



Consultative Study of Poverty Reduction Strategies

Colleges and Institutes Canada's Submission to
The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and
Social Development and the Status of Persons
with Disabilities (HUMA)

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Colleges and Institutes Canada is the national and international voice of Canada's publicly supported colleges, institutes and polytechnics. We work with industry and social sectors to train 1.5 million learners of all ages and backgrounds at campuses serving over 3,000 urban, rural and remote communities in Canada. The Association operates in 29 countries via 13 offices around the world.

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It is shocking that in 2016, one in seven Canadians live in poverty.¹ A variety of measures need to be taken to address this urgent problem. Education is internationally recognized as one of the most powerful ways of reducing poverty, mitigating the factors that contribute to it and sustaining broad-based economic growth and prosperity in the long-term. Colleges, institutes, cégeps and polytechnics work with community organizations, governments and businesses to provide access to post-secondary education, including essential skills, adult upgrading and tailored language training programs, that close skill gaps for vulnerable groups, enhancing the capacity of more Canadians to fully participate in the economy.

As the national voice of 130 publicly supported colleges, institutes, cégeps and polytechnics, Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) welcomes HUMA's consultative study on poverty reduction strategies and is pleased to provide input on behalf of our members. Our members actively contribute to reducing poverty in Canada, training 1.5 million learners of all ages and backgrounds at campuses serving over 3,000 urban, rural and remote communities across Canada. CICan and its members are committed to driving

Canadian prosperity as global leaders in applied education and partnered innovation, to advance the goals of reducing economic and social disparity and accelerating inclusive, broad-based growth.

CICan's submission relates to theme two of the committee's study: Education, Training and Employment. It identifies how colleges and institutes approach these issues and highlights innovative practices that are making a difference to individuals and communities across Canada. Specifically, this submission provides policy recommendations on three key areas:

- 1. providing access to higher education for vulnerable groups;**
- 2. skills training and retraining; and**
- 3. English and French as a Second Language**

¹Canada Without Poverty: <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/> based on StatsCan data <http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26?lang=eng&id=1110015>

1. Providing access to higher education for vulnerable groups

Colleges and institutes are the main access point to post-secondary education and skills development training for vulnerable learners. They play a vital role in ensuring Canadians from all walks of life are “employment ready” with skills to build meaningful careers which provide long-term economic security. Across the country, our member institutions provide education and skills training for the marginalized and the unemployed or under-employed, including Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, newcomers and those at risk of job displacement.

For vulnerable learners, the chances of success are greatly enhanced by the provision of wrap-around supports and services. Colleges and institutes offer a wide range of support services which are key to supporting vulnerable groups in their access to, and persistence in, education and training programs, as well as facilitating their transitions into employment. These support services include:

- Academic advising and counselling;
- Peer tutoring and mentorships;
- Accommodations for students with disabilities;
- Financial assistance and financial literacy training;
- Indigenous-specific support services through counselling from Elders and ensuring indigenous cultures are reflected on campuses;
- Targeted support services for immigrant students, including second language supports and intercultural training;
- Personal supports such as access to transportation, housing and daycare; and
- Career and employment counselling, and job search support.

Due to institutional funding constraints, the ability to provide the full range of wrap-around supports is inconsistent across the country. Given the federal government’s mandate to support Indigenous education within the context of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a key measure to enhance support for Indigenous learners is to provide funding to increase reconciliation programming at post-secondary institutions.

For vulnerable groups, access to financial assistance continues to be a key barrier to their full participation in post-secondary education. For example, insufficient funding through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) limits opportunities for First Nations and Inuit students to pursue post-secondary programs.

CICan recommends that the federal government increase access to higher education for vulnerable groups through the following targeted measures:

- Increase financial assistance through the Canada Student Loans Program targeted for those with low-incomes, persons with disabilities and for Non-Status and Métis people, including more flexibility to access part-time and short programs;
- Increase allocations to the PSSSP administered by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to ensure that all eligible First Nations, Inuit and Métis students have access to funding;
- Invest \$26 million to support reconciliation programming at post-secondary institutions.

2. Skills training and upgrading

One in five working-age Canadians lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, and one in seven do not have sufficient qualifications for their current job.² Essential skills development is key to improving employability. Business and industry groups such as the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business confirm that employers see an urgent need to improve the essential skills of their employees in order to remain competitive.

This is especially important for employees from vulnerable groups such as those who may not have completed high school, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities and newcomers to Canada. As leaders in essential skills development, colleges and institutes can contribute significantly to addressing these skills challenges, in partnership with employers.

