remains on reserve, the move to cities, particularly Montreal, is picking up momentum. The 2006-2007 project sought to deepen understanding of the issues facing the growing Aboriginal community in Montreal and to gather information that could help community organizations improve services. Through interviews and focus groups, the study offered glimpses into LES needs. The majority of informants (62%) spoke English most often in their daily lives and, among community members in particular, 69% preferred using English (RCAAQ 2008: 8-9). The study uncovered several key areas of need connected to LES including life skills training, employment and educational support, and information and services related to a broad range of health concerns — parenting/childcare, as well as special needs such as learning disabilities, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), psychiatric help, speech pathology, and hearing.

The need for life skills training was raised in reference to a training program initiated by the Native Friendship Centre of Montreal that operated for two years (2005-2006), before losing funding. Initially a service for job-search assistance and human relations counselling, it evolved to include training in English, French, literacy, computer skills, and human relations. The program was considered “beneficial for people who are often not ready to join the labour market or who have limited employment skills” (RCAAQ 2009: 27).

### *Accessing Services in English*

The assessment revealed that many Aboriginals in Montreal felt “frustration” trying to access services in English, particularly in the area of special needs, which, they found, is generally available only in French (RCAAQ 2008: 23). Another document, outlining literacy programs offered by Native Friendship Centres to support urban Aboriginal communities across Quebec notes “...the main services offered by Quebec in literacy and education are in French”. Consequently, “Aboriginal people who have English as their first or second language are in a minority situation and have difficulty accessing literacy services” (RCAAQ 2009: 8 ).

### **9.3. Other Literacy Issues**

#### *Early Childhood Learning and Adult Literacy*

The learning environment and experiences of pre-school children play a significant role later, particularly in terms of school readiness ([Lefebvre and Merrigan, 2000](#)). For children from disadvantaged backgrounds, early learning possibilities within the family are more limited for many reasons, including poverty, the demands and constraints of single parenthood, limited literacy/education of parents, limited parenting skills of very young parents, linguistic challenges faced by immigrant parents, and the isolation of certain parents from community resources and services. The Centre for Research on Economic Fluctuations and Employment/CREFE (Montreal, 2000) cited “best evidence” suggesting that early childhood interventions for disadvantaged children have “lasting effects and high social returns”. Family literacy services have been one way to engage parents. Family literacy refers to the many ways families develop and use literacy skills, from enjoying a storybook together at bedtime and during the day, to playing with word games, singing, writing to a relative or friend, sharing day-to-day tasks such as making a shopping list or using a recipe, and surfing the Internet for fun and interesting sites<sup>40</sup>

This project asks if English-speaking families in Quebec in the various disadvantaged groups identified have access to the early childhood, parenting and family literacy services.

#### *Financial Literacy*

Financial literacy is defined as the ability to make informed decisions about money and available financial resources and options<sup>41</sup>. A recent federal *Task Force on Financial Literacy* report notes that “many consumers – young and old, rich and poor – have real challenges, from reading financial statements to managing credit cards to planning for retirement” ([TFFL 2010](#): 11). It recommended that financial literacy be added to HRSDC’s nine ES framework (TFFL 2010: 32-33). As with general literacy and health literacy, that report identifies that seniors, aboriginal communities and immigrants especially “struggle” with most components of financial literacy (TFFL 2010: 14).

#### *Civic Literacy*

Civic literacy is defined as being knowledgeable about and understanding one’s society in terms of its history, culture and values, its system of government and institutions, its laws and its political and administrative processes, so as to fully participate and contribute as a citizen.<sup>42</sup> Recent polls show that Canadians demonstrate a serious lack of civic knowledge. Across age groups, only 40% of Canadians would qualify for citizenship by passing a mock citizenship test ([Ben Hassine 2010](#): 4).

<sup>40</sup> <http://abclifliteracy.ca/en/family-literacy-facts>

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.theccfl.ca/About-CCFL.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> This definition is based on the content of a recent presentation on citizenship made by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. See: BenHassine 2010.



## 9.4 Some Illustrative Studies

### *Montreal and the Regions*

In 2007, through an IFPCA project to customize satellite libraries for specific communities, The Centre for Literacy of Quebec conducted an assessment of literacy needs in five Anglophone communities — three in Montreal, one in a regional/rural community, and one in a remote region. The findings support those suggested by studies and surveys discussed above.<sup>43</sup> Informants included professionals from community centres and organizations in health, social services, educational and sports and leisure sectors, and community volunteers.

### *Montreal*

In Montreal, immigrants had the most obvious literacy needs. Their lack of proficiency in English was mentioned often, suggesting that literacy assistance was mixed in with English as a Second Language (ESL) support (See *Section Four, p.16*). Immigrants also had specific needs for information and support regarding:

- nutrition, navigating the health care system, information for pregnant women and mothers of young children, basic parenting
- money management, daily household budgeting, dealing with banks and financial paper
- reading with and to children, helping children learn
- aspects of citizenship, i.e. understanding Canadian and Quebec society, government, history and politics, understanding Quebec laws (for example, employment-related legislation) dealing with authorities for essential documents (e.g., getting a driver's license)
- easy English for work situations, job-preparation

One Montreal assessment uncovered literacy needs among English-speaking members of the Black community. Family literacy emerged as an area where adults would benefit with their children. Other literacy needs mentioned related to every-day money management and household budgeting. All these needs relate to areas of literacy or essential skills.

### *The Regions*

In the two regional communities, literacy needs centred on challenges facing seniors and young and working-age adults and matched those in Montreal, except for citizenship. They also identified a need for assistance with computers and the Internet connected to a lack of English-language resources in the regions to instruct Anglophones in the use of new technologies. In the more remote community, respondents also spoke of literacy needs connected to cognitive or learning disabilities, which were perceived to be growing. The issue of reluctance among adults to acknowledge literacy needs was raised, in the context of how family literacy could serve both children and adults.

<sup>43</sup> The enquiry investigated adult literacy needs and did not specifically address essential skills.

## CONCLUSION (PART 1)

### *LES Needs*

The first part of this report provides a contrasted picture of the LES needs of the Anglophone community in Québec. Demographic trends are contributing to the emergence of different LES needs in the Greater Montreal Area and in the regions. In Montreal, the English-speaking community has undergone a rapid and dramatic transformation in the past two decades, resulting in a population of richly diverse ethnic and religious background, with a large visible minority component, as well as a growing Aboriginal presence. However, the Anglophone community in Montreal faces an important challenge related to its growing diversity: Because English speakers are disproportionately represented among minority and immigrant groups, many Anglophones struggle with poverty, unemployment and under-employment.

