

ArrowMight – *A Valid Solution*

for Adult Literacy in Ontario

BY DR. RONGO WETERE, ONZM, FNZIM

November 2010

For more information:

ArrowMight Canada

99 Fifth Avenue, Suite 16

Ottawa, ON

K1S 5K4

T – 613 232 0901

F – 613 232 8249

Website: available December 2010



The Open Ontario Plan Throne speech 2010 talks confidently of a new foundation for growth over the next five years with plans to invest \$32 billion in roads, bridges, public transit and energy retrofits for schools. This is deemed to create and sustain 300,000 jobs in Ontario, a fiscal stimulus designed to help re-emerge from the current world recession.

It spoke optimistically about how Ontarians respond to adversity, successfully carving a province out of a harsh northern land; building a successful burgeoning economy from buggy whip to clean energy automobiles.

Ontarians whilst supporting a quality of life for **ALL FAMILIES** realize that this cannot be if such poor literacy rates continue to prevail at their current level in Ontario. This is especially true with 70% of all new employment growth requiring a minimum Level 3 Functional Literacy skills.

**Real dialogue and real solutions must begin for 3 million
Ontarians with inadequate literacy skills!**

ArrowMight Canada through its parent body, Aotearoa Institute Charitable Trust in New Zealand, has absorbed the considerable cost of program development and curriculum presentation over 4 years, (2006 – 2010) at a total cost in excess of \$11 million cdn.

The program is designed for delivery throughout Ontario and Canada. Education providers receive full training, supervision and a Learning Management System (LMS) provided at a competitive cost by ArrowMight Canada.

The ArrowMight Program is available to Education Providers who could be funded by the Government of Ontario to run in 2011 and beyond. The warehouse is filled with student resources produced and purchased in Ontario to support the future vision of a thriving quality of life for all Ontarians.

Improving adult literacy rates will provide thousands of more skilled people for the labour force to grow the future of the Ontario economy. ArrowMight Canada is committed to improving literacy levels for adults and families by making available a comprehensive home-based program that can also be delivered for groups in a community setting.

Opening the Door, an independent evaluation of the ArrowMight Program pilot conducted in British Columbia, Manitoba and Ontario. This report, and all ArrowMight documents, will be available on the ArrowMight website (www.arrowmight.ca).

Current pilot results confirm that 80 – 90% success completion at each level is achievable within the ArrowMight Program time frame.

Though the ArrowMight approach might be considered a paradigm shift for Ontarians, few would disagree that change and trying something new is well overdue. If the Ontario Government current expenditures on literacy funded the ArrowMight family home-based approach through its many existing providers, adult participation rates could easily double to 120,000 with partners and childrens' involvement in the home.

This would justify not only retaining the extra stimulus funding provided over 2 years but supports strong economic grounds to increase expenditure on adult literacy by a further \$100 million so that 7% to 8% of people below Functional Literacy each year in Ontario are assisted, totaling some 210,000 – 240,000 people.

This will ensure that Ontario's population will not face declining literacy levels but instead lead Canada's economic recovery over the next five to ten years as envisaged by the 2010 Open Ontario speech from the Throne.

Let's not underestimate the Clinton 'Grocery Store Model.' ArrowMight's initial 400 student dictionaries cost \$65 each. When 50,000 are purchased the cost is reduced to around \$6 each.

Tutoring costs for ArrowMight are virtually eliminated by 40 DVDs each providing 5 lessons at \$20 each covering 200 lessons. If purchased in bulk the cost will be reduced to \$3.50. It is anticipated that within 2 years DVDs will be superseded by other technologies which again will mean a significant reduction in cost. Annual bulk purchase of 100,000 built-in Ontario laptops for home-based computer training will allow all successful students (households) to keep their laptop after they complete the ArrowMight Program to further their knowledge and pursue employment or higher education. This is more cost effective and better option than leasing laptops that require costs for insurance, recollection and storage. ArrowMight installs Ubuntu, a free, open-source software on every computer that includes training in Microsoft and Open Source to Level 3 with simulated internet accessibility no matter where the student is.

As Facilitators become equipped with the latest method of communication technology such as a smartphone it thereby enables them to input data straight into the LMS after every mandatory student phone or face to face contact for assessment and monitoring. This important full-time non-tutorial role is **THE** community link that encourages adults and families to excel and succeed.

WITH ARROWMIGHT, THERE ARE REDUCED ADMINISTRATION COSTS as providers and funders can track the progress of their registered students on the LMS using a secured password. Therefore, you can have one system covering all ArrowMight literacy learners in Ontario.

THE CANADIAN COUNCIL OF LEARNING
STATED IN SEPTEMBER 2010:

Next 20 years we will see 25% increase in
the Canadian population who have poor
literacy skills.

In the Province of Ontario

**OTTAWA CAN EXPECT TO SEE AN 80% INCREASE IN
ADULTS WITH LOW LITERACY; FROM APPROXIMATELY
275,000 IN 2001 TO NEARLY 500,000 BY 2031.**

**TORONTO'S POPULATION WILL EXPERIENCE INCREASES
OF 64%, JUMPING FROM 1.9 MILLION IN 2001 TO NEARLY
3.2 MILLION BY 2031.**

(www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/ReadingFuture.html)

Current literacy practice in Ontario:

1.

has not seen an improvement in literacy rates over the last 2 decades with more than 3 million with inadequate literacy skills.

