



Movement for Canadian Literacy

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“Weep all you Canadians for the future of this country”.

~ Ellen Szita / Adult Learner

The following article was written by Ellen Szita, the Chair of MCL’s Learners’ Advisory Committee. She wrote it in response to recent announcements that the Community Adult Learning Program in BC was “under review” and that regional literacy coordinators positions are being cut (only one year after the government created the positions).

To Whom It May Concern

Because it certainly doesn't seem like the government [cares]. I am going to be sixty-eight in a few weeks and am deeply saddened by what I read regarding education. I went back to school at age 45yrs because of my low literacy skills and having become a single parent of four children, I could no longer hide in the closet and had to find work. It was a long hard road in turning my life around and while in school I fought cancer and alcohol abuse in order to become the mother and teacher for my children I should've been, (our future generation).

After finishing school, I went on to having an awarding winning documentary done on my life called, 'Ellen's Story' writing my autobiography by the same name and going on to receiving a Governor General's award. All this to encourage those needing help to come out of the closet and have the life they not only deserve, but a right too.

What is it about the government that they don't see, or better yet don't want to see? Do the Canadian people know the truth regarding literacy and what it truly cost and why? I write this letter in anger and fear. Fear for the children of this country and anger that the public don't know the truth.

To have no education can mean, living on the streets, chemical abuse, incarceration and welfare. Then there's ICBC, workmen's compensation board, hospitals, doctors lawyers. Do the public know that B.C, has the highest proportion of children living in poverty and 40% of all people being laid off have low literacy skills or have lost what they did know due to not having used them, and 58% of safety issues were caused by people with low literacy skills. However, I think you get the picture by now. That's right! Into the billions per year!!

Why am I writing all this, well for those who remember Gordon Campbell saying, (recently I may add) B.C. Will be the best educated in Canada; I read an article on July 19, that went on to say; Janice Nakamura, executive director of the learning programs

branch of the ministry of advanced education and labour market development wrote in an e-mail that ministry community adult literacy programs (CALPS) and regional

literacy coordinators (RLCs) are "part of the funding review". Then, on July 16, 21 RLCs were informed that their jobs are being cut, only one year after the government created the positions.

I have volunteered my time working in the literacy field for 23yrs because I saw all too clearly the devastation it can bring to one's life. Suicide is not uncommon and not being able to access that which is taken for granted, banks, libraries, reading labels on medicine bottles, street signs, the daily news and so much more can bring on depression for so many because they don't know their rights.

I remember all too clearly some years back when begging the principal for help for my grandson and him telling me that he couldn't give him any more help than he was already receiving due to cut backs. I remember snapping back at him, "so you're telling me that the government is cutting back on the quality of my grandsons life" I walked home teary eyed wondering how many Jordon's out there??

Our technology is changing faster than even learned people can keep up with. Furthermore, ask any college what the percentage is for those high school student's wanting to enter having to upgrade to receive an equivalent high school certificate.

I believe in this great country of mine, Canada, which I immigrated to so long ago, however, it's time for the people to wake up and know the abuse that goes on in their own country, the depraved indifference of what rightfully belongs to those seeking a basic education with whom many never had a chance or was very limited due to their learning disabilities. And yes even today children in school with learning difficulties are not receiving the help that is so rightfully theirs and it's the same excuse.

I don't know if this makes much sense as I write in sheer frustration that volunteering my time for over 23yrs, nothing has improved as it should have and with the economy on a down, this could become a disaster but then that's up to you Canadians to do something for your country, your children, your future generation. Know what's going on!

Sincerely, Ellen Szita

Ellen Szita / Adult Learner