

**Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)  
Activity on the  
Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)**



**Pan-Canadian Overview**



**Council of Ministers of Education, Canada  
Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation (Canada)**

## **OECD Activity**

# **Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)**

## **Pan-Canadian Overview**

**Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)**

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Pan-Canadian Overview</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Component 1: Contextual Factors</b>	<b>9</b>
1.1. Demographic change	9
1.2. Internationalization	21
1.3. New ICT	23
1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/ mismatch	26
1.5. Social developments	32
1.6. Others	33
<b>Component 2: Description of Institutional Arrangements</b>	<b>38</b>
2.1. Political and legal framework	38
2.2. Governance and the role of government	40
2.3. Resources	45
2.4. Others	50
<b>Component 3: Description of Technical Arrangements</b>	<b>51</b>
3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework	51
3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer	54
3.3. Assessment methods and procedures	57
3.4. Others	63
<b>Component 4: Stakeholder Behaviour</b>	<b>64</b>
4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders	64
4.2. Access	67
4.3. Participation	71
4.4. Incentives and disincentives	73
4.5. Others	75
<b>Component 5: Case Studies on Benefits and Barriers</b>	<b>78</b>
5.1. Economic benefits	78
5.2. Educational benefits	79
5.3. Social benefits	81
5.4. Personal benefits	81
5.5. Others	81

<b>Component 6: Conclusions</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>93</b>
Appendix 1 Tables for Comparison	96
Saskatchewan	96
New Brunswick	101
Appendix 2 Alberta Report	
Appendix 3 British Columbia Report	
Appendix 4 Manitoba Report	
Appendix 5 New Brunswick Report	
Appendix 6 Newfoundland and Labrador Report	
Appendix 7 Northwest Territories Report	
Appendix 8 Nova Scotia Report	
Appendix 9 Ontario Report	
Appendix 10 Prince Edward Island Report	
Appendix 11 Québec Report	
Appendix 12 Saskatchewan Report	

# Report of Canadian Provincial/Territorial Activities and Pan-Canadian Overview

## Introduction

The overall purpose of the OECD Activity on Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning is to provide policy makers with useful options for generating effective, beneficial, and equitable systems of recognizing non-formal and informal learning; to effectively implement the “lifelong learning for all” agenda; and to help answer the question “Under what conditions can recognition of non-formal and informal learning be beneficial for all?” This report provides information on recognizing non-formal and informal learning in Canada, most commonly known as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). PLAR is used by a range of organizations including a) educational institutions for program admission and academic credit, b) regulatory bodies for licensing and certification, and c) employers for recruitment and advancement decisions. Because jurisdiction over education is a provincial/territorial rather than a federal responsibility and because immigration and labour force development are shared responsibilities, we have responded to OECD’s questions by providing information on policies and activities at both the national and the provincial/territorial levels.

This report presents a pan-Canadian overview in response to each question posed by OECD. This includes initial contextual information on demographics and economic and social developments, and is followed by descriptions of governmental, institutional, and other organizational arrangements. Examples of provincial/territorial, federal, and pan-Canadian initiatives and conditions have been included for clarity. These examples have been drawn from information provided by the provinces and territories, the federal department most involved in PLAR — Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC), and from supplementary research conducted as part of this project. These examples do not represent an exhaustive inventory of initiatives but rather demonstrate the ways in which PLAR has been used across the country. Quebec’s report on its integrated PLAR system was not included in the overview due to technical reasons; however, the appendices contain references, statistical tables, and the reports submitted by the governments of all ten provinces and one territory. These sources provide individual provincial or territorial perspectives and additional detail and contextual information on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in their jurisdictions.

“Diverse” is a key descriptor of the way in which Canada has responded to the idea of recognizing non-formal and informal learning. Public policies and organizational activity levels vary considerably across the country’s ten provinces and three territories. Federal policies relating to labour force development, citizenship, and immigration have also had a bearing on how PLAR has evolved.

When reviewing this document and the provincial and territorial government reports in the appendices, it is important to note the various terms used to depict postsecondary institutions in Canada. Although there are exceptions, the terms “university” and “university college” generally refer to postsecondary institutions that award undergraduate and graduate degrees following completion of programs of study. The term “college” refers to postsecondary institutions that primarily award certificates and diplomas following completion of programs of study and related applied practicum although, in some provinces, some colleges may award undergraduate applied degrees. There are also other types of public and private postsecondary institutions including institutes and CEGEPs. All jurisdictions provide free elementary and secondary schooling — 12 years in most provinces and territories; 11 years in Quebec where schooling is compulsory to the age of 15 or 16. Apprenticeship programs are primarily workplace-based, with most of the academic portion taking place in public colleges.

Postsecondary institutions may be “recognized,” “registered,” “licensed” by government, or they may not be regulated in any way. They may issue degrees, diplomas, certificates, or attestations, depending on the nature and length of their programs.

Authority to use the title of “university” is restricted to those institutions “recognized” under specific legislation in most provinces and territories. The title of “college” is restricted in some provinces but not in others. No other titles have legislated or policy-based restrictions on usage.

In most provinces and territories, use of the term “degree” is restricted to “recognized” degree-granting institutions. There are some exceptions, particularly theological colleges that may offer divinity degrees. Most public and private non-degree-granting institutions are free to use the terms “diploma” and “certificate.” Quebec CEGEPs (collèges d’enseignement général et professionnel) grant “attestations” for some programs.

Due to the broad use of some institutional titles and credentials, it is important to take into account the status of Canadian institutions (whether they are recognized, registered, licensed, or unregulated, public or private, degree-granting or not) before comparisons with other jurisdictions are undertaken.

This report addresses the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in public postsecondary education, rather than private postsecondary education (Note that the province of British Columbia provides additional information on private postsecondary institutions in that province.) According to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), there are 95 recognized public universities and university colleges in Canada (excluding theological schools) and 154 recognized public colleges, CEGEPs, and institutes of technology. This large number of postsecondary institutions, relative to the population, is an advantage in a country the size of Canada, but poses special challenges for PLAR.

## **Pan-Canadian Overview**

Canada has a population of over 32 million which, according to Statistics Canada, could exceed 40 million by the late 2030s. The median age in 2006 was 38.8 years. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has the nation’s oldest population, with a median age of 41.3 years. Nunavut, the youngest territory, has the youngest population with a median age of 23.2 years. The three provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia have the three largest populations and account for approximately 75% of the country’s total population.

### ***Canada's population is ageing***

Canada's population is ageing quickly, and senior citizens (age 65 and over) may outnumber children by 2015. The ageing of the baby boomers combined with continuing low fertility levels and increasing longevity are important contributing factors. Projections indicate that population ageing will accelerate in 2011 when the first baby-boom cohort (born in 1947) reaches the age of 65 and will last until 2031 when seniors could account for between 23% and 25% of Canada’s total population. This would be almost double their current proportion of 13%. Seniors’ share of the population is likely to continue growing after 2031, but at a slower pace. By 2056, that is, within the next four decades, seniors could constitute between 25% and 30% of the country’s total population and account for close to half the growth of the overall Canadian population.

The nation’s median age has been rising steadily since the end of the baby boom in 1966 when it was only 25.4 years. According to Statistics Canada, by 2031, our median age could reach between 43 and 46 years and by 2056, it could be between 45 and 50 years at which time an estimated 1 out of 10 Canadians would be 80 years or over, compared with around 1 in 30 in 2005 (Statistics Canada, 2006b). Between 1991 and 2001, the population aged 80 and over soared 41% to 932,000. It is expected to increase an additional 43% from 2001 to 2011. By then, it will have surpassed an estimated 1.3 million.

### ***Canada's working population is ageing***

The number of Canadians aged between 45 and 64 years inclusive increased 36% between 1991 and 2001, as the baby boomers began to enter this group. As a result, Canada's working-age population has become more dominated by older individuals. In 2001, the median age within Canada's core working population (aged 20 to 64) was 41.3 years, up 3.2 years from 38.1 years a decade earlier, the biggest increase since 1921. By 2011, this median age is projected to reach 43.7 years.

Demographic research suggests that Canada's working-age population may decline steadily in the 2010s and 2020s. Currently, the working-age population represents 70% of the total population. By the beginning of the 2030s, it could decline to 62%, then level off at about 60%.

### ***Canada's birth rate is low and declining***

The decline in the number of births since 1991 is a major factor behind both the record low growth in population between 1996 and 2001 and the record increase in median age. One of the main causes of the ageing of the Canadian population is the change in fertility rates since 1945. The fertility rate was 3 or more children per woman from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. It then fell rapidly and for the last 30 years has remained below the rate for natural replacement of the population. The current fertility rate of 1.5 children per woman is expected to remain relatively constant for coming decades. This phenomenon accounts for the notable bulge in the population known as the baby boomers who, by virtue of their numbers, will continue to influence Canadian society for many years to come (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Statistics Canada's research also suggests that natural increases could eventually become negative, that is, there would be more deaths than births. This could occur as early as 2020. As a result, international net migration would become the country's only source of population growth.

Immigration levels contribute heavily to the projected population growth at the national level, because the fertility rate is likely to remain below the replacement level. Although immigration has historically been, and continues to be used as, a tool to address labour force development needs, immigration alone cannot reverse Canada's ageing trend.

### ***Canada's population grows at varying rates geographically and by age group***

According to recent projections, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia are the only provinces in which average annual growth is likely to exceed the growth rate for Canada as a whole over the next several years. As a result, these provinces could see an increase in their population share between 2005 and 2031. The projections also show that three provinces (Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan) could have a smaller population by 2031 than their estimated populations in 2005. New Brunswick is already experiencing a population decrease due to the combination of an ageing population, a low birth rate, and out-migration.

### ***Canada's population is becoming increasingly diverse***

Data from past censuses indicate that Canada's visible minority population is growing much faster than the total population. Between 1996 and 2001, the total population increased by 4% while the visible minority population rose by 25%, primarily as a result of immigration.

Using most recent population projections of Canada's visible minority population, Statistics Canada has suggested that, by 2017, our visible minority population could grow by 76% to 7.1 million persons. In contrast, the rest of the population would increase by between 1% and 7%. By 2017, at least 20% of Canadians could be members of a visible minority group. This contrasts with 13% in 2001 and less than 5% of the Canadian population in 1981. This increase is attributed to several factors, the most significant of which is sustained immigration because visible minority persons make up a high percentage of newcomers to Canada. Immigration is a key strategy in Canada's efforts to increase the labour force. It

is estimated that visible minority groups could account for about 85% of Canada's overall population growth by 2017.

There is considerable variation in the size of Canada's visible minority groups, and their geographic distribution. South Asians and Chinese are the largest groups. They are projected to remain the largest and to account for almost half of all visible minority persons by 2017. The highest growth rates are projected for the West Asian, Korean, and Arab groups. Under most national projection scenarios, their populations would more than double over this period.

Most visible minorities live in Canada's largest urban areas. Indeed, more than 70% of the immigrants who came to Canada between 1996 and 2001 chose to live in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. This settlement trend is likely to continue despite efforts by government to encourage migration to other population centres.

## **Summary**

The changes underway in Canada's population suggest that lifelong learning must become a reality if we hope to maximize our use of our labour market and increase our economic productivity and competitiveness. The economic and social integration of immigrants presents special challenges to PLAR, but it is an imperative if immigrants are to contribute fully to their communities and the country. The recognition of non-formal and informal learning must be an element of future economic, social, and educational growth strategies. Whereas important demographic, economic, and public policy differences exist across Canada's regions, the challenges are numerous as jurisdictions strive to generate effective, beneficial, and equitable systems that recognize non-formal and informal learning.

## Component 1. Contextual Factors

### Component 1.1. Demographic change

- 1.1. a) How have the profiles (age, ethnicity, sex, socio-economic backgrounds) of learners changed/diversified for overall post-secondary education institutions (higher education, further education and vocational education and training, professional training, etc.)? Is there any evidence of admission and graduation rates?

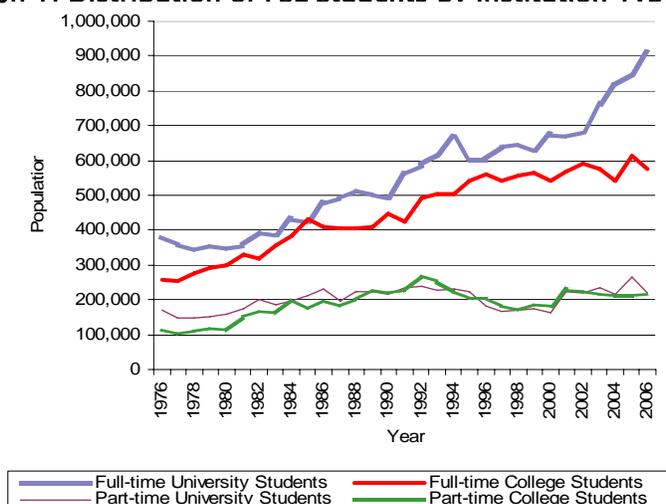
#### *Demographic Overview*

Participation in postsecondary education has been rising for several years and continues to rise. In 2001, no other OECD nation had a higher proportion of its population aged between 25 and 64 with either a college or university credential than Canada. It is in this context that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning operates.

In 2006, there were approximately 910,000 full-time and 221,000 part-time university students and approximately 576,000 full-time and 214,000 part-time college students (Labour Force Survey, 1976–2006).

Nationally, full-time enrolments in both university and college sectors are increasing. Total enrolments surpassed the 1,000,000 mark for the first time during the academic year 2004–05, following seven years of record high growth. Most of this growth was in the 18 to 24 years of age category and was fuelled by the ageing of the “echo-boom” generation. Figure 1 presents the distribution of postsecondary students in Canada by institution type and student status. It demonstrates increases in full-time enrolments over the last 30 years but relatively little growth in part-time studies at both colleges and universities.