2.

reaches too few people to arrest the decline in literacy levels.

Ministry of Education, Ontario – *Report to OLC Conference, Toronto 2010*

By having home-based DVD lessons, the high cost of tutors is effectively eliminated. On screen TeleTeachers provide the best opportunity to **REACH** the 90% of people who do not normally enroll in community programs.

Most ArrowMight students claim this methodology is better than classroom study or one-on-one. With colourful graphics, supportive images and the ability to fast forward or rewind, learning can be self-paced, self-directed, and more accessible in the home and family environment.

Bulk purchasing would allow quality resources for students to be reduced in **PRICE** with **SUBSTANTIAL COST SAVINGS** allowing more learners to participate.

A Community Facilitator is a crucial element to the program and a full-time key paid position. Their responsibility is to enroll and monitor students through the program with a potential workload of up to 80 households per Facilitator. A central database Learning Management System (LMS) has been designed to assist Facilitators to track and manage student's progress and record additional family members who voluntarily participate. This system guarantees accountability for literacy expenditure to government funders.

Pilot results across Canada for the ArrowMight Program confirm its real potential to improve national literacy statistics and the economy.

The major difference in Ontario practice and ArrowMight (AM) is that AM delivers lessons through DVD with complementary Workbooks covering Levels 1, 2 and 3 along with computer literacy. It includes 850 hours of study time that can be completed in 12 months part-time or sooner if a student is able to opt for more full-time study. This flexibility is a key feature allowing anyone, regardless of employment status, to improve their literacy skills.

Traditionally, adult literacy practices in Ontario have set individual student goals to be achievable in the short term or 420 hours over 5 months class study time, however students at Levels 1 or 2 may take a longer time spanning two or three years.

ArrowMight takes the view that literacy studies need to move at a reasonable pace. Non-readers should be able to read the daily news with reasonable clarity within 6 – 8 weeks with part-time study. The full program of 200 DVD and multi-media lessons in English covering essential life skills including reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working collaboratively with others, critical thinking, computer literacy, continuous learning and researching skills should be completed within 850 hours.

In looking at literacy expenditure **MAXIMIZATION**, the community delivery model is often the most **COST EFFECTIVE**, the **MOST COMMITTED** *and the most under-funded!*

What educational providers **NEED** is assistance with appropriate **TOOLS** and **RESOURCES** to match their social commitment, energy and drive. This was exhibited clearly by 400 practitioners at the OLC Conference in Toronto recently where ArrowMight was privileged to attend.

Providers need increased support funding and program assistance to improve both learner outcomes and market penetration, if they are to be expected to make a difference.

Ontario needs a new funding approach and cost efficient methods that support 4 times more people. This means 240,000 learners should be reached per year instead of 60,000 – 8% of the current population who are affected.

This observation is not meant to diminish or criticize existing practices. It is meant to provoke discussion and hopefully suggest solutions that could be easily implemented.

Offering a Solution

So, let's look at one solution we believe will work, whilst acknowledging other solutions may be equally valid.

The new ArrowMight Canadian-designed literacy, numeracy and essential life skills program has successfully completed its pilot test run in three provinces: Manitoba, British Columbia and Ontario.

The complete program is comprised of 200 DVD and multi-media lessons painstakingly developed, scripted and filmed in HD quality. The DVDs are for home and family-based learning but can be delivered to adult groups in a community learning centre setting.

Lessons start from Module 1 (Level One) with **50 LESSONS** moving through Module 2 (Level Two) with **65 LESSONS**, Module 3 (Level Three) with **55 LESSONS** and a home-based Computer Program option with **30 LESSONS**; to achieve the Functional Literacy level 3 regarded as the minimum requirement for the modern Canadian economy.

Adult students are encouraged to focus and develop their individual learning skills and to complete the program part-time over 12 months. If they are able to study full-time, students may complete more quickly.

sixty thousand (60,000) adults received targeted literacy training in 2009 costing **\$100 million**

This only addresses 2% of the problem!

If it could be assumed that 50% of those assisted reached Level 3 Functional Literacy this solves only 1% of the problem!

At this rate it will take 100 years to fix literacy in Ontario!

If new remedial strategies that work are not implemented, the Canadian Council of Learning prediction will become a reality!

Several prominent Canadian economists led by TD Bank's, Craig Alexander, have highlighted the importance of lifting literacy levels on Canada's GDP, saying investment in literacy programs will provide both immediate and longlasting positive returns to the Canadian economy!

Why then is Ontario allowing a significant proportion of its adult population to descend to substandard literacy levels?

Primary focus needs to be on maximizing literacy funding using best practice methodologies that utilize technology and the economies of scale. Limited education funding must fund success. Failure is not an option if Ontario wants to support a decent quality of life for all its citizens.

President Bill Clinton's Example – The 'Grocery Store Model' delivered in a speech, October, 2010 in Ottawa.

QUALITY PRODUCT, LOW MARGINS, HIGH VOLUME = EFFECTIVE COST SAVINGS; HIGHER PROFITS.

In relation to literacy, this equates to more adults in training, more awareness, more people with appropriate literacy skills and more positive gains for the Ontario economy.

The Clinton Foundation

By negotiating bulk purchasing and developing cost effective distribution networks amongst the people requiring the AIDS medicine in Africa, a reduction in costs was achieved from \$600 to \$90 per person per year.

This increased the numbers able to receive treatment by 500% for the same dollar expenditure.