

# Literacy on the Move



October 2005

## Why Clear Language?

By Anette Chawla, Executive Director

THE MOST RECENT STATISTICS CANADA SURVEY was released in May 2005. A key finding was that there are almost as many people affected by literacy challenges now as when the last survey was done in 1994.

Yet, the information Management System tells us that, of the approximately 1.6 million Ontarians with literacy challenges, only about 46,000 adults attended LBS or OBS classes last year. Obviously, our literacy classes only reach a fraction of those who might benefit from them. Of course, this speaks to the fact that more attention should be given to improving our programs' abilities to serve learners by increasing funding and resources, and by complementing this increase with targeted public outreach. However, we all know that not everyone will come to a literacy program, no matter what we do. This may be because of their age or because they, for now, have found other ways of coping. The fact that they are not attending programs evidently does not change the underlying literacy and numeracy challenges that they might meet in their daily lives when dealing with information about government services, about their health and well being, or when participating in our democracy.

We need to find alternative ways of ensuring that all adults can live full lives at home, at work, and in the community. In future, the OLC

would like to look at how to ensure that people can find and use the information and services that they need, whether that be in print or in other forms.

The OLC has long encouraged governments to start to work broadly across all their departments to integrate literacy with other social issues. An excellent first step towards such a goal would be to mandate the use of plain language by all government institutions.

As with many of you, the OLC has dedicated itself to using clear language throughout our organization—although we sometimes struggle with making this come true in our daily work! Some years ago, we adopted a clear language policy. As part of our efforts in this area, we now try to use a 13 point font, Times New Roman, in the body of most of our work and we make our documents easier to read by including plenty of white space. We often ask our Adult Learners Network of Ontario to review what we do. Our ability to seek their advice is invaluable.

In this newsletter, we turn the spotlight on plain language. We have collected a range of articles that highlight activities and approaches that are currently happening around our province and beyond.

Enjoy!



# Using Clear Language and Design (CLAD) in a Literacy Program

By the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program

**T**HE GOAL OF CLEAR LANGUAGE AND DESIGN (CLAD) is to communicate clearly and easily. There are two main areas to consider: the design or “look” of the text and the actual language itself. Clear language is something you can practise as you speak. Clear design is something you can practise when you look at anything written or printed. Look and listen critically: was it said as simply as it could be? What made it hard to understand?

The first step is to decide who will be reading what you write. This should influence every decision you make about style and layout. Vocabulary or type style that is fine for an advanced reader may block a beginning reader. For instance, very basic readers need a lot of white space, but more advanced readers can handle dense text.

As a multi-service organization, St. Christopher House works with many different community members. We need to use CLAD principles when designing signs, purchasing resources, and creating displays or flyers. We can also use CLAD when we create policies and procedures or collective agreements with our staff. It allows the message to remain approachable and inclusive.

The Adult Literacy Program offers CLAD workshops to all of our new volunteer tutors. We look at such things as a municipal parking ticket to see if it uses Clear Language and Design to get its message across.

St. Christopher House developed a clear language and design guide to help train the people who would be tutoring adult literacy learners. The guide is also given to anyone who wants to know more about how to write clearly.

Here are some ideas for you to consider when using Clear Language:



- ▶ Use headings, bullet points, and summaries to make the main points clear.
- ▶ Plan what you want to say. Avoid too much detail. Present the important information in a logical sequence, one step at a time.
- ▶ Avoid jargon, unnecessary technical detail or abbreviations. If you need to use difficult words, include a ‘dictionary’ or ‘list of useful words’ to explain them.
- ▶ Keep sentences short. If you have only one main idea per sentence this will happen naturally.
- ▶ Try to use subject-verb-object structure. Avoid the passive voice.
- ▶ Try to make the language personal. Using ‘you’ and ‘we’ makes your writing more direct and understandable.
- ▶ Use simple punctuation. Avoid semicolons (;), colons (:), hyphens (-), or sentences broken up with too many commas.
- ▶ Use images such as photos, drawings or symbols to support your text. Aim to make the subject of your material clear at a glance, even to a non- reader. Place images that help explain the text next to, not on top of, the relevant words.

Find the *Clear Language and Design Guide* on our website at

<http://www.nald.ca/schalp/clad/clad.htm> or call **St. Christopher House—Adult Literacy Program** at (416) 539-9000.

# Measuring Readability

By Sally McBeth, Manager, Clear Language and Design, East End Literacy

THERE'S A LOT OF DEBATE AROUND USING TOOLS like Fry, SMOG, or Flesch-Kincaid to measure the reading level of a document. Some plain language professionals argue that these tools are too simplistic. They don't believe they give a true sense of how easily your target readers can absorb and act on your information.

They are right up to a point. Assessing readability is a complex exercise: it can take years to learn how to do it well. But readability tools, or metrics, do have their place. We all need a way to 'ball park' the reading level of our draft material, so that we can go back and adjust it. That's where readability metrics come in. (Find out more about readability metrics at <http://www.impact-information.com/>)

## Choosing a tool: What to watch out for

The most dangerous readability metric out there is the automatic grade level score you get at the end of a spell check in Microsoft Word. Because it's completely automated, it does some silly things, like counting decimal points as if they were periods at the end of sentences. That throws your score right out of whack. And if you are writing at a high level, look out. The tool is only programmed to measure up to Grade 12, so you won't know if the reading level is actually higher.

To get a more sophisticated, fully automated analysis, visit <http://wordscount.ezpublishing.com/beta.html>, where you can paste your text into the window and view a chart that gives your grade reading level using 10 readability metrics. I tested this article. What astounded me was that the results ranged from Grade 6 to

Grade 11, depending on the metric. I've been in this field long enough to know that this article is much closer to Grade 11, and nowhere near Grade 6.

The metric that gave me the most accurate reading was the "SMOG" index. That doesn't surprise me. While at the Canadian Public Health Association, plain language consultant Debra Huron tested all the metrics in order to choose the best one for ranking the readability of health materials. She went with SMOG.

## The compromise: A semi-automated, expanded tool on the CLAD website

That's why I chose SMOG for CLAD's website. You have to do a little more work—counting the number of long words in your sample yourself. But the website will do the SMOG calculations right away and send back your result. Follow up with the CLAD online questionnaire, which asks about other features of readability, such as

organization, tone, sentence structure, and design. Watch your grade score go up and down as you answer the questions. Those questions make you think,

so you come away with two things: a reliable measurement, and some ideas for improving your draft.