Colleges and institutes have proven that even small investments in short turnaround training interventions can have a big impact on improving employee performance and company productivity. CIGan research has shown that after 24 to 40 hours of essential skills training and individual coaching, students and workers had sustained learning gains and increased motivation even when tested six months later.³

Essential skills serve as a common language among workers, employers, educators and service providers. They include literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, use of digital technology, teamwork and continuous learning. They help people find and secure jobs, and enable them to adapt and succeed in the workplace.⁴ Furthermore, the advent of disruptive technologies that challenge the status quo, requires a re-thinking and re-tooling of the skills needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

An innovative approach to financing the training required to increase essential skills levels for unemployed or displaced Canadians is CIGan's Essential Skills Social Finance Project (ESSF). As the first social-finance project of its kind in Canada, the project is pushing the boundaries of social

innovation and impact investing through a collaborative partnership between the federal government, led by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), CIGan, four college service delivery partners in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario and Quebec, and private investors. The goal of this project is to generate private investment for a public good. CIGan is leveraging the principles of social finance through Social Impact Bonds (SIB) by raising upfront capital from private investors looking for a social and financial return. The project is testing whether a SIB model combined with a 'pay-for-performance' element is an effective way to increase the essential skills levels.

CIGan recommends that the federal government improve skills training and upgrading through the following targeted measures:

- Invest in training partnerships between colleges and institutes and employers to improve the skills and competencies of working-age Canadians and reskill those impacted by job dislocation due to rapidly changing technology and automation.
- Fund a program to support the training and certification of essential skills trainers at colleges and institutes, to increase the number of trainers and improve their capacity to provide targeted outreach to disadvantaged youth.
- With the renewal of the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS), strengthen the capacity of Indigenous organizations supported by ASETS funding to improve essential skills training and career counselling.

²If at First You Don't Succeed – Toward an Adult Education and Training Strategy for Canada. Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) Study, September 2015, pg.19.

³ACCC National Framework for Developing Essential Skills – Action-Research Brief. March 2013.

⁴State of Literacy and Essential Skills Field, Canadian Literacy and Learning Network, 2012 (pg. 48).

2. SKILLS TRAINING AND UPGRADING *CONTINUED*

More must also be done to strengthen skills upgrading in northern communities. An example of an innovative approach to skills upgrading is the Northern Adult Basic Education (NABE) program that has been in place in the three territorial colleges since 2011. This successful program partnered with communities across Canada's North to identify their specific training needs. NABE's results speak for themselves:

- in **Yukon**, reliance on social assistance decreased by 30% for those who completed the program;
- in the **Northwest Territories**, an additional 30% of students secured employment after completing the NABE program and reliance on income assistance decreased by 9%;
- In **Nunavut**, there was a 76% increase in the number of enrollments of qualified students registering in apprenticeship programs during the NABE program, as compared to the period prior to NABE.

NABE's partnered, community-based approach to poverty reduction has made significant contributions to breaking the cycle of poverty for many in Canada's North. The NABE

program will conclude at the end of March 2017 and we are concerned that the progress made in providing skills development training in the North, with its proven record of poverty reduction, will be lost at this critical time.

CICan recommends that the federal government improve skills training and upgrading in Canada's North through the following targeted measure:

Fund the Pan-Territorial Framework for Innovation and Training (PFIT), building on the success of the NABE program, to provide innovative adult basic education that supports the economic development of indigenous and northern communities, and expand this program model to colleges and institutes serving other northern, rural and remote communities across Canada.

3. Language training for newcomers

The ability to communicate effectively in either French or English is a key factor in the success of newcomers to Canada. In 2015, the unemployment rate of landed immigrants who have been in Canada for 5 years or less was almost double that of the total population.⁵ Access to timely language training reduces the likelihood that newcomers will be unemployed in the long-term and rely on social assistance. With their strengthened language skills, newcomers to Canada can more easily and quickly integrate into Canadian society and participate in the labour market.

Colleges and institutes are primary providers of second language training for newcomers, with more than half offering the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, as well as occupation-specific second language training and English/French for academic purposes programs. The LINC program provides basic and intermediate level English training for adult newcomers to Canada and is the key stepping stone for newcomers to build the foundational language skills needed to succeed in Canada.

Recent funding cuts to LINC programs in some provinces have had a negative impact on newcomers, forcing many onto lengthy waitlists. CIGan member institutions have reported on the challenges they are faced with in turning away newcomers seeking language training through LINC. In this context, federal government plans to increase immigration levels in 2017 to 300,000 are a cause for concern when it comes to ensuring the provision of timely language training for newcomers.

CIGan recommends that the federal government strengthens language training for newcomers through the following targeted measure:

- Ensure that the LINC program funding levels are adequate so that newcomers to Canada can access language training in a timely manner.