**Graph 1: Distribution of PSE Students by Institution Type and Student Status<sup>1</sup>**



<sup>1</sup> Labour Force Survey, February, 1976–2006 [ages included = 15–64]

Regionally, however, trends in enrolment growth vary. In 2004–05, six provinces (Ontario, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Alberta) experienced growth in full-time university registrations, but the other four provinces experienced declines, Saskatchewan the largest at 6% and New Brunswick the smallest at 3%. Changes in part-time enrolments also varied by province, showing net declines in Nova Scotia and net gains in British Columbia.

In addition to the overall growth in the enrolment of domestic students, a record number of international students enrolled in university programs in 2004–05, up 7.3% from the previous year. International students represent 7.4% of total university registrations in Canada. About 75% of international students study in Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec, but the largest increases have occurred in Ontario and British Columbia. About 50% of the international students come from Asia, and about half of these are from China (Statistics Canada, 2006a)

Similar data on the demographics of Canada's colleges will not be available until 2008 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

### ***Age of Postsecondary Learners***

The majority of full-time postsecondary students in Canada are between 18 and 24 years of age. The majority of part-time students are over the age of 25 years. The average apprentice is 27 years old. Overall, the average age of students entering postsecondary institutions has been steadily increasing, but this average varies by region. For example, in Alberta, the proportion of enrolments by age cohort did not change significantly from 2000–01 to 2004–05; during the same period, the traditional youth cohort in Manitoba steadily increased. From 1999 to 2002, the proportion of New Brunswick full-time and part-time students under the age of 25 years decreased.

By 2000, 26% of college students were over 30 years of age; 14% of university students were over 30 years of age; 48% of master's students and 73% of doctoral students were over the age of 30 years (Human Resources and Social Development Canada, 2007).

### ***Ethnicity of Postsecondary Learners***

Canada has limited data on the ethnicity of postsecondary learners.

### ***Immigrants***

Immigrants are more likely than the Canadian-born as a whole to have a postsecondary credential. Approximately 45% of all Canadians between the ages of 25 and 64 have completed postsecondary education, but more than 60% of the immigrants who have been granted permanent resident status had completed some form of postsecondary education prior to entering Canada. Moreover, the percentage of immigrants (45%) who have a university degree is greater than that of the Canadian population as a whole (22%) (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007).

Most immigrants who intend to study after arrival do so, but a considerable number experience difficulty. In 2001, 67% of immigrants who planned to further their education had started six months after arrival in Canada. Of these, 58% were enrolled in English language training, 23% in education leading to a degree or diploma, 9% in language training, and 8% in job-related training. However, 40% of newcomers report difficulty accessing education and training after arrival in Canada. The most commonly cited barriers were language (27%), cost (25%), and problems with classes being full (11%) (Statistics Canada, 2005a).

Formal credential recognition is a problem for many newcomers to Canada. In 2001, only 32% of newcomers with credentials reported having them assessed within six months of arrival in Canada. Of these people, only 56% reported that their credentials had been fully accepted. Among those who had not yet had their credentials assessed, 56% did not plan to do so. Reasons given included the following: not looking for a job, knowing credentials would not be recognized, and lack of time (Statistics Canada,

2005a). Of the remaining 44% who still planned to have their credentials assessed, the top reasons given for not yet having them assessed included lack of time (41%), not knowing where to go to have their credentials assessed (15%), plans for further education or training first (7%), and lack of funds (5%).

Immigrants are less likely to participate in job-related training than those born in Canada. Immigrants are less likely than Canadian-born people to participate in job-related training (26% versus 31%), and they are much less likely to receive employer-supported training (14% versus 22%) (Peters, 2004).

Alternatively, immigrants who do participate in job-related training or who receive employer-supported training tend to receive more hours on average than does the population as a whole (Peters, 2004).

Data on the ethnicity of Canada's students are limited, but demographic trends indicate that, as a result of immigration, the future Canadian student body will have an increasing proportion of visible minorities.

The available data also indicate that visible minority immigrant students have higher educational aspirations than their Canadian-born counterparts. Research conducted by Statistics Canada indicates that, regardless of other characteristics (gender, family structure, region, community size, and first language), visible minority immigrant students were considerably more likely to have university aspirations than Canadian-born non-visible-minority students. Among girls, for example, 84% of visible minority immigrant students compared with 63% of Canadian-born non-visible-minority students planned on attending university. The corresponding proportions among boys were 75% and 51%, respectively. This difference between the university aspirations of the two groups held steady across all five regions of Canada notwithstanding the fact that nearly two-thirds of visible minority immigrant students surveyed had a first language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2005a). It is likely that Canada's education systems will have to reorient themselves to the implications of this demographic shift. (Conference Board of Canada, 2006).

### *Aboriginal Learners*

According to Statistics Canada, Canada's Aboriginal population (currently 1 million), is growing faster than the total population. It is expected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.8% compared to 0.7% for the general population and could account for about 4% of Canada's population by 2017. The biggest challenge confronting the Aboriginal population will be the large number of young adults aged between 20 and 29 entering the labour market. This age group is projected to increase by over 40% to 242,000, more than four times the projected growth rate of 9% among the same age group in the general population (Statistics Canada, 2005b). Growth in the Aboriginal population in the province of Saskatchewan has particular implications. The current proportion of Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan's labour force is 9%, but with the expected growth of the Aboriginal labour force, the percentage is expected to increase to 19% by 2025, when 1 in 4 new labour market entrants (aged between 15 and 29) is expected to be Aboriginal.

An increase in Aboriginal participation in postsecondary education is an important trend in most provinces with significant Aboriginal populations. For example, enrolments at the University of Saskatchewan increased from 541 to 1,825 students between 2001–02 and 2004–05 although enrolments at the college level in Saskatchewan have remained relatively unchanged. Manitoba reports that the increased enrolment of Aboriginal students has been particularly significant at the college level and in apprenticeship training. In 2005–06, 37% of learners at the province's Adult Learning Centres self-identified as Aboriginal, and it is estimated that Aboriginal students now comprise 7% of university enrolments and 17% of college enrolments. Aboriginal apprentices also now constitute 17% of all active apprentices in the province.

### *Foreign Students*

Foreign students influence the profile of postsecondary learners in Canada. In 2003–04, foreign students accounted for 7% of Canada's university population, nearly double the proportion of 4% ten years earlier. This increase is attributed to factors such as the strong economic growth of dominant Asian countries

such as China, new university marketing strategies, the changes in immigration policies that encourage foreign university and college students to stay in Canada following graduation, and the provincial agreements with other countries designed to attract foreign students. Asian students accounted for nearly 70% of the total increase in foreign students between 2002–03 and 2003–04. Compared to 2002–03, the number of students from China rose by 45%. Canadian universities also received large numbers of students from South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and India. Overall, more than 33% of foreign students were enrolled in Ontario universities and 30% were enrolled in Quebec universities. British Columbia universities accounted for 11% and Alberta universities 8%. Among foreign students, both undergraduate and graduate level enrolments increased substantially in 2003–04 compared to the previous year (undergraduate enrolments were 21%, graduate enrolments 15%).

Similar data on the demographics of Canada’s colleges will not be available until 2008 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

### *Gender*

The university sector of Canadian postsecondary education has experienced a major shift over the past three decades in the enrolment of female students who accounted for approximately three-quarters of the growth in full-time enrolment during the 1980s and 1990s. By the turn of the century in most provinces, the majority of university students were female. In 2006, females represented 56% of Canada’s 910,000 full-time university students although, overall, doctoral students were more likely to be male (54%) (Statistics Canada, 2006a). In 2004, 60% of the degrees granted by Canadian universities were granted to women.

Data on the gender of college students are dated; however, the following table presents the profile of Canadian college graduates over a period of ten years. (Additional data on the demographics of Canada’s colleges similar to that presented on university students will not be available until 2008 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

**Table 1: Profile of College Graduates**

2000 COHORT				
Demographic	Atlantic Region	Quebec	Ontario	Western Provinces
Per cent Male	50.0	43.5	41.7	41.7
Median Age at Graduation	23	21	23	25
Mean Age at Graduation	26.0	22.9	27.0	28.4
Per cent Part-Time Studies	2.7	1.3	9.5	10.8

Source: Drewes, T. (2006). Return to College Education.

### **Socioeconomic Profile**

The most recent national data on socioeconomic status and postsecondary education participation rates indicate that 18- to 21-year-olds in the highest family income quartile are twice as likely as those from low-income families to have pursued at least some university studies (40% vs. 20%).

However, the proportion of children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds attending some form of postsecondary education has increased dramatically over the past 25 years. The participation rate of children from families with family income below \$25,000 went from just under 9% for university and 14% for college in 1979 to 20% and 22%, respectively, in 1997 (Corak et al. 2003). With respect to college studies, almost 29% of young people aged between 18 and 21 from low-income families attended a community college or trade school in 2001.

Between 1998 and 2001, the number of postsecondary applicants from lower-income levels increased despite mounting financial challenges of increased tuition and student debt. During this period, applications from families with annual incomes of under \$30,000 increased from 22% to approximately 28% of total applications.

In sum, postsecondary education participation among children of low-income families is increasing, but these students are more likely to attend college than university. Students from low-income families have a chance of attending college roughly equal to that of high-income youth, but are only half as likely to attend university. Statistics Canada research indicates that university participation rates are associated with parents' income but are more strongly associated with parents' level of education. This same association does not appear to exist between participation in college programs and parental education.

## **Graduation Rates**

The number of degrees, certificates, and diplomas issued by Canadian postsecondary institutions rose in all provinces annually from 1998 to 2004 (last data available). Even in small provinces such as Newfoundland and Labrador, undergraduate degrees rose by 4.4% and graduate degrees by 70% from 1995 to 2004.

In 2004, university students received a record number of credentials (209,100), including record bachelor's (168,700) and master's degrees (31,600), up 5.3% from 2003. For the first time, master's level qualifications represented more than 15% of all qualifications awarded. The number of doctorates granted was 7.7% higher than in 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

However, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has identified these figures as an underproduction of graduate degrees and a barrier to increasing Canada's international competitiveness and productivity. While some of the growing demand for highly qualified people can be met by attracting individuals from abroad, the international labour market is very competitive. An increasing proportion of the country's needs will have to be met by graduating more master's and PhD students in Canada. While enrolments in graduate programs have begun to grow in the last few years, continued strong growth will be required if Canada is to avoid a shortfall of advanced degree holders (AUCC, 2005).

Similar data on the demographics of Canada's colleges will not be available until 2008 (Statistics Canada, 2007).

### **1.1. b) What are the effects of demographic change (ageing population and migration) on participation in different sectors of education and training?**

## **General Demographic Trends**

As indicated in the introduction of this report, Canada's population is ageing. Its birth rate is declining. The child and youth populations of several provinces are declining. The working age populations of all provinces are declining or are projected to decline by 2031. The population of seniors is rising and is projected to increase dramatically during the same period or sooner.

### ***Internal Mobility***

In 2004–2005, a total of 285,500 Canadians moved from one province or territory to another. Internal mobilization is driven largely by the labour market, with the western provinces of Alberta and British Columbia receiving the greatest number of migrants during the 5 years prior to the 2001 Census. The oil industry and spin-off businesses in Alberta are currently the important catalysts for internal migration. Between 1997 and 2004, over 186,000 people entered Alberta from other provinces. In 2007 and 2008, Alberta is expected to attract about 14,000 more persons annually. Many of the new arrivals come to the province with higher levels of educational attainment (college and university level education) than Alberta's general population.

Over the last decade, out-migration from the eastern regions of Canada (particularly Newfoundland and Labrador, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia) has exceeded already low birth rates. For example, between 1996 and 2001, the province of New Brunswick experienced net population loss through inter-provincial migration for five straight years, 98% of whom were in the range of 15 to 44 years of age. In the most recent census, the net loss of 8,400 people was more than four times higher than in the previous five years. The province attributes its current net decline in population, which is 20 years ahead of earlier projections, to the increase in outbound migration.

### ***Immigration***

Immigration is a priority in Canadian public policy, viewed by all governments as an important part of the solution to their demographic and, by extension, their economic challenges. Immigration is the main driver behind the increasing size of the country's visible minority population, with 70% being born outside of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2001). Statistics Canada projection scenarios indicate that between 2001 and 2017, Canada's immigrant population could grow by between 24% and 65% to between 7 million and 9 million compared with growth in the non-immigrant population of between 4% and 12%. Most recent immigration patterns indicate that Canada's immigrant population will likely rise to 22% of Canada total population by 2017 compared with 18% in 2001. The attention that public policy makers are currently paying to promote immigration and improve integration, including the recognition of their formal, non-formal, and informal learning is highlighted in Component 1.2.a).

### **Effects of Demographics on Postsecondary Education**

Primary school and secondary school populations are declining in several regions of the country (Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan) or are expected to decline by 2026 (Alberta). The impact that these and other demographics will have on postsecondary education is significant.

Currently, full-time postsecondary enrolments are still rising in most provinces or they remain stable largely due to the ageing of the echo-boom generation. After dropping significantly in the 1990s, part-time enrolments in most provinces appear to have stabilized overall and have even increased in some regions. However, future enrolments in postsecondary are expected to decline in all education sectors in all provinces. This decline will likely lead to increased efforts to raise levels of participation and to recruit students from other provinces and countries; for example, the province of Nova Scotia has become involved in international recruitment as a means of increasing enrolments. The anticipated decline in enrolments may also encourage strategies for continuous learning, targeted training in specific sectors, and further efforts to recognize the skills that people already have. The only exception to the above-noted trend is that Canada's Aboriginal population is increasing its participation in all education sub-sectors with no expectation of decline.