It takes 10 or 15 minutes to use the CLAD tool, but it's time well spent. It's also a great option for people who are drafting sensitive material that can't be pasted onto an external site, because nothing leaves your computer except your word count. Check it out at:

<http://www.eastendliteracy.on.ca/clearlanguageanddesign/readingeffectivenessstool/>



# Towards Clearer Communications: An FCAF Conference on Plain Language

By Tobias Keough

THE FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF), a national literacy organization, is bringing a bilingual conference called *Towards Clearer Communications*, across Canada. It focuses on the benefits of using plain language when communicating with the public. The conference is aimed at communicators from across each province's public and private sectors. To date, the FCAF has delivered the conference before 850 communicators in eight provinces.



Until recently, I have been the project manager in charge of the conferences. I am pleased to say that our conference has been well received, especially by those working for governments at all levels. Over 90% of the attendees come from the public sector.

I have been dismayed at the response from the private sector. I think this sector believes it knows their audience and their needs. This is not always the case. Many delegates were surprised to hear how many adults in Canada fall into the lowest literacy levels. They were also surprised to find out how many of these people were young, between 16 and 24, and how many of our less-literate population are part of the workforce.

Those participants from the private sector who did attend the conference have said that they appreciated the plain language tools that they learned. They felt that these tools could benefit their inner office communications as much as those messages destined for their consumers.

I would say that about 60% of the organizations who sent representatives to the conference already have some documents available in plain language. Based on the feedback following each conference, close to 100% of the organizations will now consider using plain language, when

and where appropriate, for documents destined to the public. I think that we are helping more people understand that plain language benefits us all. I also think that attendees have been appreciating a video that FCAF produced. The video offers constructive solutions on how to communicate more clearly. These solutions are proposed by four adult learners. The fact that these adults are active members of their communities, despite their low literacy skills, is one of the video's strengths. This video has been very well received. It helps to bring the issue closer to home.

The FCAF is happy that the Ontario Literacy Coalition shared its expertise at our conference in Toronto on October 4th. The series will continue with conferences in Montreal; the conference on November 3rd will be in French, on November 4th in English. A national conference, presenting new information, will be held in Ottawa on December 1, 2005.

For more information about this series of conferences, please contact Fernan Carrière of the FCAF at (613) 749-5333 or visit [www.clearercommunications.ca](http://www.clearercommunications.ca).



Tobias Keough, former project manager, and MC for the day, with the conference guest speaker, Michel Gauthier, plain language expert, from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

# What Use is Research Anyway?

By Sheila Stewart, Coordinator, Festival of Literacies

**W**HAT'S HAPPENING IN LITERACY RESEARCH? What use is research to practitioners and programs? Is there a literacy issue you want to examine? Is there something you could read that would help make things better in your program?

This past year The Festival of Literacies coordinated workshops on literacy research in Guelph, North Bay, Ottawa, and Toronto. Working with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC), AlphaPlus, and the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC), we held different kinds of workshops with titles ranging from "Reflective Practice" to "Sharing Research/Mobilizing Knowledge."

Guy Ewing, Katrina Grieve, and Ellen Long built on their knowledge of literacy research, programs, practitioners, and learners to create six three-hour workshops. They led discussions and activities, which demystified the world of research, examined where to begin, and helped practitioners value and build on what they already know. These workshops combined the practicalities of how to do research with an exploration of ethical issues. They asked us to consider how research could contribute to the literacy field if we embraced it more fully.

In many parts of Canada practitioner-research and research-in-practice have taken off. There are dynamic networks in the western provinces. "Research in Practice in Adult Literacy," begun in Alberta, explores useful literacy research: <http://www.nald.ca/ripal/>. In the United Kingdom, the worlds of practice, academia, and policy have been more closely allied than in Canada. The "Research and Practice in Adult Literacy" website at <http://www.literacy.lancs.ac.uk/rapal/> shows us the kinds of research projects that grow out of this collaboration. As we learn about literacy research and what it can do for us, we join into dialogue with practitioners who can be our allies throughout Canada and other parts of the world. We can hear the similarities in their struggles and learn



about important differences in the policies, conditions, and ideas that shape their work.

Why are we talking about research in this newsletter issue on Clear Language? Unfortunately, the world of research and theory too often uses language to obscure, rather than to speak clearly. When this happens, the academic world gathers and hoards knowledge, rather than sharing it. But, as adult educators we need all the tools available to us. Research can give us a way to think about our work anew. It can justify the reflective time we need to make our programs flourish. It can help us to be part of a bigger conversation about what literacy learning is and what programs and practitioners need to support learners.

The Festival of Literacies works with literacy practitioners to learn about and develop the connections between practice, research, policy and theory. If the Festival receives funding in October, we will do further workshops throughout the school year, across the province, both face-to-face and on-line. We want to create workshops that are appropriate to specific communities, needs, and interests. We would welcome co-facilitation with local practitioners. Give us a call at 416-923-6641, ext. 2708. For more information see [www.literacysoise.ca](http://www.literacysoise.ca).

Festival of Literacies is located at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

# Health Literacy: A Research Study

By Dr. Pat Campbell, President, Grass Roots Press

AS THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN CANADA moves towards privatization, people who have the money to pay for health care will be able to get more health services and information than people who have a limited income. If money and position in society helps to decide who gets access to health care, what does this mean for people with low literacy and little income? What does it mean to have two systems of health care in Canada while the gap between haves and have-nots gets wider? We need research to find out how these changes will affect the ability of those who have literacy challenges to get information about, and access to, health care.

Daniela Friedman and Laurie Hoffman-Goetz decided to conduct a study to explore one aspect of this question. They looked at how seniors get information about health from magazines and newspapers. Friedman and Hoffman-Goetz chose to focus on articles about cancer. They thought it was important that seniors receive and understand written information about cancer since many cancers become more common as we get older.

The study looked at eight magazines and newspapers written for people over 50. The magazines and newspapers were North American, English language publications. The researchers looked for cancer-related articles that were produced between the years 1990 and 2000.

The researchers wanted to know:

- ▶ How often did the magazines and newspapers include articles about seniors and cancer?
- ▶ How much information was included in these articles?
- ▶ How easy were the articles to read and understand?

Each article was examined to see if it contained scientific, human interest or commercial information. The content was analyzed to see whether it focused on prevention, treatment,

quality of life, or alternative care. The researchers also looked to see if the articles contained any information that would allow the reader to learn more about the topic. This could be in the form of contact names, telephone numbers, addresses or a website.