This is in stark contrast to the demographic profile of Anglophones in the regions, who, while mixing increasingly with the Francophone majority, remain quite homogeneous in comparison. English-speaking communities in the regions are also experiencing an out-migration of their youth population that has not been replaced by the influx of new immigrants. Three demographics heavily represented in the regions of Quebec beyond Montreal stand out in terms of their particular vulnerabilities, as suggested by the literature: Aboriginal communities, seniors and the unemployed. In this connection, recent surveys among young Anglophone adults also point to the possibility of inadequate literacy skills in French (reading and writing), which is a source of growing concern to this demographic, particularly outside of Montreal. The issue of bi-literacy is clearly becoming a critical one for Anglophones living in Quebec.

### *LES Services*

English speakers in the greater Montreal region have the most options in terms of both the number of providers (school boards, community-based literacy providers, Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and other community-based organizations) and the type of services provided (formal or informal literacy service, programs in the various literacy domains, essential skills training).

The situation is different beyond Montreal, where English-speaking communities are scattered across great distances, some, especially in the case of Aboriginal groups, quite isolated, in a majority French setting. In the regions, aside from the one local literacy council and one school board that serve a particular usually vast region, and which are not easily accessible to all the members of the Anglophone community of the area who might have needs, there appear to be relatively few community-based organizations offering LES support. This study identified only a small number of groups serving historic English communities that provide some limited degree of LES service.

### *Knowledge Gaps*

Our survey of the literature also underlined just how little is known about the overall LES picture for the English-speaking communities in Quebec. We have identified a number of knowledge gaps that we believe should be addressed in the future (these gaps are listed in Table 9 on page 56). Among them, the issue of needs-assessment appears to be particularly acute. For instance, it is not clear from our survey how the literacy versus ESL needs of literacy learners in the adult education programs run by the school boards are both assessed and addressed. This is an issue that is particularly critical in the Montreal area.

The extent to which workplace LES programs in Quebec are being offered in English is also a major knowledge gap. There is simply no data about this even though the provisions of Bill 90 would suggest that at least some workplaces are offering English LES training to their English-speaking employees.

*Voices from the communities*

While we wanted this overview of the LES picture for Anglophones residing in Quebec to be based on the best available data, we also wanted to know how the changes we have documented were perceived by those directly involved in providing LES services to the Anglophone community over the last decade. Local Literacy Councils, Quebec-wide literacy umbrella organizations, Anglophone community organizations, local community and new immigrant organizations, Aboriginal organizations, English school boards, Adult Education Centres, and CLCs were contacted to participate. The large metropolitan as well as rural areas were included. Efforts were made to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the key informants so that issues raised could be more freely explored. A summary of their views is reported in Part 2.

## **PART TWO: FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This qualitative research was conducted as part of a larger study and review of Anglophone adult literacy needs and programs in Quebec.

The qualitative research was designed to identify some of the patterns and themes in the delivery of English literacy programs seen by those directly involved in services to the Anglophone community over the last decade. Efforts were made to assure the confidentiality and anonymity of the key informants so that issues could be more freely explored.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

All qualitative research aims to collect data with as few direct, closed-ended questions as possible. The goal is to generate perspectives, and identify idea patterns or discussion themes on the topic at hand. It is general by nature but excellent at finding structural tensions, contradictory directions or trends over time. It should be seen as a complement to more structured or quantifiable data. It was used in this study to create a general picture of changes and directions in adult Anglophone literacy programs in Quebec over the past decade.

Informants were interviewed in two ways: individually and in focus group. Nineteen individuals were interviewed, in person, in Montreal, Quebec, or by telephone in the regions, one-on-one. They were encouraged to reflect on what they considered the most important changes in Quebec Anglophone literacy over ten years. A general interview guide was developed to probe topics, if they were not raised. (See Appendix I). There was also a focus group of nine English-language literacy workers, brought together for a one-hour discussion.

The focus group took place in English with a discussion guide (See Appendix II) while the individual interviews were done in a mix of English or French, depending on the preference of the informant. If certain topics were not raised unprompted in conversation, a series of open-ended questions were posed on the following ones: definitions of literacy, demographic changes, sense of optimism about the future, funding issues, political issues, communication and cooperation patterns, demographic changes, work challenges, Aboriginal clients, challenges in the future. Topics that were raised unprompted by at least two informants were noted and explored.

All participants were told that the interviews were anonymous and confidential and that no names of organizations or individuals would be used. Many asked that no list of organizations interviewed be included in the report due to the small sample. As a result, and according to a long-standing tradition in qualitative research, our summary of the interviews and the focus group remains purposefully vague when assigning statements to groups of individuals by using words such as “some”, “a few”, “many” or “most”. All respondents were asked to sign consent forms which stated that personal information would be kept strictly confidential, separate from the interview data and on file for one year after the end of the study in May 2011. Access to personal information will be restricted to the research team only and will be secured in a locked office away from public access. No members of any organizations that were surveyed for this consultation will have any direct access to personal information. At the end of one year, all computer and paper records containing identifying information will be destroyed.

### **3. DISCUSSION THEMES**

The issues and concerns noted in the focus group and individual interviews have been grouped into nine discussion themes to help communicate patterns of experience and of perceptions in English literacy programs and services in Quebec since 2000.

#### **3.1 Mood of Literacy Programs**

A clear distinction was noted between the moods of umbrella organizations regrouping literacy and adult education organizations and of service delivery organizations.

When asked to describe if the last decade has been one of growth, status quo or difficulty, the large organizations that act as fund distributors or as coordinators for professional trainings, meetings, or round tables, all answered that they saw the decade as one of great growth and opportunities: that even if core funding was hard to find, there was a range of new pilot project funds to try out new ideas, new techniques, and new technology opportunities. They were excited about the possibilities of financial literacy programs with a large Canadian bank, or health literacy projects with hospitals, computer or media literacy projects. All of them had grown in members and felt they had gained visibility and importance in Quebec, forging new ties with francophone colleagues, being asked to attend Ministry-level meetings and French literacy roundtables and exploring new opportunities with the private sector and particularly new funding sources via Emploi Quebec. These informants used words such as “engaged”, “feel more important”, “position of strength” and “optimistic”.

This contrasted starkly with the choice of adjectives and the mood described by literacy council workers and those working on the front lines in adult education or community organizations. They described a decline in hope over the last decade, a belief that the problems they faced were not improving but growing. They noted that it was a period of loss of staff and space, and that funding has become increasingly difficult to obtain for long-term staffing to provide direct services to learners. A sense of even despair might be described about the fate of Level 1 services, and about the failure of funding and political organizations to understand the complex long-term commitments of such one-on-one work. This group used words such as “hopeless”, “disheartened”, “exhausted”, “stretched too thin” to describe the past ten years.