Specific data on the impact of immigration on educational sectors are not available. However, federal data indicate that the postsecondary education level of Canada's adult immigrants in the largest immigrant class (skilled workers) is higher than that of Canadian-born persons, suggesting less need for higher education after they arrive in Canada. However, this advantage is mitigated by the difficulty immigrants

experience in obtaining recognition of their academic credentials. Some institutions have begun to use PLAR to assess prior formal learning when foreign academic credential assessments do not render sufficient information to transfer academic credit toward a Canadian credential. Research does indicate that, once immigrants obtain a Canadian credential, their employability is generally equal to that of Canadian-born persons with the same credentials (Alboim, Finnie, Meng, 2005).

It is also generally accepted that, because immigrants tend to settle in Canada's three largest cities (Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto), educational institutions in these urban centres are most affected by immigration. Student bodies are diverse; the children of immigrants indicate higher levels of intention to obtain postsecondary education than Canadian-born youth; and visible minority enrolments at universities and colleges are increasing.

Student populations in less urban settings are considerably less diverse, and the availability of institutional and community supports is equally scarce. In smaller provinces where there has been a long-term decline in their share of Canada's total immigration, it is recognized that they need to pursue a more proactive immigration role.

In provinces with significant Aboriginal populations, an increasing proportion of young people will be of Aboriginal origin. Canada's Aboriginal population has a positive birth rate and its participation in postsecondary education is rising. Given estimates that two-thirds of the new openings in the labour market over the coming years will require postsecondary education and training, the next decade will see an unprecedented need to further increase Aboriginal participation in postsecondary education and training. In Saskatchewan for example, 18 % to 20% of the 15 to 29 age group of potential entrants into the postsecondary system are Aboriginal. This is expected to rise to 25% by 2013 and 27% by 2016. However, "while the situation is improving, Aboriginal people continue to face major challenges in integrating into the labour market compared to non-Aboriginal people. (Yung-Hing & Lazar, 2006).

**1.1. c) Is there any evidence of national policy on migration (e.g., the low-skilled or high-skilled) with respect to demographic change?**

Canada's demographic projections (combined with labour and skill shortages and economic pressures for higher productivity and global competitiveness) have contributed to the establishment of national and provincial/territorial policies and programs that promote migration. For the purpose of this report, we have interpreted the OECD term "migration" to include both immigration and internal mobility. A number of these initiatives are described below.

## **Legislation**

Canada's federal government has national immigration legislation designed to encourage qualified persons to come to Canada. The *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (2002)* is intended to foster, among other things, a strong, viable economy in all regions of Canada. The federal, provincial, and territorial governments have actively engaged in policy initiatives and agreements that promote migration. Government initiatives can be divided into four categories: 1) federal policies, 2) federal-provincial/territorial agreements, 3) pan-Canadian agreements, and 4) provincial/territorial policies.

### *1. Federal Policies*

As stated earlier, immigration is a key element of Canada's response to national demographic changes related to labour force development. National immigration policies are managed by the federal Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). This includes negotiating immigration agreements with the provinces, setting annual immigration levels, establishing categories of immigrants, and overseeing the administration of immigration, including bringing individuals into Canada, helping them resettle, and removing individuals who have lost their immigration status. Immigrant applicants are

awarded points for meeting specific immigration criteria, and level of education is a priority consideration.

### **Foreign Credential Recognition Program**

Among the most important programs promoting the recognition of immigrants' qualifications is the Foreign Credential Recognition program (FCR), a federal program involving 15 federal departments that provide financial and strategic support for initiatives to improve foreign credential recognition processes. The program assists a wide range of organizations (including sector councils, regulatory bodies, immigrant-serving organizations, and postsecondary educational institutions) who are interested in doing a better job at assessing immigrants' qualifications. The program targets both regulated and non-regulated occupations. It is intended to promote a pan-Canadian approach to assessing and recognizing foreign credentials within targeted occupations and sectors of the economy to facilitate entry into, and mobility within, the Canadian labour market.

### **Foreign Credentials Referral Office**

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) was established by the federal government in 2007 to help immigrants find the information and access the services they need to put their skills to work quickly in Canada. A key component of the FCRO is a Web site featuring a search engine that helps individuals identify both the occupations in Canada for which they may be qualified and the regulatory body appropriate for their needs. The tool will also provide individuals with detailed labour market information, based on where they live (or plan to live). Service Canada will also provide information, client referral, and path-finding assistance to immigrants in Canada via a dedicated phone service (1-888-854-1805).

In addition to the Web site and phone service, an in-person service will be launched in 2007 for service to clients in Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal, Halifax, and Winnipeg. By fall 2007, as the initiative unfolds, this service will be available at more than 320 Service Canada Centres throughout the rest of Canada.

### **Foreign Worker Program**

The Foreign Worker Program is a federal program that authorizes the temporary migration and employment of foreign workers to Canada by helping employers fill positions for which there are skill shortages. The program includes several sub-program categories through which specific occupations have been targeted for an expedited work permit process. The Foreign Worker Program also allows temporary foreign workers to transfer into immigrant nominee programs (see section below entitled "Initiatives Promoting Regional Settlement") and thus accelerate the permanent residency process. Most workers entering Canada under this program are from the United States, Mexico, and the United Kingdom.

### **International Student Post-Graduation Employment**

The recruitment of immigrants through international student programs is a recently adopted mechanism for promoting settlement in Canada. Although international students have traditionally been encouraged to return to their home countries following completion of their postsecondary studies, the federal government has recently begun to encourage their permanent residency by extending post-graduation work permits to two years following graduation rather than one year. In 2004, there were 41,419 international students studying in Canada at postsecondary or trade levels. They came primarily from South Korea, China, Japan, the United States, and France. Most were destined for educational institutions in Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec.

Canadian employers can hire international student graduates who have post-graduation work permits or permits obtained through one of the provincial nominee programs.

## **Immigrant Preparation Overseas**

Through a partnership between the federal government and the national Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), a program to help immigrants prepare for moving to Canada was established in 2006. The Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP) offers labour market information, one-on-one advice and guidance, support for the development of an Individual Integration Plan, and contact information for organizations that provide credential assessment and recognition, language and skills testing and upgrading, licensing, and employment search support. Initial offices have been established in India, the Philippines, and China.

### *2. Federal-Provincial Agreements*

Immigration legislation gives the provinces a voice in deciding immigration policy. The federal government is required to consult with the provinces on patterns of regional settlement and can enter into immigration agreements with individual provinces. As of 2006, all provincial governments have immigration agreements with the federal government; for example:

#### **Canada-Quebec Accord**

The Canada-Quebec Accord is an immigration agreement between the federal government and the province of Quebec. While Canada remains responsible for setting admissibility requirements to enter the country, Quebec is solely responsible for selecting immigrants to the province. Canada will not admit an individual to the province who does not meet the province's selection criteria. Although Canada retains authority over setting the total figures for immigration into Canada, the Accord commits Canada and Quebec to pursuing policies that will allow Quebec to receive a percentage of the total number of immigrants admitted to Canada in a given year that is equal to its percentage of the total population. Furthermore, due to concerns in Quebec over its declining birth rate, the province can exceed this figure by up to 5 per cent. Determining the number of immigrants who will immigrate to Quebec is handled through consultations between the provincial and the federal government.

Quebec is the only province to have immigration offices in overseas countries to provide information about immigrating to Quebec and to attract immigrants to the province. The countries in which Quebec has established immigration offices include France, Mexico, Austria, and Hong Kong.

### *3. Other Federal-Provincial Immigration Agreements*

All the other Canadian provinces also have federal-provincial agreements. Territories can also participate, and Yukon is currently attempting to attract business class investors through the program. A few provinces, including British Columbia and Manitoba, have entered into additional separate agreements so that each can increase its control over immigration to their provinces.

#### **Initiatives Promoting Regional Settlement**

Nearly three-quarters (73%) of the immigrants who came to Canada in the 1990s lived in just three cities: Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal. In contrast, just over one-third of Canada's total population lived in these three areas. As a consequence, newcomers have increasingly represented a larger proportion of the population in these three census metropolitan areas. Only 6% of the new immigrants settled in areas outside the census metropolitan areas.

Past initiatives promoting the settlement of immigration outside of Canada's three largest cities have met only limited success. Two current programs are described below.

#### **Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities**

In 2006, Citizenship and Immigration Canada announced the Strategic Plan to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities (see <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/settlement/plan-minorities.asp#minister> ).

Armed with the experience of earlier initiatives, the Strategic Plan proposes an annual target of 8,000 to 10,000 French-speaking immigrants to francophone minority communities through the proactive management of a series of long-term initiatives. Implementation calls for the recruitment, integration, and retention of new French-speaking immigrants in communities in and outside of Quebec between 2006 and 2011. The federal government proposes that attracting, integrating, and retaining French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec will enhance the vitality of communities by strengthening Canada's linguistic duality and increasing diversity within the communities, provinces, and territories. The plan relies on the creation of partnerships between community organizations, the federal government and its departments, the provincial and territorial governments, municipalities, schools, the private sector, credential recognition organizations, and others.

The following initiatives have been identified as priorities for 2006 to 2011:

- implementing and supporting local networks
- increasing awareness of the local community
- implementing language training in English and/or French
- providing training to upgrade professional and employability skills
- research
- supporting the creation of micro-businesses
- supporting French-language postsecondary institutions in the recruitment and integration of foreign students
- promoting immigration and selecting potential immigrants
- supporting refugees

The Strategic Plan proposes to support the initiatives of 10 postsecondary institutions. These initiatives will, in particular, enable the institutions to offer foreign students support services during their studies (reception, guidance, counselling) and social and economic integration services after their graduation.

### **Immigrant Nominee Programs**

Federal-provincial immigration agreements set the terms of the provincial Immigrant Nominee Programs, which are immigration initiatives driven by labour and skill shortages. The parameters of each province's Immigrant Nominee Program vary. However, in most cases they are employer-driven job recruitment programs that accelerate the immigration of individuals who have obtained employment in advance of arriving in Canada. Employers must demonstrate a need for skilled workers that cannot be filled by Canadian residents. In some cases, this allows individuals to immigrate to Canada who might not otherwise qualify. Every province but Quebec (which has its own arrangements) has a Provincial Nominee Program, the most recent one beginning in May 2007 in Ontario.

#### *4. Pan-Canadian Agreements*

There are a number of Canada-wide agreements that affect migration. These include:

#### **Agreement on Internal Trade**

The Agreement on Internal Trade (1995) between the federal government and all the provincial labour market ministers (except Quebec) is intended to eliminate barriers to trade, investment, and mobility within Canada by providing general rules that prevent governments from erecting new trade barriers and that require the reduction of existing ones. It includes the agreement that any worker qualified for an occupation in one part of Canada should have access to employment opportunities within that occupation in any other province or territory.

In addition, the agreement states that eligibility to practise occupations including those requiring licensing, certification, or registration should be based on competence, and should not result in unnecessary delays in obtaining necessary certification. All provinces and territories of Canada except Quebec agreed to meet these labour mobility provisions by July 2001. Government departments and agencies, occupational regulatory bodies, and non-governmental organizations such as unions, colleges and universities, and professional associations have been asked to comply with the terms of this agreement.

### **Red Seal Program**

The Red Seal Program was established following agreement by all provinces and territories to provide greater mobility across Canada for skilled tradespersons. Through this program, apprentices who have completed their training and certified journeypersons are able to obtain a Red Seal endorsement on their Certificates of Qualification and Apprenticeship by successfully completing an Inter-Provincial Standards Examination.

The program encourages standardization of provincial and territorial apprenticeship training and certification programs. The Red Seal allows qualified tradespersons to practise their trade in any province or territory in Canada without having to write further examinations. To date, there are 49 trades included in the national Red Seal Program.

### **Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol (Colleges)**

All of Canada's publicly funded colleges are signatories to a Mobility and Transferability Pan-Canadian Protocol in which they agree to maximize the recognition and transfer of learning acquired through formal education, workplace training, and work and life experience.

Specifically, the colleges have agreed that course or program transfer credits will be based on an equivalency of educational achievement and of knowledge, skills, abilities, and outcomes. It recognizes that effective learning can occur under a variety of arrangements and conditions including all forms of formal and informal learning such as self-study, workplace education, training and experience. Various methods of demonstrating or achieving equivalency may be employed, such as program reviews of workplace training, competency tests, challenge examinations, and other forms of prior learning assessment.

Essentially, this agreement supports the automatic transfer of credits acquired through PLAR across institutions. Institutions that deny the transfer of credit must state their reasons for the refusal. In addition, the colleges have agreed to make available current information that accurately describes course equivalencies, program prerequisites, and levels of achievement on which admission to, and awarding of transfer credit at, the receiving institutions will be based.

### **Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits**

In 1995, Canada's universities engaged in a consultation that culminated in the adoption of a pan-Canadian protocol on the transferability of university credits. The protocol states the importance of promoting student mobility across Canada at the university level and acknowledges the evolving characteristics of the Canadian university student body where students are generally older, more mobile, and more likely to be forced by work-related or personal reasons to register in more than one university to complete their undergraduate work.

As a result of the consultations, it was agreed that all course work satisfactorily completed in the first two years of university study will be considered for recognition of credit if they are granted admission at another university. This was to ensure that transferring to another university in Canada would not result in undue additional costs or in the need to repeat essentially equivalent prior learning experiences.