Of the 1,254 health-related articles 226, or 18%, were cancer-related. The majority of the articles focused on site-specific cancers such as breast or colon cancers. Most of the information, 54%, was scientific rather than commercial or human interest. The articles usually focused on prevention, and most of these articles were about breast cancer. Many of the articles, about 40%, included information that would help people find out more about the topic, but 58% were written at a high school level.

From the results of this study, Friedman and Hoffman-Goetz believe that seniors with low literacy skills would have difficulty in accessing health information from popular magazines and newspapers. There is a mismatch between the reading level of the publications and those expected to read them.

Literacy and health researchers, writers and practitioners need to continue to work together to produce easy-to-read publications. They also need to explore other ways to help seniors access information about health. If seniors have access to understandable information, they can make informed choices, promote their own health, prevent disease, advocate for themselves, gain confidence in their relationships with health care workers and gain greater control over their health and well-being.

## References

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- Macdonald M., & Hoffman-Goetz, L. (2001). Cancer coverage in newspapers serving large and small communities in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 92, 372-375.
- Rootman, I. & Ronson, B. (n.d.). *Literacy and health research in Canada: Where have we been and where should we go?* Retrieved December 11, 2004 from <http://www.igh.ualberta.ca/RHD/Synthesis/Literacy.htm>.

# New Resources

By Maria Moriarty, Centre AlphaPlus Centre  
1-800-728-1120 — [www.alphaplus.ca](http://www.alphaplus.ca)

The following materials may be borrowed or purchased through AlphaPlus.

## Selected Print Resources

### Get to the Point. A strategy for writing clearly at work

by Rose Grotzky

Call no. 808.06665 G68

Toronto, ON. Praxis Adult Training and Skills Development. 1998.

Get to the Point is a guide to the use of clear language in business communications. It includes a brief explanation of clear language principles and a description of the benefits of using clear language to improve internal and external communications. The guide also provides a practical and concise set of guidelines and examples for business writers to help them to develop their skills in clear language. This publication is a very useful tool for organizations working on improving communications and accessibility to information and services.



### Making it Clear: Clear Language for Union Communications

Ottawa, ON. The Canadian Labour Congress. 1999

Call no. 808.06665 L13

Although this publication is primarily intended for use by unions as part of the Canadian Labour Congress' Workplace Literacy Project, the information, guidelines and examples are generally applicable, and can be used by organizations to develop clear print and electronic communications internally and with clients. Making it Clear is written from the standpoint of the right to information and incorporates the principles of clear language and design.

The **Making it Clear design screen** is a simple and very useful tool to help writers check draft design of a report, letter, manual or other document. It is available for sale at the Canadian Labour Congress Workplace Literacy Project web site: [http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/literacy\\_resources](http://canadianlabour.ca/index.php/literacy_resources)



### The Literacy Audit Kit

Calgary, AB. Literacy Alberta. 1997

Call no. 374.01206 D265

The Literacy Audit Kit is in two parts: an audit manual and a video. The audit manual contains a literacy audit tool designed to help organizations assess their success in addressing the literacy needs of their clientele, background information about literacy, and suggestions on how to use the literacy audit to help the organization become more accessible. The audit manual addresses literacy barriers in 4 areas: Print Materials, Clear Verbal Communication, Sensitivity to Literacy and Promotion and Publicity. The video, Literacy Matters, can be used to raise literacy awareness within organizations and in the community.



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## Selected Web Resources

### Successful Communication Tool Kit

Communications Canada. 2003

- ▶ [http://www.communication.gc.ca/services/alpha\\_lit/2003/scr2003\\_e.pdf](http://www.communication.gc.ca/services/alpha_lit/2003/scr2003_e.pdf)

Designed specifically to help Government of Canada departments improve all aspects of communicating information about government policies, programs and services. This comprehensive Tool Kit is divided into 8 sections: Section 1 [Successful Communication] reviews the challenges to be faced in order to make information accessible, clear and credible; Section 2 [Successful Written Communication] provides tips for creating, organizing an presenting written information; Section 3, 4 and 5 [Successful Verbal/Television/Internet Communication] provides tips to improve communications in each of these areas; Section 6, 7 and 8 contain evaluation Tools, contact information and information about clear language and design initiatives in Canada and internationally.



**NALD** has developed a comprehensive directory of plain/clear communication service providers in both the non-profit and private sectors. This directory is available at: <http://www.clear.nald.ca/>

### Clear language and design: East End Literacy (Association)

- ▶ <http://www.eastendliteracy.on.ca/clearlanguageanddesign/>

Information, resources and online tools and services for clear language promotion and practice. Includes an online thesaurus of clear-language equivalents.

### Plain Train: plain language online training

- ▶ <http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/plaintrain/index.html>

An online tutorial and introduction to plain language. Presented as either a digest or a 'guided tour'. it

contains helpful hints and techniques for improving your communication skills with the use of plain language.

### Plain language.com

- ▶ <http://plainlanguage.com/index.html>

A collection of resources on creating plain language documents, and legal materials in particular. Focuses on clear language and clear lay-out and design.

### Directory of Plain Language Health Information for North America

- ▶ <http://www.pls.cpha.ca/english/directry.htm>

A list of 375 examples of plain language health information including patient education resources. Basic plain language and clear design tips are included.

### MedlinePlus: interactive health tutorials

- ▶ <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorial.html>

A series of animated health tutorials presented in easy-to-read language covering various health conditions and procedures.

### Plain English campaign

- ▶ <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

A British site promoting the use of clear language. Provides access to resources on how to write plain English including Tips for clear websites and an A to Z of alternative words

### Firstfind.info

- ▶ <http://www.firstfind.info/>

Easy to find, easy to use websites in plain and simple English. Provides access to a web library of sites organized by topic, and reviewed by a team of librarians. Intended to provide easy access to clear language sources of information.



# Clear Language from a Learners Point of View

By Patricia Brady, Learner Coordinator, and the Adult Learners Network of Ontario

RECENTLY ASKED THE ADULT LEARNERS NETWORK of Ontario (ALNO) why they thought that clear communication was important to people who have literacy challenges. They said that it was important because it makes everything easier to understand. People are less frustrated. If people communicate in a clear way, students can stay with a conversation. If teachers use ideas or words that a learners does not know, they can get lost. They will not be able to concentrate on what is being said and their minds will wander. Clear communication also helps students to cope with situations that they may have found difficult in the past.

At work, clear communication is important too. People need to know what they are getting into when they sign all those forms! Some people sign forms without reading or understanding

them because they don't want other people to know that they have difficulty reading. They can be pressured by co-workers to sign so that everyone can get on to other things. People who are under pressure to sign, with no time to understand what is going on, can get confused. They may not know what is expected of them on the job. This can not only jeopardize their job, it can put them and their fellow workers at risk.