#### **3.2 Demographic Changes since 2000**

Literacy groups indicated that fewer clients are coming and that several literacy projects and programs have closed, but informants were unable to name which ones had done so. They also did not seem to have undertaken local needs assessments to gauge why this was happening. At the same time, though, they were able to name several new projects and programs that were opening. Literacy councils and community groups seem to be dealing with 10-20 clients on average per year but adult education workers at the school boards had trouble providing their totals as they do not have access to the data.

There was frequent mention of the need to use the term “English-speaking” rather than “English mother tongue” or even “Anglophone” literacy on funding applications as it was seen to be a better reflection of their client base. Thus immigrants from China or South Asia living in Montreal, who spoke a third language at home but were oriented culturally towards the English-speaking community, were able to be included in the client pool projections.

Overall, the Anglophone literacy groups mentioned difficulty recruiting clients. This was not because they felt there was not a need, but because it was difficult to reach them. This was echoed by their French-speaking colleagues. The challenge has grown over the last four years, as many provincially-funded groups were told that they could not include television or radio advertising in their funding requests, an important method to reach those who cannot read.

The Anglophone literacy groups described a decline in the traditional older person, often rural or poor, as client, and the rise of a new client - the young person, often male, between 15-20 years of age who does not want to return to the regular school system or adult education program due to its module approach. They prefer the one-on-one attention of literacy tutoring sessions. Another demographic group is francophones, seeking one-on-one English classes as a second language for personal or employment reasons, who must be re-directed to regular ESL classes. The third new client group being served is recent immigrants, literate or not in their home language, seeking English and French literacy services. This demand for bi-literacy is particularly difficult to address due to the funding environment in Quebec.

### **3.3 Shifting Definitions of Literacy and Program Goals**

Most groups mentioned a shift in the labelling or priorities of funding organizations from general or family literacy to that of more pointed employment-oriented literacy skills. When literacy council workers were asked to define literacy, they all mentioned the ability to read, write, calculate and solve problems but only a couple mentioned computer skills. No mention was made of health, media, financial skills or any of the newer types of promoted literacy approaches, despite nearly five years of targeted seminars, lectures and training focused on such new literacy domains.

When asked to read a list of the HRSDC essential skills and rank them in order of importance, literacy workers ranked them in order of: reading text, writing, oral, numeracy, thinking, document use, continuous learning and working with others. They felt that topics such as mastering French, social and life skills, and confidence/self esteem were as important as earlier literacy definitions and should have been included rather than some of the newer categories.

There was a concern that linking literacy too closely or exclusively to jobs might discourage people who are unable to work, due to mental health issues or physical disabilities, from pursuing literacy as a personal goal or just to become a better parent or citizen. However, when asked which skills they believed would be most important in the next five-ten years, they mentioned thinking skills, communicating with community, computer use, self esteem, continuous learning and life skills. Many mentioned that literacy had to be more holistic in approach, taking in the needs of the whole person. Some mentioned that the best literacy services could only be done independent of government program goals and focused solely on the needs of the learner.

Groups consulted attributed a noted decline in family literacy projects in Quebec in recent years to the fact that there are very few new parents who want English literacy services. They mentioned that a majority of new English-speakers are immigrants to the province from the rest of Canada or internationally. They have put their children in French schools so they want to be able to communicate in French. French literacy programs such as *'Éveil à l'écrit'* were seen to be doing better in French but failing to bring in enough participants in English.

Literacy workers noted that the emphasis on employment-related, health-related, or finance-related literacy has lead to a lessening of negative associations with literacy topics. For example, an older man who might be concerned by what his family would think about his taking a literacy class will be more at ease saying he has to take a computer course for a job or banking forms.



At the same time, however, literacy workers pointed to an underlying danger in building literacy policies around the new definitions, which are really aimed at clients at Level 3 or higher. In other words, the new approaches to literacy best serve people who actually have work, or are functioning in the community, rather than the typical Level 1 client who is “not even able to get work, or get up off the couch”. They are also wary about the shift towards new types of literacy leading literacy groups into partnerships with banks, computer companies or book sellers that might be really out to expand their customer base. In their view, this will mean that Level 1 clients will be ignored and that, if government cut-backs continue, there will be no literacy groups left to help them.

Representatives from a number of groups expressed the desire to have more English-literacy programs geared towards employment in the workplace, emphasizing the need for multilingual skills in a globalizing trade environment. But others felt that the private sector, particularly small or medium-sized businesses should not be made responsible financially for something the state should be providing. It was also argued that workplace literacy was too specific to job requirements, i.e., learning how to read work orders or computer screen lists, but not broadly applicable to every day life, to being able to act as a full citizen or even read the paper.

### **3.4 Working as a Literacy Provider**

The literacy and community organizations mentioned that one of the greatest changes they have experienced has been their transformation into fully or partially bilingual groups. All have bilingual websites or staff or volunteers. Most of their interactions with provincial-level colleagues or funding representatives are in French. This was seen as absolutely necessary to be fully involved in Quebec and seemed to be a simple statement of fact, i.e. that they were part of a minority and that this reality would not change. Older Anglophones with weaker French indicated that they could cope by turning to English-language websites or groups and by using English-language materials from the rest of Canada, the United States or the United Kingdom. The workers mentioned that French-speaking colleagues often praised the English-speaking literacy community at meetings for being able to bring new ideas and approaches to the table.

Another important change is the feeling of being overwhelmed by networking opportunities rather than feeling isolated professionally. One person said: “I had to take myself off email lists as there was just too much to do and read!” A certain level of networking fatigue seems to have set in with literacy councils and community organizations. A feeling is emerging that there are now too many coordinating groups in Quebec, all asking for input and information, all asking for attendance at training seminars, or sending out surveys. For people in the regions, this often means long travel and time away from family. There were clear statements from volunteers or very poorly-paid tutors or coordinators that there was not enough time to do the real work of recruitment, retention and long-term commitment to clients with so many demands on their time. Little local or regional client needs assessment was done. This was exacerbated by the fact that there were very few full-time coordinator positions and that even part-time positions were only guaranteed for one year at a time.

A common issue for many groups is the changing nature of volunteerism over the last decade. Groups described how they had previously been able to rely on steady volunteers who arrived on time and committed to a couple of years of working a few days a week with learners. But both rural and urban groups have noticed that people seem far too pressed for time these days, volunteer for shorter time periods, and are unable to commit to a fixed schedule. As one person noted, “...you feel so sorry for clients that show up, after trying so hard to even identify a problem, only to be let down. They take it so personally”.

