

Provincial Government Provides Increased Funding to Literacy and Basic Skills Programs

On May 24, 2011, staff and learners from Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading (LBS/AU) programs in Ottawa gathered at ALSO (Alternative Learning Styles & Outlooks) in Heartwood House for a very important announcement. Yasir Naqvi, MPP Ottawa Centre, announced increased funding for literacy programs in Ontario. The provincial government will invest an additional \$44 million in Literacy and Basic Skills over the next three years. This is welcome news for many literacy programs who have been struggling for years with low levels of funding and for 3.4 million Ontario adults who have literacy skills at less than a high school level.

Mary Wiggin and Louise Lalonde (Executive Director, *Moi, j'apprends*) warmly welcomed Yasir, representatives of LBS/AU programs and several learners.

Jan Goatcher, Coordinator of the Skills Plus program at John Howard Society (JHS), expressed thanks to the Ontario government for their commitment to literacy. JHS will receive a considerable boost with these new funds. They are one of the organizations that will see their base funding increase to \$100,000 a year. Programs, which already receive \$100,000 or more annually, will get an 8 percent increase.

Edward Schuett, an ACElinks student at JHS, expressed his thanks to the program and the instructors for helping him overcome obstacles related to learning. He struggled with school throughout his youth and is happy that through Skills Plus he has been able to move ahead to the ACElinks program.

Catherine Jordan is a learner with People, Words & Change (PWC). She thanked the program for providing her with the opportunity to learn how to use a computer. The computer classes at PWC are giving her the skills she needs to become more employable.

Representatives from most literacy organizations attended the event. These included, Algonquin College, ALSO, ALSO Deaf Adult Program, John Howard Society, *Moi, j'apprends*, La Cité collégiale, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and People Words & Change.

The good news is that Ontario's 2011 Budget – Turning the Corner, committed to permanently increase base funding to service delivery organizations in the province. In Ottawa, programs will receive over \$4.7 million to help 2,319 learners. This additional funding will ensure that literacy programs can continue to deliver programs and serve more learners.

“Ensuring every adult has the opportunity to upgrade their skills is one of the best investments we can make. Not only does it help more people succeed, but it builds a strong foundation for our local economy.” *Yasir Naqvi*