Clear communication can be a safety issue. Management needs to make sure that employees understand what they need to, so that they can stay safe. If people are not good at reading they may have to depend on others for their own safety. Their life and health could be in someone else's hands.

ALNO members thought that all important forms involving personal and financial safety should be read to people, whether they can read or not. Management should make sure that all people understand the forms. This benefits both workers and employers.

If clear language is used at home and in the community, people with literacy challenges would have more control over their own lives. It would mean that they could better understand mortgages and leases, doctor's and pharmacist's instructions, and have better access to the information that would enhance their lives.

To my surprise, the ALNO went beyond talking about how clear communication would help them in their day-to-day lives at home, school and work. ALNO also wanted to look at clear communication as both a social justice issue and a social duty. They felt that society has a right to understand the things that will affect their lives. Sometimes language can be used to be purposely confusing, such as in contract negotiations, legal matters and politics. Language can be used to discriminate. We should not have to put up with this. Clear communication is not just for people who have reading, writing or learning difficulties. It is important for all people.

## MINI COLLECTION REMINDER



**Calling all literacy practitioners in Ontario.**

Are you planning your programming for the fall? Would you like to have new books to work with? If you answered YES to these questions, it's

time to order a mini-collection from AlphaPlus!

We will build a small collection of resources that answers your needs. It can include workbooks, videotapes, staff training materials, and more. The collection is on loan to you for a period of four months. We pay both the outgoing and the return postage.

What's the next step? It's easy. Describe the types of resources you need and we will do the rest. Just fill in our Resources request form available at <http://alphaplus.ca/borrowloanorg.html> and a librarian will contact you.

You can also contact us at:

Email: [info@alphaplus.ca](mailto:info@alphaplus.ca)

Telephone: 416-322-1012 or 1-800-788-1120

# Adult Learners Network of Ontario Literacy Coalition (ALNO) for 2005–2006

By Patricia Brady, Learner Coordinator

ALNO helps OLC to see issues from a learner’s point of view. It is made up of eight adults who have literacy challenges from across Ontario.

In 2004–2005 ALNO took part in the Workforce Bulletins, the Social Marketing and the Workforce/Workplace Symposium projects. They advised the OLC on other learner related issues and developed their own ALNO brochure.

This year ALNO will look into ways of contributing to the OLC website. Members are also looking forward to participating in OLC programming and to taking part in OLC outreach.

ALNO members serve overlapping three year terms. The members of ALNO for 2005–2006 are

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Patricia Ashie      | <i>Chair and Advisory Roundtable representative</i> |
| Jason Ashkewe       |   |
| Darci Bonneau       | <i>Advisory Roundtable representative</i>           |
| Doug Duval          |   |
| Henry Lariviere     |   |
| Denis Lemieux       | <i>Secretary</i>                                    |
| Dan McGibbon        |   |
| Michael Shaughnessy | <i>Vice-Chair</i>                                   |



Adult Learners Network of Ontario 2005–2006  
**FRONT ROW:** Denis Lemieux, Darci Bonneau, Michael Shaughnessy. **BACK ROW:** Patricia Ashie, Henry Lariviere, Doug Duval, Dan McGibbon. **MISSING:** Jason Ashkewe

## Learners Corner

By Shirley Annable

Clear communication is important so that all people can understand and participate in everyday life. It is even more important for people who have literacy challenges. Clear communication helps people with literacy challenges to cope. It helps them to remember information that they may not be able to read or to write down.

I have developed coping skills—ways around my literacy problems. If I can’t read a document, I scan it at the library and then find someone to read it to me. If anyone in my family is sick I go to a pharmacy where I know they will go over how to use medications with me. It always helps if people talk to me in “layman’s” terms. A “layman” is someone who doesn’t have any special knowledge about a subject.

I find that people with higher education, such as doctors, can’t imagine what its like not to read and write well. It is not that they don’t care; it is just that they haven’t lived it. They get so used to using their own jargon that they don’t remember that other people may not be familiar with those words. It would help if they didn’t assume that other people know what they know.

Clear language can be so easy. Sometimes it just means using a \$5 word instead of that \$5000 one. Tell people with literacy challenges not to be ashamed. If they can’t read they need the courage to ask, “Can you put that in layman’s terms? Say it the way I can understand it. Make it simple.”

## Sandy Barnabé

2005 Kim Strickland Memorial Learner Leader Sponsorship Program Winner

By Patricia Brady, Learner Coordinator

THE OLC CONGRATULATES Sandy Barnabé for being chosen as the winner of the Sponsorship Program for 2005. The award goes to a person with literacy challenges who has been active in volunteering within their community, and who is interested in taking on leadership roles in literacy at the provincial level.

Sandy is a very worthy winner. She is a literacy student at the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board Literacy and Basic Skills program. Sandy is not only very active in her program, she also volunteers for many other literacy activities. She writes stories for learner publications and has helped put together student conferences. She has spoken to public health nurses, the CBC and her own School Board trustees about adult literacy. She has participated in a video about going back to school and proofread plain language articles for Consumer Awareness—and this is just a part of Sandy's busy volunteer activities! She also volunteers for other groups in her community such as the United Way and her daughter's school. The OLC hopes that Sandy will want to volunteer with us in the future!

People who are chosen for the sponsorship receive an expenses paid trip to the OLC Annual General Meeting where their literacy activities are recognized. They also attend the meeting of the (ALNO) that out



Patricia Brady, OLC Learner Coordinator, presents Sandra Barnabé with the 2005 Kim Strickland Memorial Learner Leader Sponsorship Award.

## Golden Oak Book Club Award 2005

By Brenda Livingston,  
Chair of the Golden Oak Committee

RICHARDO KEENS-DOUGLAS, author of *Tales From the Isle of Spice*, has won the third annual Golden Oak Book Club Award. Golden Oak, sponsored by the Ontario Library Association, is a provincial book club for adult learners. The winning author is decided by feedback from learners across Ontario.

*Tales from the Isle of Spice* contains three beloved stories inspired by Richardo Keens-Douglas' memories of Grenada that capture his belief in the power of the human spirit. As one learner wrote... "My favourite book was *Tales from the Isle of Spice*. Adults learning to read would find these stories interesting. They would learn about honesty, caring and hope. He told us to be true to yourselves and do not let anyone tell you cannot do the things you want to do."

