

## **CCCBT Feedback Letter to HRDC on *Knowledge Matters***

July 8, 2002

The Honourable Jane Stewart, PC, MP  
Minister of Human Resources Development Canada  
Place du Portage, Phase IV  
14<sup>th</sup> Floor – 140 Promenade du Portage  
Hull, Quebec  
K1A 0J9

Dear Minister Stewart,

We are writing to share our initial feedback to the federal green paper, *Knowledge Matters*.

The Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Training (CCCBT) is a national network of approximately 500 non-profit community based training organizations. CBT agencies deliver a wide range of pre-employment and training programs to clients with barriers to employment.

The CCCBT has collaborated with politicians, bureaucrats and policy- and decision-makers on many issues of common concern including responding to the federal Social Security Reform, responding to Bill C12 and to the devolution of training to the provinces several years ago.

The CCCBT is a quasi sector council for non-profit community-based training in Canada and has the overall objective of ensuring the long-term viability of the sector in Canada.

First we would like to congratulate you and your department for recognizing that too many Canadians are currently outside of the workforce. The paper also acknowledges the key importance of literacy and lifelong learning to our future success as a nation and some of the steps that need to take place to achieve stated milestones.

We agree with the need for a Canada-wide skills and learning agenda and an accessible and comprehensive adult learning system that is part of the country's infrastructure. However, there are some issues we would like to address regarding how such an agenda will be prepared and the actions that are required to meet stated goals/milestones. Below we have listed the issues we have regarding the document and the proposed consultation process.

While the paper discusses the lack of literacy skills and the divide in labour force participation rates for low-skilled and high skilled Canadians, it leaves out a number of important reasons why many other Canadians are not currently in the labour force.

1. **Clients with barriers to employment are mentioned but not adequately addressed in *Knowledge Matters*.** There are a wide range of reasons why people cannot participate fully in the labour market. Some have physical and or developmental disabilities and some have been out of the labour market for many years. Others have been incarcerated and require extensive support to assist them in re-entering the labour market. Some people have chosen to stay home and raise a family and require support to upgrade skills in an effort to re-enter the labour market. There are also the people who have long time drug or alcohol addictions and require support services to deal with addictions before they can become job ready and participate in the labour market.

Long term unemployed people require long term supports/solutions to help them develop or enhance basic employment skills such as problems solving, communication and analysis skills. We had hoped to see comprehensive coverage of these issues and ways to address them.

2. **New innovative federal policy changes are the answer to increasing labour force participation rates.** The paper discusses the need for a broad-based, accessible and comprehensive adult learning system as part of the learning infrastructure. It also states broad milestones to achieve over time. And it lists the programs and services that currently exist as well as the jurisdictional complexities that the government is must deal with. But the document fails to discuss innovative new solutions that will increase participation rates and truly break down barriers to accessing employment for clients who will not be job ready in short periods of time (4 months for example).

The Employment Benefits and Support Measures that HRDC currently uses to help Canadians re-enter the workforce were developed in 1995/96 and are outdated and less effective than they could be. Due to changes in the Employment Insurance eligibility criteria, there are fewer and fewer Canadians eligible to collect EI today than there were when the legislation was developed, and in many cases they are not eligible to participate in the skills development training. These same clients also have limited access to employment services beyond those offered to job ready clients at Employment Resource Centres.

For clients without income support, HRDC should consider using CRF funds so those clients who require longer-term interventions have access to the long-term support they require in re-entering the work force.

3. **The voluntary sector including non-profit community-based trainers have an active role to play in both designing and implementing a Canada-wide skills and learning agenda.** *Knowledge Matters* promotes knowledge and lifelong learning and mentions the voluntary sector. Twenty-five (25%) of the training in Canada is provided by community based training sector – we would have liked to see more recognition of the need for informal learning/training opportunities and the important role of the voluntary sector, including the community-based training sector. Each

year tens of thousands of Canadians improve their literacy, employment and other basic skills with the support of voluntary organizations. Voluntary organizations are effective, efficient, economical and flexible in their ability to reach learners, clients, and participants who would not likely access more formal, institutional programs.

4. **We take issue with the “invitation only” style of the consultations sessions and the open-endedness of the consultative strategy.** We are concerned that the “expert roundtables” and the “best practice workshops” referred to in the paper may not be as accessible as they need to be to ensure effectiveness and inclusiveness. We would also like to see a clear timetable and agenda for the process.

Both *Knowledge Matters* and the *Achieving Excellence* documents represent the federal government’s commitment to shifting to a culture focussed on lifelong learning. We are pleased that the federal government is bringing together Canadians including stakeholders such as the CCCBT to participate in the development of a Canada-wide and learning agenda.

The CCCBT plans to participate in the national summit in the fall as well as a range of other relevant consultation meetings on both of the above-mentioned documents.

In the near future we would like to meet with you and your staff to discuss the future of non-profit community-based trainers and their role working with HRDC.

Best regards,

Bernadette Beaupré  
Co-Chair, CCCBT

Nicole Galarneau  
Co-Chair, CCCBT