CIGan commends HUMA for undertaking this study to identify strategies to reduce poverty in Canada. Our recommendations reflect the broad range of education programs that colleges and institutes offer, the diversity of learners they serve, and their close partnerships with industry and community organizations. CIGan looks forward to engaging further with HUMA on these issues to increase access to higher education for vulnerable groups, improve essential skills training and ensure that newcomers to Canada have timely access to language training.

As Canada prepares to celebrate its 150th anniversary we have an historic opportunity to take decisive and strategic action to enable vulnerable Canadians to lift themselves out of poverty. We can and must do more to reduce the poverty gap. Colleges and institutes stand ready to contribute to building a more equitable, inclusive Canada.

⁵Statistics Canada data 2015: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/labor90a-eng.htm>

Member Colleges and Institutes



Colleges and Institutes Canada
Collèges et instituts Canada

Yukon

- Yukon College

Northwest Territories

- Aurora College
- Collège Nordique Francophone*

Nunavut

- Nunavut Arctic College

British Columbia

- British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)
- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Collège Éducentre*
- College of New Caledonia
- College of the Rockies
- Douglas College
- Emily Carr University of Art + Design
- Justice Institute of British Columbia
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Langara College
- Native Education College**
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) **
- North Island College
- Northern Lights College
- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College
- Selkirk College
- Thompson Rivers University
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University (VIU)

Alberta

- Alberta College of Art + Design
- Bow Valley College
- Grande Prairie Regional College (GPRC)
- Keyano College
- Lakeland College
- Lethbridge College
- Medicine Hat College
- NorQuest College
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)
- Northern Lakes College
- Olds College
- Portage College
- Red Deer College
- SAIT Polytechnic: Southern Alberta Institute of Technology

Saskatchewan

- Carlton Trail College
- Collège Mathieu*
- Cumberland College
- Dumont Technical Institute**
- Great Plains College
- North West College
- Northlands College
- Parkland College
- Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies**
- Saskatchewan Polytechnic
- Southeast College

Manitoba

- Assiniboine Community College
- École technique et professionnelle, Université de Saint-Boniface*
- Red River College
- University College of the North
- Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology

Ontario

- Algonquin College
- Cambrian College
- Canadore College
- Centennial College
- Collège Boréal*
- Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning
- Confederation College
- Durham College
- Fanshawe College
- First Nations Technical Institute**
- Fleming College
- George Brown College
- Georgian College
- Humber College Institute of Technology & Advanced Learning
- Kenjgewin Teg Educational Institute (or KTEI)**
- La Cité*
- Lambton College
- Loyalist College
- The Michener Institute of Education at UHN
- Mohawk College
- Niagara College
- Northern College
- Sault College
- Seneca College
- Sheridan College
- St. Clair College
- St. Lawrence College

Quebec

- Cégep André-Laurendeau*
- Cégep de Chicoutimi*
- Cégep de Jonquière*
- Cégep de l'Abitibi-Témiscamingue*
- Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles*
- Cégep de La Pocatière*
- Cégep de Sainte-Foy*
- Cégep de Saint-Félicien*
- Cégep de Saint-Laurent*
- Cégep de Sept-Îles*
- Cégep de Sherbrooke*
- Cégep de Trois-Rivières*
- Cégep de Victoriaville*
- Cégep Édouard-Montpetit*
- Cégep Garneau*
- Cégep Limoilou*
- Cégep Marie-Victorin*
- Cégep régional de Lanaudière*
- Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu*
- Champlain Regional College
- Collège André Grasset*
- Collège de Maisonneuve *
- Collège LaSalle*
- Collège Lionel-Groulx*
- Collège Montmorcency*
- Collège Shawinigan*
- Cégep Heritage College
- Cégep de Rimouski*
- Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec*
- John Abbott College
- TAV College*
- Vanier College

Newfoundland and Labrador

- Centre for Nursing Studies
- College of the North Atlantic
- Fisheries and Marine Institute of Memorial University of Newfoundland

New Brunswick

- Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick (CCNB)*
- New Brunswick College of Craft and Design
- New Brunswick Community College (NBCC)

Prince Edward Island

- Collège de l'île*
- Holland College

Nova Scotia

- Université Sainte-Anne*
- Dalhousie Agricultural Campus, Dalhousie University
- Nova Scotia Community College

Associates

- Association des collèges privés du Québec*
- Association québécoise de pédagogie collégiale*
- Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC)
- BC Colleges (BCC)
- Canadian Association of Diploma in Agriculture Programs (CADAP)
- Canadian Association of College and University Student Services (CACUSS)
- Colleges Ontario
- Fédération des cégeps*
- Forum for International Trade Training (FITT)
- Tra Vinh University

* *Francophone*

** *Indigenous*

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