The 2005 Golden Oak Award was presented at a luncheon on June 9<sup>th</sup> in Toronto. An audience of 220 adult learners enjoyed hearing from four of this year's Golden Oak authors. Learners introduced each author and gave away copies of the author's book to door prize winners. Reknown storyteller Rita Cox accepted the Golden Oak award on behalf of her friend Richardo Keens-Douglas. Keens-Douglas is currently in Grenada, but was in Toronto in May when he thrilled audiences with two evenings of exceptional storytelling.

The 2006 Golden Oak Book Club selected titles will be announced in early October.

Check the website <http://www.accessola.com/goldenoak> for the announcement and for lists and winners.



Lillian Magalnick and Hortense McCarthy, from the Adult Literacy Program at the Toronto Public Library, celebrate with Tanya Lloyd Kyi, author of *Truth*, one of the nominated books.

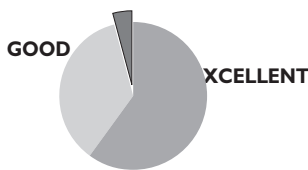


# What Our Members Said!

THE ONTARIO LITERACY COALITION wants to make sure that the work we do meets the needs of our members. That is why, in May 2005, we carried out an online survey to discover what you think about the OLC, our work, benefits of membership and the future direction for the OLC. The survey was also mailed to our members who have literacy challenges.

Fifty-six members completed the survey. In this article, we present you with highlights from the survey. If you want to see the results from the whole survey, please go to our website at <http://www.on.literacy.ca/member.htm>.

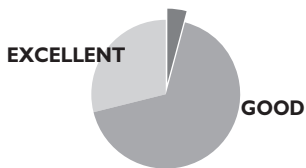
## PUBLICATIONS



Generally speaking, you think we do a good to excellent job of most of our activities. However, the results also indicate areas where you think we could continue to develop. We look forward to improving our service to you.

You have a high degree of satisfaction with our **member publications** such as the newsletter, e-bulletins and meeting summaries. Around 60% of you think they are “excellent” and another 36% think they are “good.”

## WEBSITE

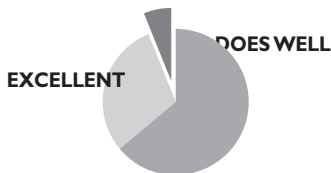


You were less satisfied with our **website**. Only 29% found the website “excellent” and 67% found it to be “good”. Now that we have redesigned our website, we wonder if this might change. We will find out when we do our next member survey.

Of our members, 47% were satisfied with the **level of information provided** by the OLC. However, some of you indicated a need for more information. The most **popular topics** that you want us to tell you more about were:

- ▶ practitioner training (19)
- ▶ practitioner issues (15)
- ▶ teaching strategies (18)
- ▶ workplace literacy (15)
- ▶ new resources (17)

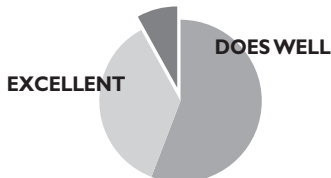
## GATHERING OPINIONS



When it comes to **your views**, this is what you said:

- ▶ 64% find that the OLC does “well” at **gathering your opinions**, and 30% think we do an “excellent” job.
- ▶ 56% think we do “well” at **representing your views**, and 36% think we are “excellent” at it.

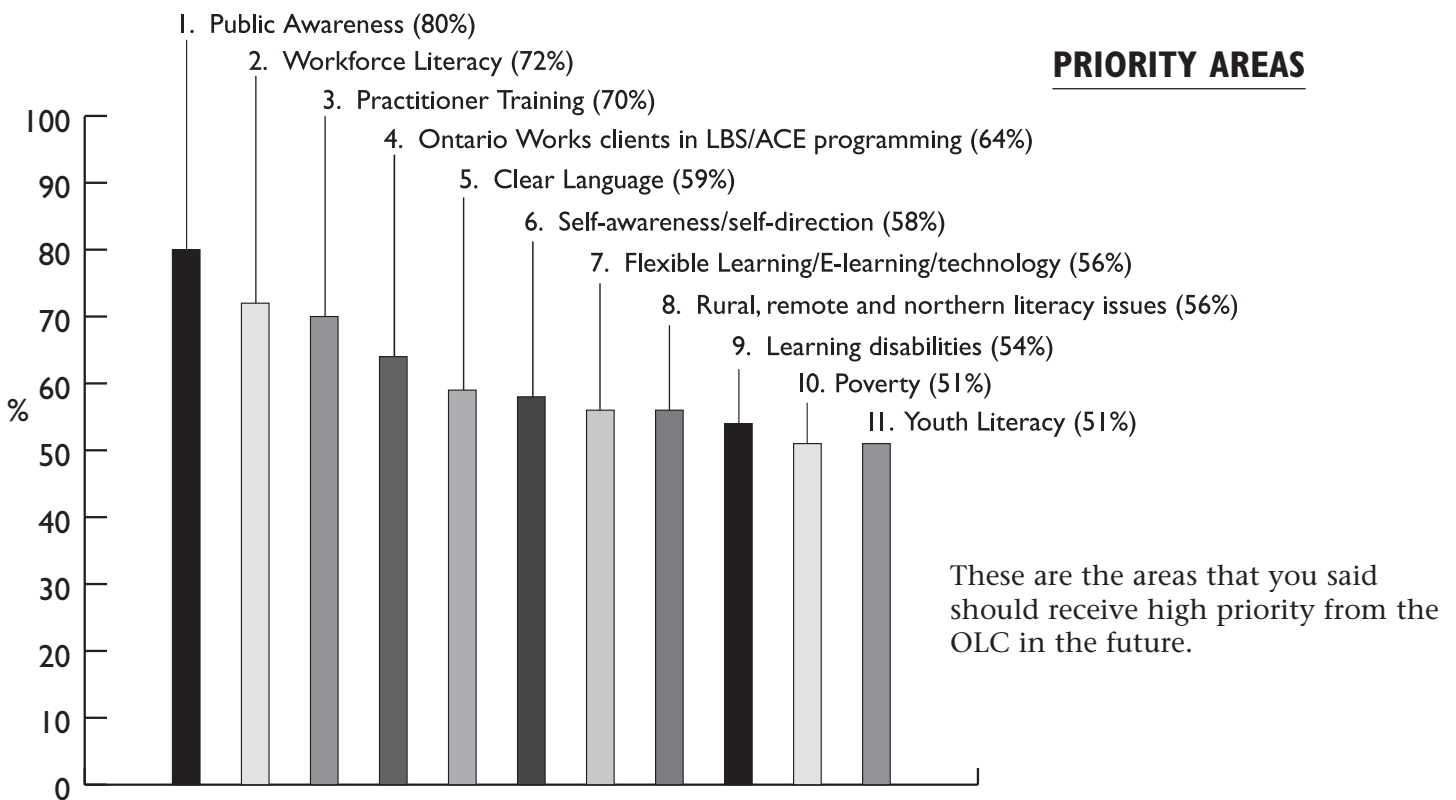
## REPRESENTING YOUR VIEWS



When asked how you prefer to let us know **what you and your program need**, no less than 87% said you wanted to let the OLC know directly, though an online survey. Another 39% wanted to let the OLC know through the regional literacy networks. (One person might have had more than one preference.)

