

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**21st CENTURY PLAGUE – THE DEMISE OF LITERACY**

(Dartmouth, NS) **Panicked by the systematic demise of literacy in Canada, the Dartmouth Learning Network is at a loss to explain why funding for literacy programs is being drastically reduced or cut completely.**

“Literacy is the cornerstone of social policy and a strong indicator of a countries economic well-being. Reducing programs or cutting them completely is just short-sighted and will place an economic burden on society for generations to come, says Lesley Dunn Executive Director of the Dartmouth Learning Network.

Recent reports released by the Organizatin for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) clearly demonstrate that working aged Canadians, especially youth are not prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

Jean Hillman, Dartmouth Learning Network Board Member, finds it difficult to understand why government officials and the majority of Canadians fail to understand that there is a cost to maintaining low literacy levels. “The burden to welfare systems, healthcare, employment insurance programs, the workforce (resulting from time lost resulting due to accidents attributed to low literacy), and the judicial system is astronomical.

We are not saving a penny. Strong literacy skills are linked to increased and sustainable employment opportunities, higher wages and access to higher education. Those with low literacy skills will remain unemployed, or low employed, where the wages, hours and working conditions are poor. Literacy is a critical building block for life and a foundation skill for the labour market, says Hillman.

According to Statistics Canada “ the complexity of today’s world means that individuals need to have some level of proficiency in reading, mathematics and science in order to undertand and participate fully in economic and social life. Low literacy may not be hereditary but it certainly is systemic. Low literate children become low literate adults who raise low literate children creating a neverending cycle.

“Literacy is not just reading and writing – it is the lens through which we see the world, it happens everywhere, all the time and it never stops…**literacy is life**,” says Mike Leland, Director of Communications, Decoda Literacy.

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**ABOUT DARTMOUTH LEARNING NETWORK:** Originally founded in 1985 by the former Premier of Nova Scotia Dr. John Savage, The Dartmouth Learning Network offers free literacy and essential skills programming in classroom/small group and one-on-one environments; daytime and evening programs are held on site, and at community partner locations throughout Dartmouth. We offer basic adult literacy programs, math upgrading, computer basics, and employment readiness program in addition to a General Education Development (GED) program.