The coexistence of an increasingly professional province-wide level of coordination and organization benefiting from some core funding alongside a highly underpaid, even volunteer, base seems to be an emerging structural tension development that some describe as a concern. A number voiced the suspicion that this two-tiered approach was due to government fiat at both the federal and provincial levels. They believe that governments have decided to interact and fund only a few recognized English community groups, the latter then distributing training and funding. One of the great successes of past English literacy groups was seen to be their ability to be “innovative” or to “think and move fast on their feet” due to their small size. There is a feeling now that they had become more bureaucratic and rigid, top-down rather than grassroots.

### **3.5 The Emergence of Community Learning Centres (CLCs)**

The development of Community Learning Centres (CLCs) in English school boards over the last decade was noted as one of the most important changes in education policy in Quebec. This was seen as a great opportunity to connect English communities and schools and literacy groups were often included in the planning stages as school boards designated schools. Rural-area CLCs were particularly welcomed. However, a number of literacy workers noted that CLCs have not been as successful in meeting their needs as initially hoped. Only one CLC stated that they had a relationship with the local community literacy group, but it was “very informal and tentative” and they only communicated for referrals. No literacy group said that they used a designated school itself, however ideal it seemed at first. One group coordinator stated: “Why would a mouse go live in the cat’s bed? School boards are what our clients are avoiding.”

Over the years, as CLCs were developing in high schools, the outside funding they obtained to keep running was almost always for teen activities or community-centre-type activities from municipalities. That meant that over time and wholly unintentionally, adult education activities were slowly de-emphasized. The video conferencing equipment and computers of the schools that could also have been used for literacy program development have increasingly been used for teen school retention programs.

The actual type of school where a given CLC operates has also posed some problems for literacy groups. In a number of cases, elementary schools are being used – which is great for offering Moms & Tots programs, except that there is no longer major funding for Family Literacy. At the same time, grown men and women looking for adult literacy support are understandably put off by the prospect of being served in a children’s school.

The opening of English school libraries under the CLC mandate appeared excellent on paper but the lack of funding to keep them open after hours, and the negotiations required to have adults drop into elementary schools at any time were noted as major barriers to their success.

The nature of the CLC mandate is for school boards to provide support for three years after which the CLC is expected to draw on financial support from beyond the boards, i.e. in the community. At the time of this consultation, only one CLC had a verbal agreement that they would be renewed by a school board, yet new CLCs were being opened within the same board. None had been able to obtain long-term funding from outside the school boards themselves. Most feared they would be forced to close after their first three years of support ended.

### **3.6 Role of New Technologies**

Every group had or was in the process of getting a website. Half used Facebook or Twitter and all used email as forms of technology. The large institutions and CLCs employed video, white boards

and computers. Almost none of the Literacy Councils provide computers for their tutors but many used client or personal computers. One described using an answering machine to get her clients to leave clear messages for her everyday. While computers were not used in most Level 1 activities, it is something that all the major institutions or umbrella organizations felt was going to be a major part of their activities. They have invested heavily in web information, e-newsletters, and list-serves which were mentioned as particularly useful in the regions. Tutors also mentioned using websites from the rest of Canada, the USA and the UK. Web resources most commonly referred to include The Centre for Literacy, QELA, ABC and COCo.

### **3.7 Aboriginal and First Nations Engagement**

A few literacy groups mentioned having clients of Aboriginal background. However, none mentioned on-reserve projects or clients. All wished they could help, several had begun projects but all stated that complex funding issues on reserves made it very difficult. They also pointed out that their traditional literacy courses were not going to work anyways. They indicated that what would work best was more holistic in approach, one that emphasized life skills and self-esteem, and that had more flexibility to address local needs. The geographical challenge was also mentioned, i.e. the fact that many communities do not have roads or are located far away from the majority of literacy services found in larger centres. One stated that he/she would not know if a client was Aboriginal or not, as clients are never asked personal, language or cultural questions during intake. One school board adult education centre in central Quebec had 50% aboriginal students, many with literacy issues. Frontier College runs summer Literacy camp with Mohawk students at Kanasatake.

### **3.8 ESL, FSL and Bi-Literacy Issues**

A number of informants discussed a unique feature of Quebec Anglophone literacy seekers – they often need and want to simultaneously improve both their English and French literacy skills. This poses a problem when Anglophone literacy funding and projects are tied to employability, health, financial and computer skills but not to improving the ability of Anglophone adults to function in French. French skills are the key to employability. Quebecers, particularly in the regions, require the ability to read and write in French in all these spheres, not just speak. If the literacy support available to them is in English only, they will not be able to achieve their life goals. One provider described the dilemma in the rural regions: “If we just do English literacy, then our clients can only find work outside Quebec and they want to stay here.”

According to informants, a number of clients, seemingly of immigrant background, appear to be using English literacy services as a first step towards integration, as they already know some English. In other words, they are seeking English Literacy combined with ESL. They then shift to French literacy combined with FSL classes. This transition is facilitated by the French school boards offering combined Literacy/FSL classes for those at Level 2 or 3.

An additional pressure blurring the boundaries between English literacy and ESL is apparently coming from French-speakers. Some are French-speaking immigrants but many are simply low or high literacy French-speakers wanting to enhance their employability skills by improving their English. They are the very type of clients that the new Federal funding was hoping to attract – job-oriented. However, since English is not their mother tongue, they are not covered under minority-funding rules, thus they cannot be served through government-supported literacy classes. They are therefore told to enrol in ESL classes even if they are not literate enough to do so.

One of the few groups to bridge this bi-literacy issue successfully could only do so by resorting to private funding, which operates outside of the federal or provincial regulatory framework. This

group had bilingual intake volunteers and a stable of English and French tutors. If the mainly urban immigrant client expressed a need for English literacy but explained it was for work in the province, they would suggest French literacy instead but with a bilingual tutor. If the client expressed a need for English literacy but it was for dealing with English issues at home or abroad, they would assist with English literacy tutors. This was the largest literacy program for Anglophones encountered. A number of Montreal groups felt it to be the most successful at placing clients in higher-level education and training programs.

### **3.9 Funding Environment**

This decade has been a dramatic period for literacy services. Almost all participants mentioned the changes brought first by the Liberal and then Conservative administrations to federal funding priorities. Shifting priorities in Ottawa have meant a move away from family or general literacy issues to more employment-related and private sector initiatives. Federal funding cuts introduced from 2003 to 2006 were mentioned most often as having had a major detrimental impact. The feeling is that programs shrank or closed, staff members were laid off and clients let go. People mentioned a variety of reasons that they perceived led to the cuts: general government cost cutting, shifts away from family literacy to employability targets, moves away from government roles to private sector initiatives, and a fear of offending Quebec by supporting Anglophone programs.