The **most popular membership benefits** were the e-mail bulletins and briefings (84%), followed by the OLC newsletter (84%), our research and resource publications (84%) and the ability to attend OLC conferences at reduced rates (83%).

Almost all of our members, 97%, rated the **OLC’s responsiveness** to requests for information as “excellent” or “good”.



## Message from the President and Chair

By Sara Gill, OLC Board of Directors



WELL, FALL IS HERE and with it, a very exciting year ahead for the OLC. The Board of Directors for 2005 would like to welcome Asghar Naqvi onto the Board. We are fortunate to have attracted Board members with a wide range of skill sets and past experiences, all of which help us in our work. I am looking forward

to working with all of you, as well as the skilled OLC staff.

The Board has worked very hard to create Ends Statements for this organization that speak to the province's needs. The AGM gave us a great opportunity to meet and discuss these Ends with a portion of our moral ownership. Thank you to all members who were there and provided feedback on our draft Statements. We

certainly value your input. We will be reviewing the Statements to ensure that the Ends for the organization match with the needs and goals of the moral ownership. We will also continue to connect with the moral ownership in a variety of ways in order to ensure that we hear the many voices that have an interest in literacy in Ontario.

This year we look forward to prioritizing the work of the OLC in order to be able to play a role in significant issues in the literacy community. Anette, along with the OLC staff and the Board of Directors, is focused on being proactive with the changes that are expected ahead. We hope to be an advocate for the literacy community and for all people with literacy challenges in Ontario.

We hope that you will keep on providing us with feedback on our work as we continue to come together as a community for common goals in literacy.

# 2005 Frances Lever Memorial Award Recipient

By Mary Wiggin, Chair, Frances Lever Memorial Award Committee

THE ONTARIO LITERACY COALITION is pleased to announce that Louise Leduchowski, of Atikokan Literacy Incorporated Reading Plus, is the recipient of the 2005 Frances Lever Memorial Award. She received her award at the Annual General Meeting on June 24.

Louise established the Reading Plus program and has operated it for 18 years. The program was initially sponsored by the Atikokan Public Library but Louise saw the potential of the program and pursued opportunities for it to grow. In 2000 she led the program to independence as Atikokan Literacy Incorporated Reading Plus.

Louise has introduced a variety of other literacy-related programs in her community. She developed specific delivery models for groups such as single parents and bush and sawmill operators and she developed and co-created literacy resource materials including *Sharpen Your Reading*; *Balance Your Books*; and *Job Readiness: An Instructor's Guide*.

As a strong supporter of Family Literacy, Louise initiated Fresh Start, a program for young mothers that has enabled many of them to read to their children and to continue their high school education successfully. Further fuelled by her desire to ensure that Atikokan's children have the opportunity to reach their full potential, she obtained funding for a three year initiative from the Early Years Challenge Fund.

Her dedication to literacy does not stop in Atikokan. Louise served on the board and

on committees of the OLC. She was among the group of dedicated people who lobbied for and secured funding to establish Literacy Northwest. Louise was on the network's first board of directors and held various positions, including chairperson, over a span of eight years. In March 1988, she became involved with Operation Literacy which resulted in the first Literacy Northwest workshop sponsored by Multiculturalism Canada to address the issues of literacy advancement in northwestern Ontario.

In the community Louise gives of herself all the time. One of her close friends said, "She has never said no to help any local organization. You can always count on her. She volunteers and lends a hand for many things."

The Ontario Literacy Coalition is delighted to honour Louise Leduchowski for her many contributions to literacy and to her community.

We are very grateful to all those people who submitted nominations for the 2005 award and we would like to recognize the passionate and dedicated people they nominated.

- ▶ Mrs. Ottily Andrews, Iroquois Falls Adult Learning Centre
- ▶ Marilyn Davies, Barrie Literacy Council
- ▶ Jenny Horsman, Toronto
- ▶ Theresa MacDonald, Literacy North Halton
- ▶ Maureen O'Keefe, Oakville Literacy Council
- ▶ Maynard Plane, Parkdale Project Read
- ▶ Barb Shipley, Centre for Employment and Learning in Exeter



OLC Chair Corry Wink and Mary Wiggin, chairperson of the Frances Lever Memorial Award Committee, present the 2005 winner, Louise Leduchowski, with the cheque for \$1000. The Award cheque goes to the literacy program of the winner's choice.

# Ontario Literacy Coalition Outreach

Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals Canada Pension Plan/Old Age Security

*By Patricia Brady, Learner Coordinator*

**T**HE OLC WAS PLEASED TO BE ASKED to speak at workshops for the Office of the Review Tribunals twice this year, on March 12 and September 17, 2005.

Members of the Review Tribunals were interested in finding out how literacy challenges can create barriers for people with low literacy skills. They wanted suggestions that would help them recognize that a person may have reading and writing difficulties. They also wanted to discuss strategies that could help these people successfully negotiate an appeals process.

OLC staff addressed these concerns. We discussed information about literacy in Canada and how literacy skills touch everything in a person's life. We spoke about what literacy is and how it affects access to information and to meaningful participation in society. We discussed why people might have literacy challenges and how this could affect someone's health.

The connection between literacy and health is important because many of the appeals are for disability benefits. Many appellants have difficulty understanding their medical information as well as how to present their case to an appeals court. This can be very challenging, and scary, if literacy skills are limited.

The Office of the Commissioner of Review Tribunals is a federal body. It is responsible for hearing and deciding appeals under the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) or from the Old Age Security Act (OAS). The appeals are to decisions made by officials of Social Development Canada (SDC). The Review Tribunal is an independent body that does not act on behalf of any other person or group.

# Annual General Meeting 2005

**I**T WAS GOOD TO SEE SO MANY of our members represented at all of the events and meetings that surrounded our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in June 2005. Our Advisory Roundtable, Adult Learners Network of Ontario and our Board all had an opportunity to meet. It was a chance to network and talk about important issues in our field.