## 5. *Provincial/Territorial Policies*

Every province in Canada has an immigration agreement with the federal government. Specific provincial departments are generally responsible for participation in immigration nominee programs, delivery of settlement and language training programs, training programs for employment readiness and bridging, federal/provincial relations, and agreements related to immigration.

An example of provincial engagement in migration issues is provided in the province of Saskatchewan. Although there is no formal migration policy in place, the province has taken a number of steps to stem the migratory flow out of the province and to attract workers from other provinces. In 2006, a graduate tax credit was established for students who graduate from postsecondary institutions. The credit serves as an incentive for graduates to start their careers in Saskatchewan.

In 2007, the Government of Saskatchewan undertook a number of initiatives to attract and retain young people in the province by demonstrating how the province is the best place for young people to live and work. The province also allocated \$25 million to retain and recruit health care professionals over the following three years. The province has recently injected an incremental \$52.6 million into the postsecondary education and training system in order to increase training capacity and discourage student movement to neighbouring provinces.

The province of British Columbia has also taken a proactive policy approach to promoting regional settlement, including a labour market strategy that gives high priority to immigration as a key source of labour force growth. In 2002, the federal and British Columbia governments began to work together to encourage immigrants to settle in areas outside of Vancouver and the Lower Mainland. A regional immigration strategy is under development and will use community partnerships to promote a broader settlement pattern. In 2005, eight areas of the province joined a Regional Immigration Initiative to promote regional settlement by increasing awareness and developing resources to attract immigrants.

### **1.1. d) Describe any change of higher education institutional admission policies starting to practise recognition of non-formal and informal learning due to the demographic change.**

There is no research on PLAR-related changes to postsecondary admission policies as a result of demographic change. The effects of Canada's ageing population and low birth rate are only now starting to reach the postsecondary level of education. In addition, part-time enrolments have remained relatively stable at both colleges and universities. Consequently, there has been little incentive for strategies geared to increasing enrolments as a direct result of demographic changes (although there are some regional exceptions). Changes that have taken place appear to be driven more by concerns about access and equity than about empty seats.

In most provinces, adults who have completed secondary school are automatically entitled to apply to college for credit programs (although some programs have pre-requisites that must first be completed) as well as a wide range of non-credit programs. Pre-admission and upgrading courses as well as secondary school equivalency examinations are available for learners who have not completed secondary school. As a result, adult learners in Canada do not face significant admission barriers to most colleges.

This is not the case with universities. Most institutions have strict limits to admissions and do not use PLAR for admission purposes.

Colleges and universities that are interested in recruiting more adult learners however, have begun to offer prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) services. The following are examples of institutions that have modified their admission policies to at least some programs in order to facilitate the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, but demographic change as the key motivator has not been explicitly stated.

## **Manitoba**

In 1999, the Senate at the University of Winnipeg approved PLAR policies and procedures following a decision that recognized several benefits to adult learners, faculty, and the university, including student recruitment and retention. PLAR services are limited to the awarding of academic credit rather than admission to programs. Before student candidates are granted permission to undertake PLAR, they are required to undertake pre-assessment evaluation and to consult with an advisor. The university has a full-time Coordinator of PLAR and Adult Learner Services.

## **New Brunswick**

Most universities in New Brunswick have PLAR policies although only a limited number of programs have implemented the service. The University of New Brunswick (UNB) has instituted a Bachelor of Integrated Studies degree completion program. PLAR is a component within the program that encourages learners to apply for assessment either as a means of meeting admission requirements or of furthering their amount of elective credit. ([http://extend.unb.ca/deg\\_cred/programs/bis.php](http://extend.unb.ca/deg_cred/programs/bis.php))

New Brunswick Community College's prior learning recognition policy states: "The college institutions may also recognize experiential learning by establishing equivalencies between non-institutional prior learning and available training programs." Institutions are required to establish appropriate mechanisms for the transfer of credits and the assessment and recognition of prior learning as part of the academic management function.

## **Ontario**

Non-formal and informal learning began to receive recognition in Ontario's 25 publicly funded colleges during a policy-based implementation phase from 1993 to 1996. In 2003, a formal PLAR policy was incorporated into the ministry's Framework for Programs of Instruction. Emphasis was placed on assessment for academic credit rather than admissions. According to the provincial policy, PLAR must be made available for as many credit courses as possible in programs of instruction that receive funding from the provincial government. A resource document on appropriate institutional policies and practices was also made available to all colleges. Most Ontario colleges have developed PLAR policies that provide for assessment for program admission (where there are specific pre-requisites) and for academic credit.

## **Component 1.2. Internationalization**

### **1.2. a) Describe any national policy or current practices of recognition of non-formal and informal learning as part of integration strategies of migrant population (highly skilled, low skilled and refugees)?**

Canada's policies and practices on integration are driven by the same factors that drive migration policies — labour and skill shortages, and economic pressures to become more productive and competitive (see 1.1.c). The federal government considers PLAR to be an integral component of Canada's national strategy to improve the labour market integration of immigrants. The federal Innovation Strategy, launched in 2002 notes that in 1996 there was a percentage point difference of nearly 20 points between the employment rate of university-educated, Canadian-born workers (92 per cent) and that of university-educated immigrants (73 per cent). These gaps have been widening over time, indicating inefficiencies in the labour market integration process that results in immigrant skills being under-utilized (HRSDC, 2002).

Poor labour market outcomes have also contributed to a rising incidence of poverty among recent immigrant families. The percentage of immigrant families who have been in Canada for 10 years or less and who fall below the low-income cut-off level rose from 23 per cent in 1985 to 39 per cent in 1997.

A critical aspect of labour market integration for skilled immigrants is the recognition of their qualifications by Canadian educational institutions, regulators, and employers. To promote recognition, the federal government established the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program that provides financial support for many initiatives designed to develop better processes for assessing and recognizing foreign qualifications.

Beginning in 2003, the FCR program was allocated \$68 million to speed the recognition processes for internationally trained professionals in several occupations (pharmacists, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, physiotherapists, and occupational therapists) as well as in non-regulated occupations that make up about 85 per cent of the labour market. Non-regulated occupations are in sectors such as tourism, textiles, software technology, and aviation maintenance. Many projects have been completed or are still in progress.

Across Canada, there are many national and provincial integration support programs. They include information and counselling, labour market information services, language assessment and training, employment preparation, technical skills assessment and training, essential skills assessment and training, workplace culture orientation, internships, and mentoring programs among others. In order to provide a manageable response, we have selected a small number of initiatives that address the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a primary objective. Examples in two jurisdictions are provided below. Other examples are presented in the reports of British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

## **Ontario**

In 1995, the Ontario government established the Access to Professions and Trades (APT) initiative to promote access to the labour market for qualified skilled immigrants. The then Ministry of Citizenship worked with key partners (occupational regulatory bodies, employers, educational institutions, and community agencies serving immigrants) to develop programs and policies that facilitate recognition of international qualifications and experience. PLAR was one of six issues identified as a priority. One result emanating from the APT initiative was the systematic implementation of PLAR at all of Ontario's public colleges.

The government also funded project development for PLAR tools and processes that evaluate the skills and experience of internationally educated persons. One example is the skills demonstration test for automotive service mechanics seeking a provincial Certificate of Qualification that authorizes holders to work in this regulated occupation. However, in this and many other innovative projects, the challenge of establishing sustainable PLAR processes overwhelmed the results.

In 2006, the Ontario government announced an investment of almost \$14 million for 24 new bridging programs to help newcomers work in their field sooner. This brings the total investment to \$53 million and 68 active bridging programs in 2007. These newest programs, which often include PLAR components, are in the fields of accounting, the agricultural industry, architecture, carpentry, construction, early childhood education, employment counselling, engineering, environmental planning and science, health care, engineering technology, and midwifery.

In 2006, the Ontario government also passed landmark legislation to address barriers faced by internationally educated professionals. The *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act* (2006) requires Ontario's 34 regulated professions to ensure their licensing processes are fair, clear, open and timely.

The Act establishes the Office of the Fairness Commissioner to audit registration and licensing practices, and ensure compliance. The extent to which this new Office will incorporate PLAR into their

expectations of fair practice has not been explicitly stated. Policy development is under way. Similar legislation is pending in Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

A number of the regulatory bodies that govern access to Ontario professions have also instituted procedures to recognize international applicants' non-formal and informal learning. In some cases, the regulatory bodies conduct their own assessments; in other cases, they have contracted with postsecondary institutions to perform assessments on their behalf (e.g., Ontario College of Massage Therapists).

### **British Columbia**

In 2007, the British Columbia government introduced a Skills Connect for Immigrants program to assist new immigrants to secure jobs that fully use their skills and talents. The program will respond to current and long-term skill shortages by assessing immigrants' skills and experience and bridging their access into the workplace in areas that complement B.C.'s growing economy. Skills Connect aims to assist over 5,000 immigrants over a three-year period bridge into employment that better reflects their skills and qualifications.

Skills Connect currently focuses on connecting immigrants with employers in the construction, transportation, energy, tourism, and hospitality sectors. Plans are underway to expand the program to include the health care sector. The provincial commitment to this program of \$4.8 million each year for three years will be matched by contributions from Citizenship and Immigration Canada and Health Canada.

In 2006, the British Columbia government also introduced a three-year Immigrant Skilled Trades Employment Program (ISTEP) with funding from the federal Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program. It is a pilot program aimed at helping landed immigrants put their construction knowledge and experience to use. The program will help build careers in British Columbia's construction industry and provide employers with workers in the skilled trades. Landed immigrants who have experience in construction or who want to start a career in the construction industry will be matched up with employers who have jobs. Candidates will also be able to "challenge" provincial requirements in the same way tradespeople from other provinces can.

ISTEP is not a training program but, through job coaches, immigrants will be advised about available training. The program will, however, pilot an introduction to the trades program specifically targeted at immigrants. This will be a six-week technical program that also has an additional six weeks of English-language instruction specific to the trades. There is no cost to the potential employers or to the immigrants wishing to participate in ISTEP, and there is no fee for the services provided by the job coaches.

## **Component 1.3. New ICT**

### **1.3. a) Provide any evidence of modularization of learning and the new recording system opened up by new information and communication technologies be fully used to promote credit transfer.**

Although there are occurrences of modular programming, they are not characteristic of Canadian postsecondary education, and there is little available evidence that modular training has been used to increase institutions' credit transfer capacities or practices. Modularization has had a positive impact however on the delivery of prior learning assessment. For example, Red Deer College in Alberta offers prior learning assessment for a Modularized Computer program through which students must demonstrate competence in at least half of the modules in order to obtain credit for their prior learning.

The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in daily life (school, work, households, public domains) is transforming education and training in many ways ranging from teaching

and administration to research and social networking. New technologies are increasingly used to deliver courses and programs and to store data for administrative and communications purposes. However, the use of these technologies for the expressed purpose of promoting credit transfer is more limited. Three examples can be found in the reports from provinces of British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan. In the province of Alberta, electronic tools and resources to increase access to educational opportunities have been used for many years, and a synopsis is provided in Alberta's report.

### **British Columbia**

British Columbia has made a strong effort to promote and coordinate on-line learning and credit transfer through the activities of three organizations — BCcampus, the BC Council on Admissions & Transfer (BCCAT), and LearnNowBC.

BCcampus is a provincially sponsored collaboration of B.C.'s 25 public postsecondary institutions with a mandate to develop on-line learning resources to provide students with greater access, choice, flexibility, mobility, and success. BCcampus is responsible for coordinating the collaborative development of on-line courses and programs, and provides a single access point for learners to on-line courses at all public postsecondary institutions in B.C. It includes a made-in-B.C. "connector technology" which provides automated data transfers between institutions, allowing them to securely exchange information. The deployment of the BCcampus connector across the entire postsecondary sector will be completed in 2007.

BCcampus works with BCCAT to automate connections between the BC Transfer Guide and to assist students with admission, registration, and course transfer decisions.

BCCAT was formed in 1989 as part of an "access for all" strategy of the provincial government. BCCAT's purpose is to coordinate the transfer and articulation efforts of institutions in the BC Transfer System. Transfer and articulation in B.C. have always been the responsibility of individual institutions, and BCCAT has coordinated and managed the processes involved.

BCCAT has responsibility for the "Education Planner," an on-line database of provincial programs, admission requirements, tuition fees, and other program-related information. It has developed a number of transfer-related research and admission-related research projects to inform and ease the transfer and admission system in the province. The BC Transfer System is widely regarded as being among the most successful systems in North America.

Also known as the Virtual School, LearnNowBC is a single point of entry to information about distributed learning in British Columbia (in the K to 12 system). This Web site contains both distributed learning course details and information about student services available on-line. The Virtual School is an alliance of public distributed learning (DL) schools that enables coordination and efficiencies for on-line services such as Web sites, tutoring, course development, registration, and access to courses.

Between BCcampus and BC Virtual School, there are shared data elements for transfer, concurrent studies, and education and career planning through BCCAT.

### **Nova Scotia**

ICT is used to better promote credit transfer at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, through the publication of an on-line credit transfer guide. While it serves as a guide only, it provides students with a sense of which credits taken elsewhere will be accepted at Dalhousie University. Several other universities in the province are creating their own transfer credit guides. The community colleges in Atlantic Canada have also collaborated in the development of a *Guide to Block Transfer Agreements*. This guide is available in CD format to all graduates of community colleges in Atlantic Canada.

### **Saskatchewan**

In Saskatchewan, ICT has facilitated the administration and record-keeping of academic credits acquired through the recognition of prior learning. The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and

Technology (SIAST) has developed a database of courses eligible for prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR), including information on requirements, process, and fees. The database provides access to information for prospective candidates to help them determine whether to proceed with PLAR and what steps are required in order to do so.