Despite these changes, umbrella organizations see the last decade as having produced a generally positive funding environment. They spoke favourably about the days of the IFPCA Entente between the federal and provincial governments (see page 14). Yet, since its demise in 2008, they have seen a rise in project, pilot project and core funding arrangements emerging from the federal departments of Canadian Heritage and HRSDC through their commitment to minority languages programs. They felt that, as a whole, constitutional guarantees for minority languages were being respected and supported.

This increase in multi-year and core funding for umbrella organizations has had an impact on the amount of time that literacy workers are spending in obtaining funding. A number of groups look back on the days when a letter with a quick budget to a funding agency would result in new program money. Now, federal government projects in particular, are seen as onerous, complex and very difficult to complete. They are seen as having too many “hoops to jump through” for a small group with a volunteer making the applications. There is a sense that only “a full-time professional fundraiser could get money these days”.

A number of literacy workers indicated that while the federal government is constitutionally required to recognize English language literacy needs, it appears to be too worried about provincial political optics to fund English groups directly. According to a number of informants, funds for English minorities are seen as too politically dangerous in Quebec so Anglophones receive 2/3 less funds than French-minority groups in the rest of Canada. Then, that smaller amount is drained because it is funnelled through other institutions, such as the provincial Ministry of Education, which take a further administrative cut. A few community groups expressed bitterness about the creation of the federal funding transfer and IFPCA Entente which they saw as a shrinking of English literacy funds.

Literacy groups mentioned the difficulty in the present environment of pulling funds together to make Level 1 programs work well. As mentioned earlier, these programs need a long timeline, one-on-one teaching, multiple sources of support in the areas of employment, social and health services. Most of the new funding sources are short term, pilot projects. Also, for the moment, the provincial government will not fund projects that receive more than 50% funding from the federal

government. In the case of almost all English-minority literacy programs, which cannot easily turn to alternative sources of funding in the Francophone education community, this is particularly difficult. Successful programs were thought to be possible only if local administrators could work with private, federal and provincial funding without much restriction.

English adult education centre workers in the school boards are perceived by adult education workers and administrators as having to deal with a number of tight administrative controls over adult literacy funding by the provincial government that their French colleagues do not seem to face. Funding for literacy is calculated at a higher rate per head than ESL thus costing the province more. Consequently, classes with low enrolment are cut, and the large classes that are offered make it difficult to do one-on-one work. In this connection, a number of volunteer-based literacy councils described how literacy clients were referred to them by well-paid staff at adult education centres run by school boards for basic skills development. This was due to the board being unable to fill a class with Level 1 learners but being able to fill a class with Level 2 learners. Another challenge faced by people in Level 1 seeking literacy service through the school boards is that many adult education programs that train clients for employment programs have a time-limit of three years, which most Level 1 learners cannot meet.

A number of literacy workers mentioned that school boards were perhaps making more money with ESL students than literacy students because of the larger teacher-student ratio allowed in ESL classes. They also voiced concerns that federal literacy transfer money was being used to support ESL classes rather than for running genuine literacy programs. This concern was particularly strong in the urban context where literate immigrants are perceived to be entering English literacy courses as a way to raise their English skills. This suspicion of board activities was acknowledged to exist by the adult education centres but the centres attributed it to rumours that have arisen because of problems in the coding, tracking and counting of literacy students. The French sector school boards use tracking categories that include a blended literacy-FSL code. The English sector, however, had been instructed by the Ministry of Education, some years back, not to mix classes for accounting purposes and thus keeps the counts of the two groups separate.

#### **4. FUTURE CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS**

Informants were asked what they felt were going to be the issues, challenges or concerns in the next decade in Quebec adult literacy programs and services. Most felt that the funding for English services would dwindle due to federal cuts.

Politically, workers mentioned that a change in provincial parties in power was probably in the wind. However, contrary to what the rest of Canada might think, they often did better financially under the PQ governments due to the latter's commitment to social and poverty issues at a grass-roots level. This was seen as one of the ironies of being Anglophone in Quebec. At the moment, the announcement of the provincial Liberal government's new adult education policy priorities has been delayed for five years. School boards, while receiving funds from Heritage Canada to open new CLCs were found to be deeply concerned that no new funds exist to keep the original cohort open.

The informants also seemed very concerned about the impact of a federal majority government, even with minority language constitutional guarantees. They felt that further budget cuts were sure to come to deal with the deficit reduction. They also seemed concerned that federal project funds and goals would continue to reflect private-sector partnerships that would further splinter literacy funding into "flavours": health, financial, computers, work... that target higher literacy levels.

Concern was expressed that if the government eroded its support further, no one would be around to fund Level 1s whose numbers, they perceived, have not altered in the last twenty years.

Almost every worker mentioned the need to teach English literacy with French literacy as the only way to guarantee that English clients could get work. This meant a brand new way of interacting administratively, which they feared would never occur without a great deal of political risk-taking.

Overall, there was a sense that the percentage of people in the lowest levels of literacy was not going to change or improve but that helping them was going to be harder and harder. Fears were voiced of the emergence of a permanent “underclass” among both Anglophones and Francophones.



## **OVERALL CONCLUSION: WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED, WHAT WE STILL NEED TO EXPLORE**

### **LES Needs**

#### *Real Needs, Real Variations*

As presented in the report, the picture of adult literacy and essential skills needs among Anglophones in Quebec and of the services currently in place to address these is a portrait in contrasts. The literature scan conducted in the first stage of this study shows clearly that English-speaking communities across the province require assistance to bolster their skills in all the various literacy domains explored (basic, family, health, financial, civic). It is also clear that, within the growing and increasingly heterogeneous Anglophone population, needs vary along both regional and demographic lines.

In Montreal, the English-speaking community has undergone a rapid and quite dramatic transformation in the past two decades, resulting in a population that is richly diverse in ethnic and religious background, with a large visible minority component and a growing number of Aboriginal Anglophones. The LES needs of Montreal's Anglophones cover the full spectrum of the English speaking population, but are most pressing for the expanding Aboriginal presence in the city, immigrants and visible minorities. All of these groups grapple with challenges connected to educational attainment, language proficiency and employment that LES services could help alleviate. Such services were found to be more abundant in Montreal than in the regions. This is in stark contrast to the demographic profile of Anglophones in the regions, who, while mixing increasingly with the Francophone majority, remain quite homogeneous in comparison. Outside the greater Montreal Areas (GMA), small, scattered, dwindling and ageing Anglophone communities face the larger, underlying challenges of linguistic and cultural isolation, as well as inadequate services in English. Seniors who would benefit particularly from improved health and financial literacy, constitute a vulnerable population, as do the large percentage of unemployed adults who could benefit from essential skills training and upgrading of their French literacy proficiency. Aboriginal communities beyond the cities have LES needs across the spectrum of domains examined in this study, but often find themselves physically cut off from services because of their remote location and inadequate communications and transportation infrastructure.