At the AGM on June 24<sup>th</sup>, the members



Group consultation of our organizational "Ends"



Board Member Joyce Banya leads an "Ends Statements" discussion.

# OLC Update

By Lesley Brown, Director, Program Development

## Literacy: Workforce and Workplace

In 2004, the OLC in partnership with Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—Ontario Division crafted a report titled, *Building Support and Developing Partnerships for Workplace Literacy in Ontario*. Some of the recommendations that came out of this report identified the need to build support for workplace literacy development. The report described ways of building that support by exploring incentives and partnership models with employers and unions. It also highlighted the need for sustainable investment in workplace literacy, encouraging development of educational tools and resources and cooperating with the public education system on areas of mutual interest.

The first step in making these objectives tangible was to organize and coordinate a gathering that would bring together key stakeholders. From this meeting came *The Workplace/Workforce Literacy Symposium: Building Linkages for Action*, funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. The symposium was held on May 31, 2005 at the Holiday Inn Yorkdale in Toronto. Forty-eight participants were selected to attend based on their interest in workplace and workforce literacy education and their willingness to engage in a discussion. The groups represented business, labour, and the literacy community. A fourth group included representatives from government, colleges, school board sectors, trainers and academia. The provincial literacy coalitions who represent the interests of the Deaf, Native and Francophone communities were also part of this group.

The symposium was a working session. It provided multiple opportunities to network while moving towards a common vision and plan for workplace and workforce literacy. The participants had various opportunities to meet both in their sector groups and in mixed groups to discuss and identify recommendations

for moving the workforce/workplace agenda forward. Each of the sector groups reported their top action steps to the full symposium at the end of the day. Here are some of the highlights:

- ① Facilitate a culture of lifelong learning involving government, business, and labour. Government has a role to educate and foster a culture of learning. Lobby government for funding.
- ② Strengthen collaboration between the labour and literacy communities. The OLC can help to foster relationships between labour and literacy groups.
- ③ Better utilize the linkages and awareness of what is happening in our communities by bring learning institutions together, and explore opportunities in local communities.
- ④ Create a cross-sectoral, multi-party steering committee to develop a strategy for a regional model for literacy in Ontario.

The group expressed the desire to see the advisory committee, which was set up for this symposium, continue. They felt this would help to develop a common vision in order to lobby government.

## Next Steps:

The OLC was fortunate in securing new funding to continue this work through the *Strategic Partnerships for Action: A Focus on Workforce and Workplace Literacy in Ontario* Project from the National Literacy Secretariat. Working with the original advisory committee from the workforce symposium—our goals for this project will be to:

- ▶ Establish relationships with key government representatives and decision makers in Ontario in order to undertake interviews with key provincial government stakeholders and policy makers.
- ▶ Coordinate five (5) regional forums in the east, west, north, south of Ontario, and in the Toronto area, to provide opportunities

for key stakeholders in each of these areas to get together for discussion and planning for next steps. Feedback from these meetings to be put together in a report that will include recommendations.

- ▶ Develop and maintain a database of contacts and experts from labour, business, government and literacy—as we move forward in creating a “community of practice” for workforce and workplace literacy in Ontario.
- ▶ Develop a report on the findings of the *Strategic Partnerships for Action* initiative. This will include the findings and recommendations from both the 2004–05 Symposium and the regional forums.

The OLC is pleased to be part of this important initiative, and we look forward to working with our partners in moving workforce and workplace literacy education into the future.

## Project Updates

### Social Marketing

We launched the “Take a Step” television public service announcement (PSA) on September 12, by sending it to all the television stations in Ontario. The PSA features a diverse group of real adult learners and volunteers who give brief statements about the changes that they are making in their lives with the help of literacy and upgrading programs. The statements all work with the theme of “taking a step”. The premise is that it all begins with a first step and that learning is really a series of steps to get to where you want to be. You can view the PSA on the OLC website at [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca). At the top of the page, click on *Taking Action*, then scroll down to the *Take at Step* link.

The radio PSA has also been distributed across the province. Listen to it on our website.

The OLC was able to develop postcards drawn from the commercial with special funding provided by Canada Post Corporation. These will be sent out to all agencies and Networks for use in any promotional activities.

### Workforce/Workplace Literacy Bulletins

Watch for the *Making it Work!* bulletins. They will be arriving at your centre soon. There are two sets of five volumes each. Each volume includes practitioner related information and a tear out section in the centre of the bulletin geared to learners. The bulletins include information for implementing workforce literacy ideas in your program as well as relevant resources and websites. PDF copies are also available on the OLC Website under the Resources and Publications section.

### Workforce Symposium

The report on the *Workplace/Workforce Literacy Symposium: Building Linkages for Action* will soon be available on the OLC website. Look for it under the Resources and Publications section. The report documents the ideas collected from key stakeholders in labour, business, literacy, government, training and education from the symposium. It includes recommendations for moving workforce and workplace programming forward in Ontario.

### Adult Learners’ Week: September 8–14, 2005

To celebrate Adult Learners’ Week this year, the OLC, together with our partner coalitions in the Native, Deaf and Francophone streams, showcased the accomplishments of adult learners and highlighted the importance of adult literacy education in Ontario in two different ways.

During Adult Learners’ Week, we approached the major media outlets in Ontario to draw their attention to adult literacy and to ask them to cover the issue. Media kits were developed that provided statistics, key messages and learner biographies to capture their interest and provide opportunities for media coverage. Copies of the kit are available on the OLC Website under the *Taking Action* section.

We were successful in getting a radio interview on CKLN’s Norman Richmond Show featuring two learners, Rita Buffalo and Devon Smith. It was aired on September 10th. Pat Whyte from

*continued on next page >>*



Kathleen Wynne, MPP, speaks about the Ontario Learns report.

...continued from page 17

the Doorways Program in Burlington was part of a guest panel on TVOntario's *Studio 2* with Paula Todd, as well there was an article in the French newspaper *Le Droit*. Our efforts were somewhat impeded by the Toronto Film Festival which kept the media busy.

Together with our three stream partners, we also hosted a keynote address by Kathleen Wynne, MPP and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, on the *Ontario Learns Report*. This event was held on September 27th in Toronto. The address provided the opportunity to raise awareness of the report, and allow for questions and discussion on moving it forward. We have already had some success in raising the profile of the report. Joe Fiorito, reporter for the Toronto Star, covered the story for his column, Metro Diary, on September 30, 2005. Highlights from the address will be available on OLC's website in November.

## New Project Announcements

The OLC has been fortunate to be funded for two new projects and is awaiting approval on three other projects over the next year.