Student records are electronically coded to identify on internal records the courses that have been credited through PLAR. Confidentiality is maintained on external records (transcripts), with no distinctive codes accorded to credits obtained through alternate assessment methods. Thus no stigma is attached to students who have obtained credits or certification through the PLAR process.

The ability to track and maintain efficient records of credits granted through PLAR may aid administrative processes supporting the granting of partial credits and recognition of course modularization. This type of work, however, is still under development.

**1.3. b) Provide a list of new qualifications that have been opened up by new information and communication technologies. Provide evidence, if any, that the certificates by the major industries carry more or equivalent currency in the labour market than academic qualifications.**

No national or pan-Canadian data are available. The report of the province of British Columbia, however, describes a number of occupations that are generally accepted as part of the new ICT in that province.

**1.3. c) Describe current national policies or practices of e-portfolio as a tool to record learning outcomes or 'learning assets'? What have been achieved and what have been challenges?**

The use of portfolios as tools to identify and assess students' academic and prior learning are familiar to many Canadian postsecondary educators, particularly in colleges. Portfolios are used to assess non-formal and informal learning of adults applying to or seeking credit for college courses and programs. They are also used by community-based organizations serving immigrants as a means of documenting the knowledge and skills that cannot be verified in academic credentials. The use of e-portfolios however, has been limited to specific pilot projects or initiatives.

Portfolio development is used extensively in Nova Scotia where the Nova Scotia Community College has branded itself, Canada's Portfolio College and requires all full-time students to engage in developing a portfolio. E-portfolio is one option for learners to meet their portfolio requirement to graduate. E-portfolio is a natural fit for computer programs at NSCC as well as many applied arts and new media programs. Students in these programs work in an on-line environment and are expected to showcase their skills in this medium. On-line learners at NSCC also choose to engage in a portfolio process via technology. Not only students but many faculty and staff at NSCC also take portfolio development on line.

E-portfolios are also increasingly used in the province of British Columbia. The University of British Columbia recently completed a three-year, campus-wide ePortfolio pilot project involving 12 sub-projects, 2000 students, 91 instructors, and 37 staff. The University College of the Fraser Valley developed an English for Career and Professional integration course to help foreign-trained professionals continue their career paths in Canada through the development of personal ePortfolios. All B.C. faculties of education now require their teachers-in-training to complete portfolios during their undergraduate years. Three challenges were identified in a 2005 study with university students: 1) buy-in by students, 2) understanding the assessment purpose and process, and 3) problems with technology and ePortfolio software.

## Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch

### 1.4. a) Describe any legal framework, policy, programs, research that address the issue of recognition of skills, experience, and knowledge within the framework of human capital with respect to the economic developments or labour force issues. Are there any specific policies at the regional level concerning such as 'Regional Development' and 'Learning Regions'?

There is no federal legislation requiring the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Canada. However, there has been support for PLAR at all government levels for several years, directly linked to the need to maximize the use of Canada's labour supply. Early provincial pilot projects involved the assessment of workers' knowledge and skills for the purpose of labour adjustment (lay-offs and industry closures) as well as re-training and upgrading. Recognition has also been linked to the need to do a better job of recognizing immigrants' knowledge and skills that cannot be identified through the traditional methods of academic credentials assessment, credit transfer, and accreditation. Today, federal public policies and several provincial policies on labour force development include the recognition of prior learning as a priority. The Northwest Territories has included PLAR in its strategic plan for 2005 to 2015.

An example of federal policy in this area is the Government of Canada's Innovation Strategy (2002) which sets out the government's position on skills and learning. The strategy recognizes that Canada's learning system must be strengthened if we are to meet the skills and labour force demands of the coming decades. The strategy states that insufficient PLAR capacity is an important gap in our learning infrastructure and refers to a recent study by the Conference Board of Canada which estimates that the economic benefit of recognizing prior learning would be an additional \$4.1 to \$5.9 billion in income to Canadians annually. Recognition of informal and non-credit learning would also motivate more adults to gain additional skills, and would remove a significant barrier to full participation and mobility in the labour market for many Canadians.

A further example of federal policy support for PLAR is demonstrated in HRSDC's Learning Initiatives Program. The goal of the PLAR initiative within this program is to identify innovative ways of helping individuals secure improved employment opportunities in the knowledge-based economy and promote a culture of lifelong learning. The PLAR initiative offers contribution funding for up to 3 years to projects that develop and test original approaches to PLAR, develop best practices to encourage recognition of all types of learning for academic credit, and build stakeholders' capacity to recognize learning. Between 2000 and 2005, over 20 PLAR projects were funded under the Learning Initiatives Program.

Provincial approaches to recognizing skills, experience, and knowledge as tools for economic and labour force development are noted in the provincial reports of Alberta, Manitoba (under 2.1.a), Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island. Examples of provincial approaches are available in the reports of the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia.

In Alberta, there are a number of initiatives linking the recognition of skills, experience, and knowledge to economic and labour force development. Building and Educating Tomorrow's Workforce (BETW) (2006) is a provincial initiative that includes a number of short-, medium-, and long-term strategies that aim to increase Alberta's education and skill levels. Under this strategy, working with partners to recognize the credentials, competencies, prior learning and work experience of immigrants and inter-provincial migrants, is highlighted as a priority activity to attract labour to the province.

In 2005, Alberta undertook a comprehensive review of its advanced education system — A Learning Alberta (2006) review. The key goal of A Learning Alberta is to ensure all Albertans are able to maximize their potential through higher learning (including those who have been traditionally under-represented in the system). A policy recommendation from the review is to develop an action plan to recognize the international credentials and prior learning of immigrants. A second policy

recommendation is to expand the ability of institutions and employers to recognize prior learning through developing a framework that supports assessment. The goal of the review is to achieve a learner-centred society in which mechanisms that recognize prior learning and transfer among institutions allow ease of movement throughout the system.

In July 2005, Alberta established a new immigration policy, Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta, to help attract and retain immigrants. This government-wide policy states that immigrants are vital to sustaining the prosperity and continued development of Alberta's economy, now and in the future. Alberta's strong economy has placed high demands on the province's labour force, which has resulted in skill shortages. The policy sets out specific strategies that include expanding efforts to recognize and use foreign credentials and skills acquired abroad.

In October 2005, the Alberta Legislature passed the *Access to the Future Act* that gave the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology the authority to implement processes that enhance access and affordability of advanced education, including arrangements among public postsecondary institutions regarding recognition of prior learning. In 2007, the Ministry of Advanced Education and Technology announced that a PLAR policy framework would be developed for the province.

In 2007, the British Columbia government released a WorkBC Action Plan and Web site that sets out the province's priorities and the steps for how government will address skills shortages for the next five years and respond to challenges for the labour market in the longer term. See [http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev/down/work\\_bc\\_action\\_plan\\_april27.pdf](http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev/down/work_bc_action_plan_april27.pdf)

In February 2004, the International Qualifications Unit of the British Columbia Ministry of Economic Development, in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, funded 16 exploratory and developmental projects across British Columbia. These projects explored the current capacity, interest, and strategic opportunities related to the labour market attachment of skilled immigrants in B.C. Additionally, some projects identified best practices and developed resources to assist in addressing barriers to employment. See the British Columbia provincial report for further information on these projects and on common themes in key B.C. research and reports on improving the labour market integration of immigrants.

**1.4. b) Describe overall skills mismatch/shortage situation in your country. Do you have any economic policies that address the issue of skills shortage or skills mismatch? In what sectors/industries has the issue been most conspicuous?**

***Skill Mismatches/Shortages***

Because Canada is a diverse country, labour market supply/demand characteristics are often dependent on the economic circumstances of a particular region. The western province of Alberta's current skill shortages, for example, are largely the result of a booming economy in oil and gas industries. Skill shortages in Eastern Canada reflect population declines and migration to western Canada. In 2000, a national report published by the Expert Panel on Skills determined that there was a "persistent shortage of skills" deemed "essential," including teamwork, communication and management skills. Shortages also exist on a regional basis within provinces.

Occupations currently showing signs of greatest shortages nationally include professional occupations in health, management occupations, construction, and other trade occupations and energy-related occupations. Across the country and in all sectors of the economy, increasing and ever-changing skill requirements are being driven by the emergence of the knowledge economy, the rapid advance and transformational nature of new technologies, and the force of global competition.

## ***Economic Policies***

The policy commitments in Canada's recently announced economic plan, *Advantage Canada: Building a Strong Economy for Canadians* (2006), may address skill shortages:

A policy commitment that the government will "continue to reduce personal income tax to make the tax system fairer and ensure Canada attracts and retains the highly skilled workers necessary to foster innovation and growth" (Department of Finance Canada, 2006).

Actions to increase participation in the workforce:

- reviewing/eliminating labour market participation barriers for under-represented groups
- improving labour market programming to ensure the development of skills that will benefit both employers and employees
- improving the Temporary Foreign Worker Program to be responsive to the needs of employers
- reviewing ways to make it easier for temporary foreign workers and foreign students educated in Canada to remain here and become Canadian citizens (Department of Finance Canada, 2006)

Additionally, the national budget announced for 2006 provides the following:

A tax credit for employers who hire and train apprentices to help them cope with the difficulties they face in finding skilled tradespeople, as well as grants for apprentices under a new Apprentice Incentive Program, and a tools tax deduction for tradespeople who must acquire tools as an employment condition (Department of Finance Canada, 2006).

The Budget also notes that the government will move toward establishing a Canadian agency for assessment and recognition of foreign credentials (Department of Finance Canada, 2006).

## ***The Sector Council Program***

The Sector Council Program has a demand-driven approach designed to address skills and mobility challenges from the business/employer perspective. The program is a key component of the federal Workplace Skills Strategy that aims to improve Canadian economic competitiveness by fostering innovative, productive, and inclusive workplaces where workers are encouraged and supported to develop optimal knowledge, skills, and abilities.

The Sector Council Program works with a network of sector councils in various industries: including automotive, policing, biotechnology, steel, aviation, mining, and petroleum. Sector councils are organizations that bring together business, labour, and educational stakeholders in key industries to share ideas, concerns, and perspectives about human resources and skills issues, and to find solutions that benefit the sector in a collective, collaborative, and sustained manner. The program's activities ultimately enable workers, employers, and training providers to better match skills development and supply to employer demand and to address critical skills shortages. SCP activity fosters systemic change in the labour market by supporting industry-responsive curriculum and skills development; promoting mobility through the availability of standards and certification.

Additional information on skill mismatches and shortages is available in the attached reports of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Concrete examples of how skills mismatch/shortages are being addressed is provided in the report of the province of Saskatchewan which is developing a provincial labour market strategy focused on development, attraction, and retention of skilled labour. The provincial immigration strategy, with a \$6.3 million budget for 2006–07, also aims to attract more immigrants to Saskatchewan and help them settle in Saskatchewan communities and labour force. There will be increased expenditures on support programs to address the employment, language, literacy, essential skills, and other settlement needs.

**1.4. c) Provide any evidence of increasing or decreasing economic and social disparities in your country (e.g., poverty rate such as gini-co-efficiency) among certain groups (low-skilled, immigrants, youth, older workers, etc.). Provide also, if any, relevant documents addressing policies issues (economic, social, labour market, etc.) that account for such trends.**

The report of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) notes that, in Morissette and Picot's 2005 paper *Low-Paid Work and Economically Vulnerable Families over the Last Two Decades*, the proportion of jobs that pay less than \$10 per hour has remained "fairly stable since the 1980s" (p. 4) even though workers' education and experience have grown substantially. In particular, it was found that

"In 2000, individuals with no high school diploma, recent immigrants, unattached individuals, lone mothers and persons living alone accounted for fully 71% of all full-time workers in low-paid jobs *and* in low income, but only 37% of all full-time workers. While members of these five groups account for the majority of low-paid workers in low-income families, two of these groups have seen their economic position decline significantly: low-educated couples and recent immigrants" (Morissette and Picot, 2005, p.4).

Picot and Sweetman (2005) also note there has been a disparity in the earnings of immigrants when compared to Canadian-born residents. More specifically, the 1980s and 1990s saw the deterioration of the earnings of recent immigrants. The three main empirically significant sources identified are

- different characteristics of immigrants (such as different source regions, higher educational attainment)
- a decline in the returns to foreign work experience
- a general decrease in labour market outcomes for all new entrants to the labour market, including immigrants (Picot and Sweetman, 2005, p.4)

A 2004 study by the C.D. Howe Institute, *Immigrants' Declining Earnings: Reasons and Remedies*, indicates that the earnings of recent immigrants to Canada are declining, even though the people themselves are more skilled than those in the past.

Yung Hing and Lazar (2006) also identify higher unemployment for certain groups particularly "youth, Aboriginal Canadians, persons with disabilities, older workers and recent immigrants." Also noted is the fact that, although the unemployment rate is low (relative to recent historical standards nationally), there still exists "persistent, significant, and growing regional disparities in unemployment rates" (p.5). As an illustrative example, Yung Hing and Lazar note that in March 2006 the unemployment rate in south-central Manitoba was 2.2%, but it was 22.7% in Gaspésie, Quebec (2006, p.5).

The report from British Columbia provides similar data on economic and educational disparities from a provincial perspective.

HRSDC reports an interesting trend related to older workers and education. In 2005, nearly 40% of the "better-educated" workers were over 45 years old, nearly double that in 1990. As a consequence, older workers with a higher education are more likely to remain in the labour force or to find a job:

"The participation rate of people aged 55 or more with some postsecondary education is nearly twice as large as for those with high school or less. They are also twice as likely to be employed, with an employment rate of 40% versus 21% for those with only high school or less" (Statistics Canada, 2006a).

