



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

January 17, 2014

For Immediate Release

### **Time, Options & Hope running out for Labour Market Agreement Funded Programs Education, & Literacy Not our Responsibility, Candice Bergen Minister of State (Social Development)**

(Dartmouth, NS) The Dartmouth Learning Network has struggled for eight months to understand why the needs of business are superseding the needs of Canadians. Canada is one of the few industrialized countries in the world that does not have a national framework for literacy and learning and it seems that the Federal Government has no plans of making it a priority. On a recent visit to Halifax, Candice Bergen Minister of State (Social Development) made it very clear to those attending a Budget 2014 Roundtable that education, soft skills development and literacy were not a priority or the responsibility of the Government of Canada.

"Shocked doesn't quite describe our reaction to these statements," says Lesley Dunn, DLN Executive Director. "When the needs of business take precedence over the needs of 48% of Canadians, all Canadians should be sounding the alarm bell and asking why? How can businesses possibly thrive if the general population does not? More importantly, who will fill the job vacancies of the future if 48% of working age Canadians are struggling to meet entry level skills required for the workforce?"

Dunn says that Bergen also stated that she does not believe in national strategies and that decision making should be left to provincial jurisdiction. This comment begged the question as to what exactly the proposed Canada Job Grants program was if not a national strategy. If Minister Bergen believes it is important that provincial jurisdictions be respected, why are the Government of Canada and Minister Jason Kenney prepared to force Provinces and Canadians to accept the Canada Jobs Grant program, despite protests that this is not a good fit for Canadians?

Dana Atwell, Dartmouth Learning Network Board Member finds it ironic that it was the Government of Canada who identified the nine essential skills (reading, writing, document use, numeracy, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use and continuous learning) needed for the work force and now they are stating they are not prepared to support people requiring these skills, nor are they prepared to invest in these individuals to ensure they can attach themselves to the labour market allowing them to earn a living wage, breaking the cycle of poverty.

January 15<sup>th</sup> was LMA Social Media Day highlighting the success of the current Labour Market Agreements throughout the country. Hashtag tracing stats showed the reach to be 194,718 individuals with timeline deliveries (total possible number of times someone could have view a particular message) topping 1.04 million. This is a clear indication that the successes of current Labour Market Agreements are being heard, just not by the Government of Canada.

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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.