### Funded Projects

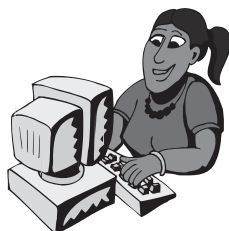
#### First Language/ESL Literacy in Ontario

The OLC is pleased to be involved in a project that will be exploring new territory for our organization. The project *First Language/ESL Literacy in Ontario* is funded by The Ontario Trillium Foundation. This two-year project will enable the OLC to work with key partners from the English as a Second Language (ESL), settlement and literacy communities to examine the literacy issues and challenges faced by immigrant Canadians (both newcomers and settled immigrants) who are living in Ontario and whose first language is not English or French and who have low literacy skills in their first language.

The goal of this project is to identify and analyze the literacy and language development needs of the target group in order to determine how best to meet their needs for literacy services. The deliverables will include a research paper that offers a more complete picture of first language literacy, a symposium to bring together key partners for dialogue and planning, as well as newsletters and e-bulletins to share information with the partner communities.

#### Strategic Partnerships for Action: A Focus on Workforce and Workplace Literacy in Ontario Literacy

See "Next Steps" in the *Literacy and the Workforce* article on page 16 to find out about this exciting new project.



Check out the **NEWLY REDESIGNED OLC** website at [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca)

## Projects Pending Final Approval

### Building a Family Literacy Community of Practice in Ontario: Action for Family Literacy

Working through Action for Family Literacy (AFLO), a working group of the OLC, this project will continue to build on the work developed through two previous projects. This year Roundtable forums will be held in 5 regions throughout Ontario to provide an opportunity to bring together key stakeholders to discuss research, best practices, professional development, sustainability issues and policy development pertinent to the family literacy field in Ontario. AFLO will continue to provide access to information through their website [www.aflo.on.literacy.ca](http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca)

### Ontario Literacy Coalition's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference Pre-Planning

The OLC is preparing for another large provincial literacy conference in 2007. This event will coincide with our twentieth anniversary and we look forward to celebrating twenty years of literacy development in Ontario with our friends and colleagues. This project will allow the OLC to do the planning and groundwork that is needed to bring quality professional development opportunities to literacy practitioners, volunteers, learners and administrators.

### Workforce Learning Activities Guide for Building Foundational Employment Skills

This project will develop a workforce preparation guide. The guide will support Literacy and Basic Skills practitioners by giving them additional resources to use in preparing adult learners as they develop the skills and knowledge required in workplaces. The guide will concentrate on the "soft skills" needed to be successful in the complicated workplaces of today and will include practical tools and activities necessary to support this learning. The guide will cover a range of LBS levels and will include basic workplace knowledge as well as employability and lifelong learning skills.

## Other News

By Anette Chawla, Executive Director

### New Website

In September, the OLC launched our redesigned website. We think it is attractive, easy-to-use and packed with information. See for yourself at [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca)

### New Office Location

This summer, the OLC moved to a new office location. We were forced to move when our old landlord wouldn't offer us a reasonable rate when the lease came up for renewal. As many of you have experienced, it was not a fun way to spend our time. But that is but a distant memory now and we are now settled into our new space and enjoying it! See all of our contact information on the back page.

### OLC Highlights

The OLC has kept busy with lots of other activities. Here are some highlights since our last newsletter:

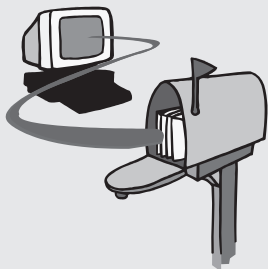
- ▶ Held combined four meetings into three days of intense fun: Annual General Meeting and meetings of the Advisory Roundtable, Adult Learners Network of Ontario (ALNO) and Board—in June.
- ▶ Awarded the Frances Lever Memorial Award 2005 to Louise Leduchowski. Congratulations!
- ▶ Organized additional Board of Director meetings in April and August.
- ▶ Hosted ALNO at further meetings in April and September. ALNO provided feedback on the nomination form used for the Frances Lever Memorial Award.
- ▶ Designed a new brochure about ALNO.
- ▶ Took part in Word on the Street. Thanks to ALNO for their excellent public relation skills.
- ▶ Supported Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO) in their work on research, resource development, strategic planning, developing a position paper and a newsletter. Visit [www.aflo.on.literacy.ca](http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca) to learn more about this important work.

*continued on next page >>*

## OLC Highlights... (continued from page 19)

- ▶ Participated on advisory committees with the Centre for Family Literacy (Edmonton), Festival of Literacies and the AlphaPlus Centre's research database.
- ▶ Liaised with the hosts of the four roundtables held by the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of State (Human Resources Development) in Kenora, Ottawa, Timmins and Thunder Bay.
- ▶ Supported Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) in the development of a 10-Year National Literacy Action Plan.
- ▶ Attended a two-day MCL meetings in April and September.
- ▶ In partnership with MCL, analyzed the release of the *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* and provided material to the regional and sectoral networks, in May. Had a letter to the editor published in The Toronto Star.
- ▶ Wrote and distributed *What's New at Queen's Park*, summarizing the report on the adult education review called *Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System*.
- ▶ Attended a consultation held by MTCU on the One Stop Training and Education System, in September.
- ▶ Ran an on-line member survey in May.
- ▶ Sent out 10 e-bulletins to our members.
- ▶ Gave a presentation to the Office of the Commissioner of the Review Tribunals.
- ▶ Initiated the distribution of ABC CANADA's Family Literacy Day material.
- ▶ Prepared for the MTCU/OLC Liaison Meeting on November 4<sup>th</sup>.

### Update your email address!



The OLC is sending out regular e-mail updates, e.g., election information, and family literacy updates. **Make sure we have a current e-mail address on file for you.** Send your e-mail address to [olc@on.literacy.ca](mailto:olc@on.literacy.ca).



### Find out about the OLC Employee Benefits Program

There is an Employee Benefits Program designed specifically for Ontario Literacy Coalition member agencies. Customized choices are available to you at an affordable price. Enrolling is easy! For more information contact the OLC's insurance broker, Owen & Associates, at 416-252-6116, or visit the OLC website at [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca) and follow the links from Membership & Benefits/Group Benefits.



## Literacy on the Move

Literacy on the Move is published three times a year by the Ontario Literacy Coalition



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The articles in **Literacy on the Move** do not necessarily reflect the view of the Ontario Literacy Coalition but are published to share experience and stimulate interest in, and discussion on, adult basic literacy and numeracy issues.

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