In 1990, there were 285,000 bachelor's-degree-holders aged 45 or older employed in the workforce. By 2004, most of those individuals would have left the labour market. In 2004, there were 790,000

bachelor's degree holders aged 45 or older employed in the workforce. Consequently, replacement demand in the next 15 years can be expected to be close to triple that of the past 15 years (AUCC, 2005).

As noted previously, many of the trends discussed in this section may be related to changing population demographics and regional economic variation. For good examples of populations that face economic and social disparities in Canada, see the report by the province of Saskatchewan in the appendices.

**1.4. d) Provide data, if any, which points to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a way of re-distributing human capital and solve the issue of skills mismatch and skills shortage and, therefore, a way to drive economic development.**

No national data or examples are available linking the recognition of non-formal or informal learning to improved distribution of human capital to resolve skills mismatches or shortages. However, Canadian research supports the need for such initiatives. Research by the Conference Board of Canada asserts that elimination of the learning recognition gap in Canada would provide \$4.1 to \$5.9 billion in additional annual income to Canadians. Over 540,000 Canadians would gain between \$8,000 and \$12,000 on average each year from improved learning recognition (Bloom and Grant, 2001).

*Skills, Innovation and Growth: Key Issues for Rural and Territorial Development — A Survey of the Literature* (Alasia, 2005) examined literature pertaining to “the spatial variation of skills and human capital and its implication for local innovation capacity and economic development.” Alasia found that the return to education tends to be lower for rural residents; and communities may face problems in capitalizing on their investments in education due to the high-mobility and out-migration of high-skilled workers. Furthermore, geographical location may have an impact as geographical proximity to education offers more innovation opportunities than scattered locations. These findings are important, given that it was also determined that lack of human capital affects capacity to access and absorb technology and public programs, potentially leaving smaller communities more vulnerable.

Based on these findings, regions where educational institutions are less prevalent, and regions that have suffered from the out-migration of skilled workers may benefit from informal/non-formal learning recognition as a means of human capital enhancement (Alasia, 2005).

Research conducted by Athabasca University in Alberta indicates that learners whose non-formal and informal learning have been recognized report receiving higher incomes, improved benefits, better career prospects and, as an accompaniment to academic accomplishment, improved quality of life. In addition, communities can also gain economically by using qualified individuals in the labour force where there is an increasingly short supply.<sup>2</sup> The *Gateways* (2006) report also indicates that employers promote individuals they would not ordinarily promote without further education if progress toward an educational goal is demonstrated.<sup>3</sup>

Mentoring projects have also been used in B.C. and Ontario as a means of addressing skills mismatch and labour shortages but, as the B.C. report notes, although best practices have been identified and the practice of mentoring appears to frequently meet with success, evidence is largely anecdotal. See the B.C. report for examples of successful mentoring programs.

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<sup>2</sup> Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 7

<sup>3</sup> Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 18

**1.4. e) Provide data, if any, if there has been any study that points to a certain group that would benefit most from the recognition system for their skills (e.g., retirees, older workers, women, immigrants (highly-skilled or low-skilled), part-time workers, unemployed youth, etc.).**

No national data identifying specific groups that would benefit most from a skills recognition system are available. However, a study of 3,500 adults completed in 1999 and replicated with an additional 3,500 learners in 2003 at seven postsecondary institutions across Canada found that adults have educationally relevant, college-level prior learning that could be successfully assessed and recognized within postsecondary educational settings. Adults who had undertaken PLAR were successful students — a finding that effectively addressed early concerns that PLAR could set adult learners up for failure in subsequent academic endeavours.

The study's reports, *A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition* (1999) and *Feedback from Learners: A Second Cross-Canada Study of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition* (2003), concluded that PLAR strengthens adult learners' confidence in their own capacities to learn and also motivates adults to pursue further education. PLAR also represented important efficiencies for part-time adult learners by shortening their programs, reducing course loads, and reducing costs. It was particularly beneficial to part-time students who decided to return to education to achieve employment-related training and occupational credentials.

In addition to supporting initiatives that promote the prior learning of adults, federal and most provincial public policy makers continue to give high priority to the recognition of immigrant skills.

The provincial reports of Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan provide information on their particular experiences.

**1.4. f) Provide data, if any, that discuss some issues linking between the recognition of non-formal and informal learning and the non-formal and informal economies.**

There are no national, provincial or data linking the recognition of non-formal and informal learning to non-formal and informal economies.

**1.4. g) Please provide a list of occupations to which the recognition of non-formal and informal learning can be counted as a part of entrance (e.g., teachers, engineers, journalists, etc.). Of the list, which occupations are regulated professions, i.e., that require a certain qualification (certificates, licences, etc.).**

In Canada, non-formal and informal learning can be recognized as part of occupational licensing or certification processes (e.g., nursing, physiotherapy, respiratory therapy, medical laboratory technology, massage therapy, optometry, midwifery, pharmacy), employer-based workplace training, and for entry to training programs that bridge to licensing or certification (e.g., CIITE projects in Ontario). However, recognition varies by province/territory and comprehensive national or provincial/territorial lists for these occupations are not available for regulated or unregulated occupations. The report of British Columbia provides some information on the availability of PLAR for occupations in that province.

With respect to skilled trades and apprenticeship, there are 13 separate systems of apprenticeship training and certification in Canada. Specific information about requirements in each province and territory has been organized for most trades by an Ellis Chart at <http://www.ellischart.ca/>. The Ellis Chart was developed as a comparison tool to highlight commonalities between the separate provincial/territorial apprenticeship systems. It is a comprehensive information database that addresses over 300 trades in Canada. It describes whether PLAR is available and whether certification is compulsory or voluntary. Compulsory trades refer to a prevailing provincial/territorial legislation requirement that a person must

possess a Certificate of Qualification or be registered as an apprentice in order to work or practice in those trades or occupations.

## **Component 1.5. Social developments**

### **1.5. a) What are the newly evolved ‘skills and competencies’ to live in the knowledge economy, which have been identified to date? Make a list of such skills and competencies.**

The federal and provincial governments have developed various lists of skills and competencies that are considered essential for work and daily living. Several examples are presented below to illustrate the variety currently in use.

Perhaps the most common is a group of nine Essential Skills used by the federal government and several provinces. These are not newly evolved skills, but they have become recognized as critical to success in a knowledge-based economy and are part of many labour force development and adult learning programs. They are as follows:

- reading text
- document use
- numeracy
- writing
- oral communication
- working with others
- continuous learning
- thinking skills (problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, job task planning and organizing, significant usage of memory, finding information)
- computer use

The Conference Board of Canada’s list of Employability Skills is also used by some provincial governments and educational institutions in the development of employability programs. Included are fundamental skills, personal management skills, and teamwork skills.

The province of Manitoba also uses skills and competencies related to career development presented by Blueprint for Life/Work Designs. The blueprint is an international partnership project of the National Life/Work Centre, the Canada Career Information Partnership, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and the national Occupational Information Coordinating Committee in the United States.

The province of British Columbia uses a list of Career Development Skills as part of a comprehensive description of almost 200 occupations related to the B.C. labour market developed collaboratively by several government departments. See the B.C. report for further details, including a list of resources and initiatives related to Essential Skills and the development of a Workplace Essential Skills Action Plan policy framework.

### **1.5. b) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning has led to the uptake of further learning or progression in profession.**

There is currently no national process or mechanism to record the recognition of essential skills obtained through informal or non-formal activities, but there is acceptance that informal and non-formal learning

activities do play a role in workplace development of essential skills. The extent to which this directly leads toward further formal education and training or career advancement has not been quantitatively documented.

Several provincial jurisdictions have made significant progress in combining essential skills with PLAR. An example is Prince Edward Island where Workplace Education PEI has developed a Learning Portfolio to enable people to develop and/or seek recognition of their skills from a certification body or a learning institution. This portfolio includes specific attention to essential skills. With this portfolio, employees can develop an education and career plan and make upward and lateral moves in their workplaces; high school students can make the transition to postsecondary education and college; university students can obtain course and program credits as well as advance standing, plan their entry into the workforce, and obtain employment.

Although no quantitative data exist on whether or not recognition of essential skills through PLAR has led to the uptake of further learning or career progression, anecdotal evidence suggests that this does occur. The British Columbia Ministry of Education is one example that supports a continuous process of generic employability skill assessment, development, and reassessment for its secondary school students to prepare them to meet the challenges of the world of work. Students can record their skill levels and map strengths and areas needing improvement.

A non-governmental example is the Work Keys System of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, which assesses generic employability skills as they are used in specific workplace settings. Work Keys is a systematic approach to recruiting, training, managing, and developing people, based on an assessment of their skills in applied technology, applied mathematics, academic work, personal management, and teamwork as well as an assessment of the skill level areas required in specific workplace situations. Employers can identify the current skill deficiencies of individual employees and arrange for appropriate retraining.

**1.5. c) Provide evidence, if any, that recognition of this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship.**

Unfortunately, no evidence is available on the impact of recognizing essential skills on democracy and citizenship.

## **Component 1.6. Others**

**1.6. a) Provide other contextual factors or trends that you think are influential — directly or indirectly — that drive changes of institutional and technical arrangements and stakeholder behaviour concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning which have not been addressed in Component 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5.**

Several trends in Canada include growing recognition of the need to:

- improve literacy levels that meet the demands of the knowledge economy.
- acknowledge the long-term impact of declining birth rates on primary and secondary school participation rates.
- acknowledge economies that are driven by informal learning (e.g., fishing and mining in Newfoundland and Labrador).
- promote continuous, life-long learning based on learner-directed needs.
- expand English as a Second Language programs.

- place greater emphasis on skills training in the workplace and on strategies to reduce barriers to employer investment, including time and money, lack of information, concern about return on investment, and poaching.
- achieve greater labour market efficiency. While regulated workers comprise only 15% of the workforce in Canada, “there are over 440 regulatory bodies overseeing 51 regulated occupations and more than 200 regulated trades” (Yung Hing and Lazar, 2006).
- take a more collaborative, systematic approach to PLAR.
- obtain validation of prior learning from educational leadership.
- develop a greater understanding of how Aboriginal work-related learning can best be recognized.
- link credential assessment with PLAR.
- expand access to postsecondary education by adult learners.
- acknowledge that upcoming competition for students may require recognition of prior learning to boost enrolments.
- deliver education and training in people’s home communities (e.g., apprenticeship).
- integrate essential skills into program offerings.

Additional factors include:

- growing attention to non-formal and informal learning recognition by research and practitioner organizations (e.g., Association of Community Colleges of Canada, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment, Canadian Council on Learning, Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Conference Board of Canada, Halifax PLA Centre).
- development of PLAR practitioner qualifications and training programs such as those offered in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia.
- specific examples of policies and programs designed to provide access to learning and overcome barriers are provided in the province of Manitoba’s report on Components 1.6.a), 1.6.b), 2.1.a), and 3.1.a).

**1.6. b) Provide historical backgrounds concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning in your country.**

Academic research on PLAR in Canada records the conditions that prompted the development of PLAR in Canada, and examination of the events of the past 15 years suggests that public policy makers have played a key role in the growth of this educational practice (Van Kleef, 2006).

PLAR initiatives began in Canada in 1978 with the implementation of two pilot projects in Energy Systems Engineering Technology and Data Processing at Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology in Hamilton, Ontario. By 1985, Mohawk had implemented a Credential for Experiential Learning policy. During the same period, Red River College of Applied Arts and Technology in Manitoba also became involved in PLAR. In 1980, the college embarked on a project in the college’s diploma nursing program. This was expanded to the faculties of dental hygiene in 1981 and early childhood education in 1983. By 1984, Red River College had an experiential learning policy which was expanded in 1994 to cover institution-wide prior learning assessment policies and procedures (Van Kleef, 2006). In 2001, the Manitoba government announced a PLAR policy framework based on three cornerstone service areas — postsecondary, advisory services, and industry.

The development of PLAR in most postsecondary institutions in Canada followed a less pedagogical path, beginning in Quebec where the Commission of Inquiry on Vocational and Socio-cultural Training for Adults (1982) recommended that the Government of Quebec facilitate adult learner access to their educational system by implementing prior learning assessment throughout the province. In 1985, the provincial government made PLA implementation a public policy priority and legislated the right to obtain credits for non-academic learning, and initiated a funding structure to support its coordination, development, and delivery. By 2003, Quebec's colleges were receiving the same levels of government funding for prior learning assessments as they were receiving for course delivery.

Another province to embark on public policy approach to PLAR was Ontario. In 1989, a government-appointed Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades made several recommendations that the province establish a mechanism to provide systematic assessments of the prior education and experiential learning of individuals through the creation of a universally accessible Prior Learning Assessment Network (PLAN). The main public policy basis for the task force was to determine whether the rules and practices affecting entry to professions and trades were having a discriminatory effect on persons with training or experience from outside of Canada (Van Kleef, 2006).

The Cummings (1989) report was followed by an Ontario Council of Regents initiative (1990) called "Vision 2000: Quality and Opportunity," which recommended to the Minister of Colleges and Universities that, with the explicit inclusion of Ontario's colleges, the government establish a centrally coordinated prior learning assessment network (PLAN) with a mandate to ensure the assessment of prior learning and the designation of academic equivalence.

In 1992, the Ontario government responded to the Cummings (1989) and Vision 2000 (1990) reports by creating a Prior Learning Assessment Secretariat. It had a 4-year mandate to research prior learning assessment issues and implement mandatory PLA services in all of Ontario's 25 colleges of applied arts and technology. The purpose was to enrich colleges by making them more accessible to a broad range of adult learners, to help adults become more productive and capable members of society, and to increase the efficacy of the colleges by eliminating unnecessary training (Council of Ontario Universities, 1996). Funding was provided to the institutions for hiring full-time PLA facilitators who were responsible for coordinating the establishment of PLA services for all adult students and college applicants. Public policy directed at using PLA was based on an interest in improving access to postsecondary education for economic reasons.

