

SECTION 3

An Historical Chronology of the National Literacy Secretariat

September 1984 **Progressive Conservatives form government**

June 1986 **David Crombie, Secretary of State**

- October 1, 1986 In the Speech from the Throne, the federal government pledged to establish a national literacy initiative to:
- ...work with provinces, the private sector, and voluntary organizations to develop resources to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the pre-requisite for participation in our advanced economy.*
- 1987 Work begins within the Department of Secretary of State on the literacy issue.
- 1987 The Cedar Glen Declaration: drafted by a coalition of Canadian organizations concerned about *illiteracy* in Canada.
- September 1987 *Broken Words* released, containing articles about literacy that originally appeared in Canadian newspapers. While the survey provided the first real statistic about the state of literacy in the country, interviews with more than 100 literacy workers and learners also put a human face on a problem that affects one in four adults.
- March 1988 David Crombie, Secretary of State, announced \$1 million in literacy funding and creates what was to become the National Literacy Secretariat.

March 1988 **Lucien Bouchard, Secretary of State**

November 1988 **Progressive Conservatives re-elected**

CASE STUDY PERIOD 1 Foundation Building (1988–1995)

1988–1989 First full year of the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Department of the Secretary of State. The mandate was to facilitate the involvement of all sectors of society in creating a more literate Canada. Funding was \$21 million per year.

September 8, 1988 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney officially launched the National Literacy Secretariat at Frontier College.

January 1989 **Gerry Weiner, Secretary of State**

1990 United Nations International Literacy Year (ILY).

1991 Statistics Canada releases Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA), the first literacy survey to assess real life activities.

April 1991 **Gerry Weiner, Minister of Multiculturalism and
Citizenship**

1991 National Literacy Secretariat is moved to Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.

1993 National Literacy Secretariat is moved to Human Resources Development Canada—budget was cut by 10% that year.

1993 In its Throne Speech and in its first budget, the Government signalled the importance it attaches to literacy. A promised restoration of funding to the NLS was accomplished.

October 1993 **Liberals form government November 1993**
Senator Joyce Fairbairn named Minister with
Special Responsibility for Literacy

1994 National Literacy Secretariat is given responsibility for the literacy portion of The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) with a budget of \$10 million over five years. With the ongoing responsibility for the Literacy Corps, a \$1 million per year program and the restoration of its budget, the total NLS budget is \$22.3 million per year.

January 1995 Policy Conversation on Workplace and Workforce Literacy held.

1995 The first evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat is produced (Norpark Consulting).

December 1995 *Literacy, Economy, and Society*, the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey, is released.

CASE STUDY PERIOD 2
Development and Demonstration (1996–2000)

September 12, 1996 *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada* is released providing the Canadian IALS data.

October 23, 1996 The Minister of Finance announced a 100% GST rebate on books purchased including those purchased by literacy organizations.

1996 *Working in Concert* describes the NLS objective as: *Promote literacy as an essential component for a learning society and to make Canada’s social, economic, and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills.*

February 18, 1997 Minister of Finance announces a 30% increase to the NLS budget for family literacy, workplace literacy, and support mechanisms.

June 1997

**Liberals are re-elected
Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Human Resources
Development**

1997 National Literacy Secretariat no longer reports directly to the Minister with Special Responsibility for Literacy and is now under Minister of Human Resources Development.

August 1999

**Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources
Development**

January 2000 The “Grants and Contributions Crisis” begins.

March 2000 Lessons Learned on Adult Literacy, Policies, Programmes, and Practices published by HRDC.

November 2000

Liberals re-elected

CASE STUDY PERIOD 3 Program Change (2001–2006)

2002 Second evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat (The Governance Network); released in 2004.

2003 Increases made of \$1.5 million a year for 3 years (later becomes ongoing) to the NLS for adult work-related literacy to be part of the Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy Initiative (ESWLI). NLS also received an

additional \$1.5 million for a total of \$7.4 million over 5 years for family literacy, and for minority language communities. This was announced as part of the Official Languages Action Plan.

2003 National Literacy Secretariat now part of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

June 2003 The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities releases *Raising Adult Literacy Skills The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*.

December 2003 Joe Volpe, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

June 2004 Liberals re-elected

**January 2005 Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development
Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of State (Human Resources Development), is assigned lead responsibility for literacy**

February 23, 2005 Minister of Finance commits \$30 million over the next three years, to the National Literacy Secretariat.

“Canada has very high rates of post-secondary education attainment. There remains, however, a relatively large number of working age Canadians who lack the literacy skills required for success in the knowledge-based economy. In recognition of the importance of improving the literacy levels of Canadians, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC) will be working with provinces, territories and stakeholders on the development of a comprehensive strategy in support of literacy and essential skills development. As an initial step, Budget 2005 invests \$30 million over three years to enhance the National Literacy Secretariat’s

(NLS) capacity to further develop partnerships with provinces, territories, business and labour to foster awareness of and involvement in literacy issues and to promote learning in the workplace.”

May 2005 **Belinda Stronach, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development**

Summer 2005 Minister Bradshaw holds consultations on literacy across the country and appoints an Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills.

November 2005 *Towards a Fully Literate Canada - Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy*, the report of Minister Bradshaw’s Ministerial Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills. The advisory committee was composed of 19 representatives from the learning, business, labour, voluntary, Aboriginal, and francophone literacy communities.

January 2006 **Conservatives form government**

February 2006 **Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development**

February 2006 National Literacy Secretariat now part of Human Resources and Social Development Canada

March 23, 2006 Treasury Board approved the amalgamation of the Office of Learning Technologies, the Learning Initiatives Program and the National Literacy Program. Now known as the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP). This becomes effective April 1, 2006.

August 2006 The first Call for Proposals is launched under the new ALLESPP.

September 2006 The ALLESPP is now officially administered by the National Office of Literacy and Learning.

September 25, 2006 Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board cut NLS funding by \$17.7 million which represents the federal-provincial-territorial partnership funding stream that supported community-based literacy projects. ALLESP funds will now be used for projects dealing with literacy activities of national interest.