However, in both instances, more research is needed to gain a fuller and clearer understanding of this landscape.

### **Challenges to LES Service Delivery**

#### *Changes in Outlook and Direction*

*Part One* of the report outlined the funding landscape in which LES service delivery has had to operate in the past few years. It is marked by significant cuts in federal support and a shift in federal funding priorities away from individuals, families and communities towards employment-related programs and initiatives. In *Part Two*, informants interviewed for the study provided their perspective on these developments. What emerged from the latter was a mixed assessment of the current situation. Thus, while the federal funding rollback of recent years was generally noted and almost all informants appeared to share the opinion and concern that more cuts will come in the future, the mood and outlook divided strikingly along two broad lines: community-based literacy provider groups on the ground, and large umbrella organizations representing literacy and adult education providers.

On the ground, literacy provider groups are worried about the impact of a reorientation of

government priorities and dwindling financial support on their ability to serve Level 1 literacy learners, i.e. those in need of basic literacy, their traditional clientele, whose numbers, they are convinced, have remained unchanged in the past two decades. At the top, however, the umbrella organizations appear to have embraced the challenge of linking LES to a wide variety of domains, including the workplace, health, finances, and citizenship, and finding money from new sources. To this end, they are forging ahead optimistically with new projects and funding arrangements with a number of federal departments, as well as partnerships with provincial agencies and the private sector. It is too early to know the results of these initiatives.

#### *Better Communication, Stronger Alignment of LES Agenda*

The literature scan suggests that the needs of English speakers in Quebec may extend across all the literacy domains, beginning with basic literacy. Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it would seem that, to address these needs effectively requires both an assessment of the particular LES vulnerabilities of the various groups that make up the Anglophone population, and more communication and coherence between the grassroots literacy providers and the umbrella organizations. They need a common understanding of what they are each trying to achieve, whom they are or should be servicing, and how they can work together to ensure that no one in need, regardless of literacy level or personal goals, is left out.

#### *Capacity*

In addition, basic capacity problems faced by the grassroots appear to warrant greater attention. The issues include fewer, busier and over-stretched volunteers, a lack of support staff, insufficient time, energy and resources to participate in activities promoted by the umbrella organizations (networking, fund-raising, outreach, meetings, information and training sessions, etc...), and limited access to technologies (computers, Internet, etc...).

#### *Family Literacy*

Besides Level 1 learners, families outside Montreal appear to be one of the sub-populations among Quebec's English speakers whose needs are not being adequately addressed. The two strands of research informing this study suggest that, despite their traditional mission and sphere of activity (as reflected on their web sites), literacy councils are actually doing much less family literacy than previously, and school boards are doing little to reach adults. The literature scan suggested that federal funding cuts and the shift in federal focus towards employability were probably responsible for this development. Informants, however, added another dimension to this picture. They noted that there has been a drop in demand for family literacy in recent years, seemingly because immigrant parents, whose children are required by Bill 101 to attend French school, are opting to participate in French family literacy programs. This situation is a largely Montreal phenomenon.

What does this mean, though, for English-speaking families in the regions whose children are destined for the English educational sector? Is the drop in demand in Montreal responsible for fewer services in the regions, regardless of need? In this connection, the activities of the Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are significant. Many of these centres offer family literacy, but their long term funding is unclear at this point and government (federal and provincial) support for family literacy in particular is small and apparently shrinking.

#### *CLCs*

The role of the CLCs in the LES landscape seems to be shifting. On paper the CLCs appear to also support adults in the area of basic literacy, essential skills, and health literacy. However, according to informants, CLCs have shifted almost entirely to services aimed at adolescents and families with young children. Partly this may be a natural consequence of the centres being housed largely in elementary and high schools. At the same time, local funding, on which the centres will have to rely

heavily if not exclusively once federal funding is withdrawn (as is scheduled to happen in 2013) has come mostly from municipalities and private donors interested in programs to improve school retention among youth and bolster their work prospects, as well as in activities that foster community. As a result, adults with LES needs are increasingly being left out of the equation, according to what the researcher on this study was told.

### *Bi-literacy*

The call for bi-literacy is growing among English speakers concerned about their future prospects in Quebec, especially young adults in the regions. This finding emerged from several recent surveys conducted by other organizations and was strongly echoed by informants interviewed for this project. Parallel to English speakers' desire for stronger French is a desire among French speakers to improve their English language and literacy skills, a trend that was noted specifically in interviews with literacy workers.

The challenge here appears to be tied partly to funding formulas that are too rigid to meet a clearly expressed need, according to informants. Federal funding to support English as the official minority language in Quebec cannot be used to support French language or literacy — even though, according to informants, the employability of English-speaking adults in Quebec today and, therefore, their ability to remain in the province and contribute to the community's vitality, absolutely requires them to be bi-literate, i.e. able to read and write well in French (not just understand and speak). The challenge is compounded in majority French regions, where the need for bi-literacy is perceived to be particularly acute because of a lack of FSL opportunities for Anglophones.

## **Gaps in our Knowledge of LES Needs and Services**

### *School Boards*

During this study, researchers were unable to obtain data (either published, or from informants) on the number and language-literacy proficiency profile of literacy learners currently served by the English school boards, which are responsible for the formal (non-community based) English adult education sector in Quebec. Given that the boards are the single largest literacy service providers in the province (followed by community-based local literacy councils, which work with a much smaller number of learners per year), the lack of such data leaves unanswered questions. It is difficult to properly assess the degree to which the formal adult education sector is responding to the actual LES needs of the various groups that make up the Anglophone population, or how effectively.

### *Literacy and ESL*

Nevertheless, the available data – limited as it is – and comments by informants suggest a possible blurring of the lines between literacy and ESL in terms of the service provided to literacy learners at the adult education centres. The issue is worth exploring more closely, given the fuzzy boundaries between these two learning domains on the one hand, and the often complex language and literacy needs of adults, particularly immigrants. In the French school board sector, the picture is somewhat different because combined FSL-French Literacy classes are offered to immigrants, which is not the case in the English sector, at least not formally. It might be useful to look at the French model more closely, as well as the clients it serves.

Another issue requiring attention is whether the English adult education sector is hampered in its ability to provide adequate LES services to the Anglophone population by funding formulas and administrative controls set by MELs which, according to informants, are tighter than in the French sector. This might simply be a matter of perception, but again, a closer look at the French sector seems to be warranted.

### *Aboriginal Population*

A large number of Canadian studies and surveys indicate that English-speaking members of Aboriginal communities have extensive LES needs. Although few of these studies have focused on Aboriginal Anglophones living in Quebec, there appears to be an urgent need for LES support in all its dimensions, particularly basic literacy and essential skills to combat the relatively low educational attainment and exceptionally high unemployment rate among Aboriginal youth, as well as family and health literacy services to assist women, mothers, and especially young children.