In 2003, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities incorporated a provincial PLAR policy into a new Framework for Programs of Instruction, which includes a funding formula for colleges offering PLAR services and directives on assessment fees.

In 1993, the province of British Columbia established a PLAR Provincial Steering Committee, appointed a PLA Coordinator, and produced a set of PLA standards and guidelines for all public postsecondary institutions. In 1994, the provincial government commenced a province-wide initiative (Brain & Koenig, 1994). However, unlike Ontario's decision to require colleges to provide PLA services, the B.C. government offered financial incentives. Several institutions began offering PLA through pilot projects that spawned more permanent policies, procedures, and financial funding arrangements. The British Columbia Council on Admission and Transfer supported these developments, reporting in 1995 that mature students with the need for upgrading and retraining, require opportunities to have their previous learning assessed so that they may receive credit for existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes and acquire the additional learning necessary to achieve their educational or career goals. In 2002, responsibility for PLA assigned to the discretion of individual institutions. Although there is currently no provincial policy framework, PLAR activity does occur at all public institutions.

Other provinces also approached PLA from a public policy perspective. In 1994, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador began development of a provincial PLA policy and strategic plan, which culminated in provincial guidelines in 1998 (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 1998). In 1995,

provincial funding for PLAR services became available to postsecondary institutions in Manitoba and, in 2001, with concerns about skill shortages growing, the Manitoba government released *A new policy framework for prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)* which gave priority to supporting continuous learning (Manitoba Advanced Education and Training, 2001). Even the small province of Prince Edward Island has undertaken a public policy position on PLA. In 2002, the PEI Department of Education issued a statement of its support for PLA in principle and its commitment to encourage learning communities to become better connected through the formal recognition of prior learning (Prince Edward Island Department of Education, 2006). In 2004, the government initiated a plan to use PLAR to help address skill shortages in that province's apprenticeship system (Prince Edward Island Provincial Apprenticeship Board, 2004).

In 2002, the provincial government in Saskatchewan, in cooperation with the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, launched a PLAR Enhancement Funding Initiative to advance PLAR in that province's postsecondary learning system. By 2003, the government had become proactive in promoting PLAR by activating a Web-based "information forum" for stakeholders to access resources, documents, and other learning materials on recognition, as well as funding professional development activities to enhance institutional capacity to deliver PLAR services. The government also funded a series of projects that explored PLAR as a strategic human resources planning tool for immigrants and refugees, early childhood educators, and nurses (Tam, 2003).

In Alberta, PLAR grew slowly institution by institution during the 1990s. In 2005, Alberta Advanced Education and the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) commissioned a study by the Barrington Research Group (2005) to inform policy development. ACAT subsequently updated its Principles and Standards for the recognition of prior learning and published a handbook on best practices. In early 2007, the provincial government announced a decision to develop a provincial strategy for PLAR and this initiative is ongoing.

In 2005, the province of Nova Scotia embarked on an action plan that included the implementation of projects and frameworks designed to advance individuals' education and employment through prior learning assessment (Nova Scotia Department of Education, 2005). The Halifax PLAR Centre, a community-based centre led by a Board of Directors that includes college and university representatives, is a key component of the province's efforts to promote recognition of prior learning, particularly for personal development and employment.

Today, PLAR is available at most of Canada's community colleges in at least some of their programs. The literature continues to suggest that PLAR is still not readily available at universities (*Canadian Partnerships in Education*, 2001) although several universities have formal policies, including Athabasca University, Mount St. Vincent University, University of Sherbrooke, University of Regina, and University of Winnipeg (Van Kleef, 2007).

At the national level, Canada's federal government has supported the implementation of PLA services as a labour force development strategy since 1994. In that year, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) published its first national *Newsletter on PLA* and, in 1995, funded the first national conference on PLAR. In 2002, HRDC integrated PLAR into Canada's national labour force development long-term agenda by including it as a tool in its Innovation Strategy, a 21<sup>st</sup> century plan to ensure equality of opportunity and economic innovation. In this strategy, HRDC identified demographic changes, technological development, global competition, and immigration as critical factors influencing Canada's future. Recognition of prior learning was highlighted as a tool that would remove a significant barrier to full participation and mobility in the Canadian labour market (HRSDC, 2002). Today, PLAR projects are being supported by several federal program areas focusing primarily on PLAR's perceived potential to identify and recognize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of immigrants who find themselves unemployed and underemployed in Canada's labour force.

International research in PLAR suggests that institutional activity levels fall below expectations. In 2003, the OECD reported that the national and provincial rhetoric about the importance of PLAR has not been matched by a comparable level of institutional activity at the local level. This finding is supported by Canadian research (Aarts, Blower, Burke, Conlin, Ebner-Howarth, et al., 1999; Van Kleef, 2006; Wihak, 2006) and suggests that acceptance of the concept is slowly penetrating the Canadian higher education sector, but policies are not always being acted upon.

Additional details on the historical background of the development of PLAR are available in the provincial reports of Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan.

## Component 2. Description of Institutional Arrangements

### Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

#### 2.1. a) Describe, if any, clear political will or statements and policy responses in your country on lifelong learning which are explicitly linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

In 2002, the federal government published *Knowledge Matters (2002)*, a statement of its position on important policy issues facing the country. The report acknowledged that learning must be available to all Canadians throughout their lifetime, so that everyone has the opportunity to reach his or her full potential. One strategy highlighted as a means of achieving this goal is to fill the gap in our learning infrastructure by providing sufficient prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). The report noted that many Canadians have skills and knowledge that are valuable, but often underused and undervalued because of a lack of formal recognition by employers or educational institutions.

Also in 2002, the federal government established the Policy for Continuous Learning in the Public Service of Canada. This policy provided a framework for building a learning culture in the public service. Its objective was to stimulate, guide, and promote the development of the public service as a learning organization committed to the lifelong learning of its people. Individuals working in the federal public service were required to commit to lifelong learning. With a change of government in 2006, this policy was updated by the Policy on Learning, Training and Development, which did not include as an objective the inculcation of a learning culture within the public service.

The Government of Canada's Advantage Canada (2006) acknowledged the importance of learning, creativity, innovation, and skills in today's global economy. Advantage Canada stated that creating the best educated, most skilled, and most flexible workforce in the world means that Canadian businesses, federal and provincial/territorial governments, and educational organizations must all commit to achieving a "knowledge advantage" and take action to achieve and deliver excellence.

The federal budget of 2007 supported the direction set by Advantage Canada and invested in the Knowledge Advantage, including investments in postsecondary education through transfers to provinces and territories, graduate education, research, and postsecondary education savings incentives.

Within Human Resources and Social Development Canada, the Learning Policy Directorate provides the minister and the federal government with strategic advice on lifelong learning in Canada. The directorate's responsibilities include

- providing policy research and analysis on current and emerging issues regarding the overall performance of the learning system in meeting the needs of individual learners and society
- developing conceptual and analytical frameworks on lifelong learning and relating lifelong learning to the government's broader social and economic priorities
- identifying key issues requiring Government action or policy change and develop strategic options and recommendations
- leading efforts to improve coordination and coherence across government departments and agencies involved in lifelong learning in Canada
- collaborating with provincial and territorial government officials to advance learning objectives for the country as a whole

- maintaining regular contact with key external stakeholders and experts to share evidence on emerging challenges and best practices in Canada’s learning systems and build consensus on required directions for improvement

Internal to the federal government, departments involved with learning meet annually as the Learning Forum, chaired by the Learning Policy Directorate of HRSDC to discuss issues related to lifelong learning processes and outcomes, including issues such as recognition of prior learning.

At the provincial/territorial level, the provinces of Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan have recently issued statements on lifelong learning. For example, the published mission of the Department of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador is “To provide an affordable, high quality education to Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans so that they are able to acquire — through lifelong learning — the knowledge, skills and values necessary for personal growth and the development of society.” Statements on lifelong learning are referenced in all the provincial reports.

The provinces of New Brunswick and Saskatchewan have recently linked lifelong learning policy to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. For example, in December 2005, New Brunswick released Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities, a policy statement on adult and lifelong learning. It included six objectives, one of which is to “increase learning and employment opportunities through the use of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition.” In Saskatchewan, the Recognition of Prior Learning Framework (2004) sets out strategic directions to support the recognition of lifelong learning.

**2.1. b) Do you have legal regulatory frameworks concerning recognition of non-formal and informal learning? Please state — yes, under development/discussion, or no. For those who answered ‘No’, describe possible reasons for the inexistence as well as possible future prospects. For those who answered ‘yes’ or ‘under development/discussion’, please answer to the following questions.**

There are no federal, provincial, or territorial regulatory frameworks for recognizing non-formal or informal learning. Federal and provincial/territorial governments consider learning recognition to be a matter of policy. Some provinces such as Saskatchewan and Manitoba have policy frameworks concerning the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as described in earlier sections of this report. The provinces of Alberta and Nova Scotia are also developing frameworks. Some professional regulatory bodies have recognition of prior learning written into their regulations (e.g., College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario).

**2.1. c and 2.1. d**

Unfortunately, no information is available regarding legal regulatory frameworks in response to questions 2.1.c and 2.1.d.

**2.1. e) What areas of competencies do governments have or intend to have? Are there any specific areas that are/to be regulated by law or by social partners for professional recognition?**

Governments do not play a direct role in the assessment of non-formal or informal learning, with the exception of the skilled trades where provincial/territorial apprenticeship offices may conduct assessments of applicants’ knowledge and skills related to certification. Also the Red Seal program described in Component 1.1.c) is the result of pan-Canadian agreements among provincial/territorial governments.

In 2006, the Ontario government also passed landmark legislation to address barriers faced by internationally educated professionals. The *Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act* (2006) requires Ontario’s 34 regulated professions to ensure their licensing processes are fair, clear, open, and timely. The act establishes the Office of the Fairness Commissioner to audit registration and licensing practices and to ensure compliance. The extent to which this new office will incorporate PLAR into their expectations of fair practice has not been explicitly stated. Policy development is underway. Similar legislation is pending in Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

A number of regulatory bodies that govern access to 34 Ontario professions have also instituted procedures to recognize international applicants’ non-formal and informal learning. In some cases, the regulatory bodies conduct their own assessments; in other cases, they have contracted with postsecondary institutions to perform assessments on their behalf.

Ontario’s government has also made it a matter of provincial policy that all public colleges will provide PLAR services. See also the provincial policy frameworks noted in components 1.4.a) and 1.6.b).

**2.1. f, 2.1. g and 2.1. h.**

Unfortunately, no information is available regarding legal regulatory frameworks in response to questions 2.1, f, 2.1.g, and 2.1. h.

**Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government**

**2.2. a) List all actors in governance and create a matrix of who (e.g., government, quasi-government, assessment centres, public educational institutions, private for-profit education providers, professional bodies, etc.) does what (provides academic/professional recognition, overseas assessment, etc.) for non-formal and informal learning. If there are more than one body who are responsible for an action (e.g., recognition), list all actors involved and describe how is the coordination managed? If there are more than one ministry of a government are involved, specify which ministries have competencies for what. How clear are the different roles by different actors communicated among themselves as well as to users?**

Government participation in the governance of recognition of non-formal and informal learning includes several actors at both the federal and provincial levels. The following matrix provides an overview of the types of groups and their respective roles. The matrix is limited to governance actors, given the purpose of Component 2.2. Not all provinces participate in all activities. Not all actors are equally engaged in the activities. For example, colleges are more developed in their PLAR policies, procedures, and service delivery than universities. Not all regulatory bodies use PLAR.

More detailed information can be found in the provincial reports of Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan. There are also other actors that are not engaged in governance but are involved in research, knowledge exchange, portfolio development, and promotion of PLAR that are not captured by this matrix because they do not have a governance function.

Table 2: Actors in PLAR Governance

Who	Does what re: PLAR
Human Resources and Social	Exchange of knowledge and expertise with national organizations and

Who	Does what re: PLAR
Development Canada	<p>field experts</p> <p>Project funding for development of innovative approaches to learning recognition</p>
Provincial ministries/ departments in the fields of secondary education, postsecondary education, apprenticeship, health, community services	<p>Provincial PLAR policy setting</p> <p>Operational directions to school boards</p> <p>Project funding for institutions, regulatory bodies, employers, community-based organizations serving unemployed, underemployed and immigrants (e.g., policies and procedures development, assessment tool development, portfolio development, public awareness)</p> <p>Advocacy on behalf of postsecondary institutions</p> <p>Funding ongoing PLAR services (e.g., assessments, human resources, facilities)</p> <p>Fund bridging training programs</p> <p>Assess skilled tradespersons to determine eligibility for challenging certification exams in their trade. In B.C., assessment by the Industry Training Authority (ITA) may also allow them to receive equivalent status that enables them to supervise the training of other apprentices.</p> <p>PLAR promotion (e.g., encouraging institutions, employers, regulatory bodies and community agencies to develop programs, policies, and services to facilitate recognition)</p> <p>Conduct GED standardized testing for secondary school equivalency</p> <p>Assessment for certification in Continuing Care (Nova Scotia only)</p>
Provincial Councils on Postsecondary Education	<p>Promotion of excellence and cooperation within the postsecondary sector</p> <p>Policy recommendations to government</p> <p>Knowledge exchange facilitation</p> <p>Research facilitation</p> <p>Project funding</p>
Public Secondary Schools	<p>Assess prior learning for secondary school academic credit</p>
Public Colleges	<p>Institutional PLAR policy setting</p> <p>PLAR service delivery</p> <p>Marketing and awareness</p> <p>Professional development</p> <p>Pilot projects</p>
Public Universities	<p>Institutional PLAR policy setting</p> <p>PLAR service delivery</p> <p>Marketing and awareness</p>

Who	Does what re: PLAR
	Professional development Pilot projects
Provincial Regulatory bodies and/or related national associations	Assess prior learning of licensing/certification applicants including immigrants
Employer Associations (Nova Scotia only)	Assess skills and learning of boat builders leading to certification.
Provincial Adult Learning Centres (Manitoba only)	Determine implementation systems in consultation with provincial Adult Learning and Literacy Department Assess formal, non-formal, and informal learning and award secondary school level credits Provide PLAR information and advice to clients
Provincial Employment Centres	Provide PLAR advisory services Support development of employment and training plans

**2.2. b) List of ‘who does what’ for formal learning and recognition of such learning.**

Government participation in the governance of recognition of formal learning includes actors at the local and provincial levels. The following matrix provides an overview of the types of groups and their respective roles. The matrix is limited to governance actors, given the purpose of Component 2.2. Not all provinces participate in all activities. Not all actors are equally engaged in the activities. For example, not all post-secondary institutions or regulatory bodies out-source the task of international credential assessment to provincial assessment agencies.

