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Lose Their Job Today, They Possess the Necessary literacy Skills
to Secure a New Job*

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Toronto, ON – Three quarters (72%) of working Canadians believe that the current level of adult literacy – that is reading, writing and mathematics skills among adults for whom English or French is their first language – is a ‘problem’ (15% major/58% moderate). Further, an additional 26% believe it is a ‘minor problem’, while just 2% believe there is no problem at all.

- Workers in Atlantic Canada (81%) are most inclined to believe that the levels of literacy in Canada are a problem, followed by those living in Quebec (75%), Alberta (75%), Ontario (72%), British Columbia (68%) and Saskatchewan and Manitoba (63%).

The poll of over 1,000 working Canadians, commissioned by ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation, also found that millions of workers are not totally convinced that they have the necessary literacy skills to be able to secure another job if they were laid off. In fact, only eight in ten (79%) ‘strongly agree’ that they ‘possess the necessary literacy skills to secure a new job’ if they were to lose their current employment. Demonstrating less confidence, 16%

‘somewhat agree’ that they have these skills, while 5% ‘disagree’ (2% strongly/3% somewhat).

- Atlantic Canadians (86%) and Quebecers are most likely to ‘strongly agree’ (85%) that they possess the necessary literacy skills to secure a new job if they had to, while lesser proportions in Ontario (77%), Saskatchewan and Manitoba (77%), Alberta (77%) and British Columbia (75%) strongly agree.

The survey also polled over 300 managers and executives working in the private sector, and the results show that nearly one half of managers would not know how to help if a worker approached them with concerns of low literacy.

More specifically, four in ten (40%) ‘disagree’ (9% strongly/31% somewhat) that ‘if one of their employees told them they had challenges with low reading, writing or math skills, their company could quickly get them the help they need’. An additional four in ten (42%) only ‘somewhat agree’ with this sentiment, while just two in ten (18%) ‘strongly agree’, suggesting that much improvement could be made in the way that companies deal with literacy in the workplace.

Focusing specifically on Ontario, the region that has been hardest hit by job losses as a result of the recession, the data reveal that:

- Ontarian managers and executives are among the least likely to ‘strongly agree’ (16%) that if one of their employees had challenges with low literacy their company could get them the help they need.
- Ontarian workers are among the most likely to believe that the governments should contribute to helping improve literacy skills. By contrast, managers and executives in



Ontario are least likely to believe that governments should contribute to helping improve literacy skills when compared to executives in other provinces, and most inclined to believe that the onus is on individuals.

- Only four in ten (42%) Ontarian managers and executives believe that the place of work is responsible for contributing to an improvement in low literacy skills among Canada's workforce.

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of ABC Canada Literacy Foundation from March 27 to April 1, 2009. For this online survey, a national sample of 1,022 working Canadians, and 309 managers and executives working in the private sector, was interviewed online via the Ipsos I-Say Canadian Online Panel. Weighting was then employed to balance demographics and ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the Canadian adult population according to Census data, and to provide results intended to approximate the sample universe. An unweighted probability sample of this size, with a 100% response rate, would have an estimated margin of error of +/- 3.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20, of what the results would have been had the entire population of adult Canadians been polled, and +/- 5.6 percentage points for the sample of managers and executives. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error.

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