Here too, more work is needed to determine the extent to which these needs are being addressed. Very few of the literacy groups interviewed indicated that they served Aboriginal learners, although they all expressed a desire to help. According to informants, providing LES support to Aboriginal communities is difficult because of a number of constraints, including: complex funding issues on reserves, the unsuitability of traditional literacy courses in a context where a more holistic-life skills approach would be more appropriate, and the physical isolation of many communities. These constraints and possible ways to overcome them need to be investigated.

In urban areas, Native Friendship Centres are working to strengthen the skills of Aboriginal youth, adults and families by offering a variety of LES services, but believe that they could do more with better funding and more partnerships. Other community-based organizations in cities that serve the Aboriginal population also offer LES services to a certain extent, but very little is known about these services as it was not feasible during this study to meet with representatives or clients of these groups. Beyond the cities, on reserve, where most of Quebec's aboriginal population still resides, Aboriginal school boards have a role to play in LES service delivery, but more could be learned by speaking to school board administrators, teachers and students.

### *Immigrants, Visible Minorities, Disadvantaged Populations*

Similarly, LES needs and services connected to the growing immigrant component of the Anglophone population require further enquiry. The literature scan suggests that needs are present, but found very little that might tell us about how these are being addressed beyond the adult education centres (about which this study learned relatively little in terms of numbers currently being served, profile of learners, pedagogical approaches) and the local literacy councils. The research identified a number of community-based groups, not literacy groups, (mostly in Montreal), catering to a variety of needs, including LES, among English-speaking immigrants, as well as members of cultural communities, visible minorities and disadvantaged or marginalized populations. But, the extent to which these groups incorporate LES into their services, the number of clients they serve, the sources of their funding and support remain questions to be explored.

Additional study of this sector is all the more important because the literature suggests that community-based organizations that help people with pressing every-day needs related to employment, integration, housing, health, etc... and groups tied to cultural communities have the potential to "connect" with the hard-to-reach, perhaps more effectively than educational institutions/organizations, and government agencies and bureaucracies. People who struggle with literacy have always been an elusive group, but they are generally best reached through other people and organizations that they trust and that can meet multiple needs simultaneously.

### *Workplace LES*

This study was unable to determine the extent to which workplace LES programs in Quebec are offered, if at all, in English. It is even unclear whether a need for such programs actually exists given that Anglophones appear to be preoccupied with the strength of their French. For some recent immigrants, particularly for those who say that they are perfectly bilingual, it is felt that their problems in getting a job may stem from the fact that they are not francophones. The issue was not

addressed in the literature, as far as could be ascertained, nor were the informants who participated in interviews able to shed any light on this area. On a more general level, there appears to be a split in opinion as to the necessity of workplace LES as opposed to programs that help people address a broader spectrum of needs, i.e. in the workplace and beyond, in their capacity not only as workers, but also as individuals, members of families and communities, citizens.

### *Life Skills*

In this connection, literacy workers expressed an appreciation of life skills, which are reflected in the OECD's DeSeCo framework of competencies on which MELS's compétences de base and adult education pedagogy has drawn. Aboriginal communities were also found to value life skills, as a more holistic approach to the development of individuals. While workplace LES aims to help adults perform better at their jobs, the strengthening of life skills does lead to problem-solving behaviours in individuals that help them to better manage their lives by interacting effectively with others, engaging in reflection and directing their actions in all spheres of their every-day life, including the workplace.

### *Research Gaps*

Our survey of the available studies and reports on LES issues facing adult English-speaking Quebecers has underlined that much remains to be investigated in this area. In many instances, the data is simply not available to ascertain the severity of the issues that are hinted by current research findings.

We have compiled a list of research gaps that emerged from our scan of available reports [see Table 9]. This list of research gaps is not exhaustive. While our review may not have identified all LES-related issues that are important for English-speaking communities in Quebec, it is our hope that this report will serve as the basis for further inquiry as well as for community engagement.

**Table 9: List of Research Gaps**

- Unemployment: it is difficult to get data on the unemployment levels of aboriginals, immigrants, visible minorities and the Black community in Quebec. For all three groups, there is lack of data by language.
- The report published by Quebec’s Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity in 2003 using data from Statistics Canada’s monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS) does not capture the proportion of individuals with low literacy among working-age unemployed adults.
- The English language needs at work of Anglophone immigrants, or of Anglophones generally, do not figure in official documents collected for this study.
- Training: We found no data on manpower training in Quebec that includes numbers that are broken down by language.
- A 2009 TRÉAQFP survey showed that only 10% of school boards in Quebec do not offer adult education and/or professional training services to workplaces. (CCL 2009c: 7). We do not know how much of this 10% is made up of the English sector.
- It is unclear whether the English school boards, in the adult educational services, have prioritized learning connected to jobs and professions at the expense of more general LES instruction
- Language proficiency of immigrants: We do not know the extent “to which low literacy scores of recent immigrants reflect a lack of proficiency in English or French, rather than low literacy in their mother tongue”. (HRSDC and SC 2005: 65, 70).
- We do not know what type of background information English school boards gather on allophone students, and, if they do, to what extent they tailor literacy classes to the varied needs.
- LES activities in school boards serving Aboriginal communities: There is limited data on the activities in the area of literacy (or LES more broadly) of the three school boards serving Aboriginal communities (Kativik, for the Inuit in Nunavik; Cree, for the Cree in northern Quebec; and Littoral, for the Lower North-Shore region, from Kegaska to Blanc-Sablon, including Anticosti Island).
- This study could not ascertain how much of the Aboriginal workforce is served in English by the Canada-Quebec Agreement on Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction.
- We could not gather more information from libraries which have served LES needs in various times in various regions.
- The number of community organizations serving the literacy needs of English speakers requires further investigation as it appears that a significant number of them are involved in some way.
- The types of LES services possibly provided by churches and other religious institutions requires further investigation.



## APPENDIX I

### INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

#### 1. Introduction

*\*Check for any questions about Consent Forms, assure that they are signed and faxed or mailed back if interviewed by phone.*

*\*Explain difference between a qualitative and a journalistic interview. No direct quotes.*

*\*Explain the Literature search of research stretching back to 2000.*

Project is meant to deepen knowledge of the Literacy needs of Anglophone Adults to better meet the needs and challenges they are facing. This interview can help give us a sense of a decade of patterns and changes in Literacy services.

This project is also important in its efforts to include the issues faced by Aboriginal and Immigrant groups as they engage with English Literacy needs.

#### 2. Your Group Activities

Over the last 10 years, kinds of patterns or changes have you noticed?

