



## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **LITERACY**

The Federation believes that literacy is integral to labour's success, both socially and economically, and is fundamental to labour's ability to meet the challenges of the new millennium. It recognizes basic skills as the cornerstone of a learning culture and the foundation on which life-long learning can occur.

Literacy is more complex and contextual than just being able to read and write at some one, universally basic level. It is the ability to read, write, work with numbers, problem-solve, communicate and/or think critically at whatever level is basic to the task at hand.

Opportunities to upgrade basic skills enrich workers' self-esteem, increase their confidence and interest in learning, and better enable them to carry out their responsibilities inside and outside of the workplace. Upgrading literacy skills enhances workers' employability and is key to assisting those who are adjusting to lay-off and seeking re-employment and retraining. Strong basic skills prepare workers to keep up with emerging technologies, provide the foundation for ongoing training, and increase the likelihood of job security and advancement. Literacy empowers workers to not only understand their rights – be it their collective agreements, employee benefits, health and safety information, labour law or workers' compensation guidelines – but to demand these rights be respected. It increases their ability to participate in the union and collectively in society as a whole.

The B.C. Federation of Labour, adopts the following policy on literacy:

1. The Federation and its affiliated unions shall work to eliminate societal barriers to accessing and participating in basic skills training – be they economic (eg. costs of tuition, training materials, transportation and/or childcare) or psychological (eg. negative social stigma, employer intimidation and/or lack of confidentiality).
2. Affiliated unions shall seek to entrench opportunities to workforce basic skills upgrading through collective bargaining such that:
  - a) Employers assume the responsibility and bear the costs of developing and supporting basic skills upgrading programs;
  - b) Workers shall be entitled to paid time off during training; and
  - c) Union control and participation in the development and delivery of literacy programming shall, at a minimum, be equal to that of management.
3. The Federation and its affiliated unions shall advocate basic skills upgrading initiatives that are:

- a) Labour-based and further the values and principles of the labour movement; and
  - b) Learner-centered and sensitive to their needs, aspirations and prior learning.
4. The Federation and its affiliated unions shall support the delivery of basic skills upgrading initiatives by unionized public institutions and labour-based training centres.

**Adopted in Convention 1998**  
**B.C. Federation of Labour**

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