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## Report dubs Canadian post-secondary education 'dysfunctional'

By QMI Agency

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Canada needs a national body to monitor education to quell the rising tide of illiteracy and underachievement nationwide, a new report says.

Five months before a lack of federal funding closes its doors for good, the Canadian Council on Learning has issued a scathing report about the state of Canadian education.

"While Canada does possess strengths in education, we are not setting the conditions for future success," said Paul Cappon, president and CEO of the CCL.

"The principal cause of this unacceptable and deeply troubling state of affairs is that our governments have failed to work together to develop policies to improve the learning futures of Canadians of all ages."

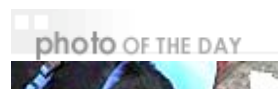
In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility, but the lack of a national co-ordinated strategy is setting the country back, the report says.

The report recommends creating a national body responsible for co-ordinating lifelong learning in Canada, with representation from the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

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Using international standardized testing, the report notes 25% of Canadian children entering school lack the foundation they need to build literacy and math skills.

What's more, 42% of adult Canadians fall below the standard in literacy required internationally to be productive in an older society. The council estimates there will be three million Canadian adults below the literacy standard within 20 years.

While Canadian high school students perform above average in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development testing, the scores have been falling in recent years, the report shows.

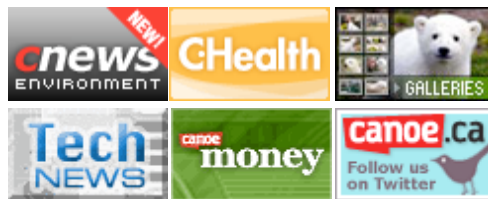
"The absence of common, or shared learning outcomes among Canadian provinces and territories is the most important weakness of K-12 education in Canada -- and is the single most-important reason for which our international standardized test scores will continue their decline relative to other OECD countries," the report says.

The council dubbed Canada's post-secondary system "dysfunctional," noting there are no national standards by which to judge colleges and universities.

The federal government, due to its lack of jurisdiction over post-secondary education, is limited to funding research, which can skew universities' mandates.

"These investments, because they are unaccompanied by allocation of resources in those areas off-limits for the federal government -- teaching and learning -- have skewed the work of institutions away from teaching functions, and toward a greater concentration on research profiles of faculty and institutions."

The Liberal government created the Canada Council on Learning in 2004, but the ruling Tories have cut its funding. This marks its final report before it shuts its doors in March.



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