- Financial
- Political
- Demographic
- Organizationally?

Any issues faced in needs, finding recruits or changes in your clients?

Are you growing in size? Is this a period of optimism or concern?

Any different or new partnerships for your organization?

#### 3. Definitions of Literacy Changing

We are interested in changes in the definition of Literacy. The inability to read a newspaper, or illiteracy as target, seems to have changed to include essential skills, media skills, health, financial, environmental literacy. I am interested in your reflections on this topic.

Are you seeing any changes in the definition of literacy at play? Why do you think it might be happening?

Are you seeing definitions changing at funding levels – fed, prov, municipal?

There seems to be a drop in Family Literacy offerings. Any idea why? Know of any other groups picking it up?

Do you see rise in requests for Bi-Literacy? How is competence in both tongues, English and French, measured?

More clients at level 1, 2, 3 etc.? Any changes in the ages of those levels?

Any differences in which levels are getting funding?

#### **4. Definition of Anglophone Changing**

Is the Demographic you serve is changing?

Do you use of terms ‘Anglophone’ vs. ‘English-Speaking’ or another term in funding applications or general information? Why difference?

Any changes seen in the testing for needs and or the meeting of needs?

#### **5. Immigrant Groups**

Is there a sense of cultural profiles changing – who is coming?

Why are clients coming – education, family, job, life learning?

Do you see a change in needing Literacy, ESL, etc. or blendings?

Is funding for literacy sometimes tied to employability programs? Any cut-offs issues?

Are immigrant needs changing how your group meets client needs, recruits or retains?

#### **5. Aboriginal Participation**

Many First Nation and Aboriginal communities are facing language challenges. Are you working with any of them?

If yes, what worked? The types of funding arrangements? Training vs. Service Delivery?

If no, any reasons why not?

#### **6. Regions vs. Urban or Political Patterns**

The 2003 Stats Can reported on big disparities in literacy in Quebec regions but hard to tell where or what might be happening.

Any differences seen in literacy needs, projects in regions? Urban areas?

Any differences in funding or political process at different levels?

### **7. Communication Patterns**

How do people get referred to your services? Which networks work best?

Ever use InfoAlpha? Who is most common community partner for you?

Who do people go to if you can't help them?

Are partnerships growing or changing? Role of the new CLCs?

How do people publicize – Website, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

### **8. General Outlook**

Is this period of growth or retreat or status quo going to be changing soon?

Biggest challenges in future?

### **9. Any questions you would like answered by this kind of research?**

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Anglophone Literacy Needs Project Focus Groups**

#### **Discussion Guide**

##### **1.0 Introduction to Group Procedures (10 minutes)**

Welcome to the Group. We want to hear your opinions and impressions. Not what you think other people think. This is a chance to reflect on your personal experience delivering literacy services to the Anglophone community.

Feel free to agree or disagree. Even if you are just one person in this group that describes a certain experience you could represent many other service providers outside the room.

You don't always have to direct your comments towards me, feel free to exchange ideas and perspectives with each other too.

You are being taped to help me write the report but as you have seen in the Ethics Protocol you signed on arrival, it will be destroyed one year after the report is presented in May. The little clock here is to help me keep us on time as we have an hour together. I may scribble a note or two down to remind myself to ask you something that came to mind.

Let's go around the table so that you can tell us a bit about yourself, such as how long you have worked in the field of literacy and the region you work in.

##### **2.0 General Attitudes to Definitions of Literacy. (10 minutes)**

I am interested in your impression of some of the trends and patterns in the delivery of literacy services to your communities over the last decade.

First, I would like you to break into pairs for a minute or so and discuss what you think the definition of literacy is based on the type of literacy programs you deliver. Then we will get each team to tell us what they came up with.

Tell me what you think literacy is?

##### **3.0 Definition of the Nine Essential Skills of Literacy (10 minutes)**

I am going to pass around a sheet with a definition that HRSDC describes as the Nine Essential Skills "needed for work, learning and life." I would like you to read them over.

Please rank, from lowest to highest, with nine as lowest and one as highest, the aspects of literacy that you feel that you are successfully delivering through your programs in your communities.

There is a space for you to note any skills or aspects of literacy perhaps are being left out or you wish you could offer because there seems to be a demand.

I will give you a couple of minutes to write your responses – no need for names – and then we will discuss. I will collect the sheets at the end.

How many of you had Reading Text as number one? Document use? Numeracy? Writing? Oral Communication? Working with Others? Continuous Learning? Thinking Skills? Computer Use?

Any aspects that you wish you were delivering more effectively?

Do you think, looking back, that some aspects were more emphasized than others? Or maybe new ones put on the list?

Looking to the future, will there be some skills that will become more important than others? Will it stay the same list of nine skills?

#### **4.0 Reflecting on Patterns of Change in Literacy Service Delivery (10 minutes)**

You have all been directly involved in the delivery of services for a number of years. Do you get the feeling that the definition of literacy has changed over the last decade? In which ways?

Probe: Increased use of computer usage? Social Media?

Probe: Have you encountered a rise demand in Health, Media, Financial or perhaps Computer Literacy needs?

Probe: Workplace Literacy Programs?

Probe: Collaborations with new anglo service partners? Francophone partners? Immigrant groups? Aboriginal groups?

Probe: Funding Changes? Increasing or decreasing?

#### **5.0 Reflecting on Patterns of Change in Clientele (10 minutes)**

You have been working with clients one on one or in groups. I would now like you to reflect a bit on some of the changes you might be seeing in the clients and referrals you have been receiving.

First, I would like to see with a quick tour of the table, how many clients you worked with this year.

Do you feel this is increasing or decreasing over the last few years?

How many of you were working with referrals from other groups or people who came to see your group so to speak?

When you sit down and work out their goals or work plan, what usually brings them in to see you?

Probe: work skills, family needs, personal development?

Probe: are you seeing them at proficiency levels of zero or more like one or two?  
Would you describe most of your clientele as traditional Anglophones? Do you think that group is declining or increasing amongst your clientele?

Are any of you seeing recent immigrants, aboriginal or francophone clients coming to see you? Is this an increase or decrease in their need for service?

#### **6.0 General Comments (10 min)**

We are coming to the end of our discussions, it has been very interesting.

I want to have one more go around the table to ask you what you think are the greatest challenges facing the delivery of literacy services to your communities?

And any suggestions for changes in direction?

I want to thank you for all your time and participation. Do you have any questions?

Thank you.

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\* Items **in bold** have been summarized for this project and are posted online at: [http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/sites/default/files/ULFLNAAQ\\_Rsrch\\_Smries\\_08\\_2011.pdf](http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/sites/default/files/ULFLNAAQ_Rsrch_Smries_08_2011.pdf)