Additional descriptive information is presented in the provincial reports of British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan.

**Table 3: Who Does What for Formal Learning and Recognition**

Who	Does what re: Recognition of Formal Learning
Regulatory bodies	Assess and recognize formal academic credentials and license/certify qualified applicants in regulated occupations Accredit college and university professional programs
Universities	Assess and recognize applicants' formal academic credentials Assess academic credentials on behalf of regulatory bodies for licensing/certification Assess courses for eligibility for credit transfer Develop and manage articulation agreements with other institutions
Public Colleges	Assess and recognize formal academic credentials Assess courses for eligibility for credit transfer Develop and manage articulation agreements with other institutions
Secondary schools	Assess and recognize adult students' formal academic credentials
Provincial Assessment Agencies (ICES, IQAS, ACAS, WES, SECE)	Assess academic credentials for academic, employment and licensing/certification purposes. Promote and facilitate the understanding of educational qualifications and educational systems throughout the world.
Provincial/Territorial ministries/departments in the fields of apprenticeship, citizenship and immigration, economic development, industry training, labour, multiculturalism, secondary school, college and university education	Provide postsecondary program funding Provide project funding Manage and implement federal-provincial agreements on immigration (including foreign credential recognition activities)
Apprenticeship boards	Establish regulations and set policy for designated trades
Private career colleges	Deliver skills training for adults in a wide range of fields.
Adult Learning Centres (Alberta and Manitoba)	Assess formal credentials and award secondary school level credits.
Quality Assessment Boards	Review new degree proposals; may conduct quality assurance audits.
Articulation Committees (Alberta and British Columbia)	In B.C., all public postsecondary institutions submit course and program material to other institutions for detailed assessment for awarding of credit transfer. There are currently 69 committees in specific subject or program areas.

	In Alberta, articulation committees are struck based on need. Currently there are 11 committees covering several subject areas.
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**2.2. c) Describe the competencies (direct and indirect role) of government in the practice? Which of the following three models would your country be classified with respect to governance: 1) a ‘predominance-of-industry’ model; 2) a ‘predominance-of-public authorities’ model’; and 3) a ‘shared responsibility’ model. Explain why that model fits into your country context. If there is a trend to shift to another model, describe driving forces for such change. Describe the details. If none is suitable to your country, describe your own country model.**

It is difficult to classify the role of Canada’s governments under a single model, in part because PLAR has evolved differently across jurisdictions over different periods of time. In the early years (1990s), the Canadian situation resembled the “predominance of public authorities” model since most PLAR activities were initiated through public policy initiatives. However, operationally, PLAR in Canada can best be described as a shared responsibility model since most implementation is the responsibility of individual institutions and progress is facilitated by the federal, provincial and territorial governments through funding of various types (seed, project, operational, and in some instances financial assistance to learners) and broad policy making.

The independence of institutions is closely protected. Although many postsecondary institutions are not required to provide PLAR services, it may be that as postsecondary enrolments drop and student demographic shifts become more pronounced, more initiative will be taken, particularly by universities in competition for students. In addition, there are some indications of a shift to more supportive policies, driven by demographic and labour force conditions and the development of more explicit provincial/territorial policies.

Individual provincial/territorial responses to this question vary. Varied responses are provided in the reports of the provinces of Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan.

**2.2. d) Describe, if any, inter-ministerial approaches to the issue. Describe also the policy objectives behind such approaches as well as positive results and challenges to date.**

The federal departments of Human Resources and Social Development Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada have provided joint funding to learning recognition projects such as Recognizing Learning conferences and pilot projects that meet their respective policy objectives. This type of support usually involves initiatives that link foreign credential assessment, PLAR, and labour market integration of immigrants.

At the provincial level, inter-ministerial collaboration sometimes involves joint project funding and participation on working groups. In New Brunswick for example, the Department of Education and the Department of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour collaborated to develop a “Policy Statement on Adult and Lifelong Learning: Quality Adult Learning Opportunities.” Additional information on inter-ministerial collaboration in PLAR is presented in the reports of the provinces of Manitoba and Nova Scotia.

## Component 2.3. Resources

**2.3. a) Who is/are the financing body(ies) for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What is the policy thinking behind such financing? What is the annual budget 2004/2005? (Please convert to Euro.) Provide data, if possible, on the breakdown of how the budget has been spent.**

The federal government department of Human Resources and Social Development Canada is the primary national financing body of national PLAR activities. In particular, HRSDC's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) program has financially supported many initiatives on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. With a budget of \$6.5 million in 2004-05, the FCR supported initiatives in both regulated and non-regulated occupations.

The federal government's policy basis for supporting PLAR initiatives is that PLAR contributes to lifelong learning, economic development, and positive citizenship. The following selected projects were funded by HRSDC during the period stipulated in question 2.3.a. Some of these projects had multi-year funding, the annual data for which are not available.

**Table 4: HRSDC Funding in Support of the Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning**

<b>Organization Name</b>	<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Total Amount Assigned</b>
Athabasca University	Pan-Canadian Gateways: Accreditation and Recognition of Learning for Adult Practitioners in the Human Services	2003-12-15	2006-12-14	\$900,000.00
Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)	Sixth International Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Qualification Recognition	2005-07-25	2007-03-31	\$395,000.00
Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)	Fifth National Forum for the Recognition of Prior Learning	2002-12-18	2005-03-31	\$410,000.00
Centre for Education and Work	Workplace Transition: PLAR in the Lumber Industry	2003-12-15	2006-12-14	\$825,248.00
College of Midwives of British Columbia (Canadian Midwifery Regulators Consortium)	CMRC National Midwifery Assessment Strategy	2003-12-15	2006-09-30	\$300,000.00
Conference Board of Canada	National Credit Review Service (NCRS) Pilot Project	2004-03-26	2006-12-31	\$1,499,324.00
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)	Responsiveness: PLAR – 1) An Inventory of Practices and Policies: 2) A Provincial/Territory Perspective	2003-01-06	2004-03-31	\$270,000.00
First Nations Technical Institute	Beyond PLAR: Creating a Hospitable, Learning-Friendly Environment for All Adult Learners (Development Stage)	2003-12-16	2004-06-01	\$49,350.00
First Nations Technical Institute	Beyond PLAR: Creating a Hospitable, Learner-Friendly Environment for	2005-05-23	2007-07-22	\$250,503.41

Organization Name	Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Amount Assigned
	all Adult Learners (Pilot Stage)			
Halifax PLA Centre	Nova Scotia Employment Assistance Services–Prior Learning Assessment Research & Demonstration Project	2003-09-15	2006-09-15	\$917,712.00
Halifax PLA Centre	The Halifax PLA Centre Leadership Project: Building on Excellence; Moving to Scale	2003-05-12	2005-03-31	\$586,153.00
Halifax PLA Centre	Evaluation of the Benefits of PLA for EAS in NS Region – A Research Demonstration Development Project	2003-02-18	2003-05-12	\$59,500.00
Halifax PLA Centre	Impact Evaluation Study of the PLA Centre's Learning Portfolio: 1996-2001	2002-04-17	2002-12-31	\$29,360.64
Halifax PLA Centre	National Forum on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition	2000-11-24	2002-03-31	\$510,696.52
Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Centre	Building Capacity in Communities -- Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Centres as Catalysts for Change	2000-10-12	2001-03-31	\$60,000.00
Mount Royal College	Proposal to Assess the impact of Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition on the Ease of Admissibility and Placement into Educational Programs and Employment in Nursing	2003-02-13	2006-01-31	\$1,484,298.00

Organization Name	Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Amount Assigned
Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB)	Saskatchewan Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Services	2000-10-16	2002-03-31	\$469,152.31
Upper Canada Leger Centre for Education and Training (T.R. Leger)	PLAR Development Project for Unemployed/ Underemployed Youth (Development Stage)	2003-12-19	2004-07-31	\$49,075.00
Upper Canada Leger Centre for Education and training	From Life Comes Learning: PLAR Youth Project (Pilot Stage)	2005-11-14	2008-11-13	\$482,965.00

Additional projects (see Table 5) were funded in 2007 by the Canadian Council on Learning, a federally funded, independent non-governmental organization.

**Table 5: Additional Projects**

Organization Name	Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Amount Assigned
University of Calgary	State of the Field Review: Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition	2005	2006	
Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning	Quality Assurance in PLAR in Postsecondary Institutions research report, annotated bibliography, and guideline for institutions	2006-09-06	2007-11-30	\$74,000
Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning	A Meeting of Minds: PLAR at Canadian Universities	2007-01-31	2007-01-31	\$7,4000

Provincial governments have also financed PLAR pilot projects within their jurisdictions and provided start-up funding for permanent PLAR services. For example, from 1993 to 1996, the Ontario government provided a total of \$3 million over three years to the province's 25 colleges to support the hiring of full-time PLAR facilitators. The role of the facilitators was to coordinate the development of institutional PLAR policies and procedures, conduct staff professional development and outreach to the community, and assist academic programs to develop valid and reliable prior learning assessment tools. The Ontario

government currently contributes to the colleges' costs of delivering assessments but the majority of PLAR costs are intended to be covered by the institution and the assessment fee charged to candidates.

Additional information on provincially based financing for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is presented in the reports of the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

**2.3. b) If the system has existed for some years, please provide the budget data since it existed. Has there been any increase/decrease of budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning since a framework/system has been taken up? If so, describe any elements that have driven such change.**

A national system for recognizing non-formal and informal learning is not in place. Most provinces do not have dedicated PLAR budgets although short-term funding for infrastructure and projects has been provided in the past. An exception is the province of Saskatchewan which in 2003–04, 2004–05 and 2005–06, provided provincial funding for two staff working in the area of RPL within the Department of Advanced Education and Employment. In its 2006–07 budget, the provincial government provided \$500,000 to support external stakeholders in implementing initiatives related to RPL. The 2006–07 budget was allocated among provincial postsecondary education and training institutions to expand the number of programs providing PLAR for credit, develop curriculum for a credentialed program to train RPL practitioners, expand the delivery of RPL advising and referral, expand the capacity of the institution to implement RPL processes, and augment RPL processes.

In British Columbia, targeted funding for PLAR was allocated between 1996–97 and 2001–02 beginning with \$1 million and declining to \$771,000 during that period. In 2002–03, the provincial government switched to block funding to institutions and \$664,000 was provided for that year. No recent data is available.

**2.3. c) Who pays for the assessment and recognition processes? If an individual is to pay, how much is it cost to him/her? Break down the costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed, if relevant. Are there any cost-sharing arrangements between educational institutions and employers, between education institutions and government, etc.? Describe the costs arrangements.**

Learner assessment fees are generally set by institutions. Costs are shared between the institutions and learners. Institutions in the province of Manitoba receive some funding for infrastructure. There are no cost-sharing agreements between educational institutions and employers. The provincial governments of Ontario and Quebec provide funding to public colleges to cover part of the costs of each assessment based on provincial funding formulas.

Assessment fees vary widely by academic institution and take a variety of forms that can be grouped into the following categories: a) no fee, b) flat rates per course, c) hourly rates based on the number of hours taken to conduct assessments (usually with a maximum cap), d) a percentage of regular course tuition fee (usually 50%), and e) up to the amount of full-time tuition (for program outcomes rather than course outcome assessments).

More detailed information is provided in the provincial reports of Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan.

**2.3. d) How many assessment centres and/or assessors exist to date, if any? Where are such assessment centres located? Please specify the areas/regions with characteristics of such areas/regions (e.g., the average income, the income disparity, etc.). How was the decision made where to locate such centres? How much does it cost to maintain such centres and/or assessors?**

**How many training programs exist: specify how many in a given year, if there are significant increases per year? How much does it cost to train such assessors? Break down by levels assessed, if relevant.**

There are no national centres for the assessment of non-formal and informal learning. Individual postsecondary institutions may provide services, in which case the faculty teaching the courses being challenged generally conduct the assessments. These assessments are primarily for academic credit, although portfolio courses may also be offered to help learners develop personal learning or career plans.

Two provincial exceptions are Manitoba and Nova Scotia. In Manitoba, 17 Employment Centres and 44 registered Adult Learning Centres provide PLAR advisory and assessment services. In addition, workplace-based assessment projects are delivered directly in industry locations. In Nova Scotia, the Halifax PLA Centre assists individuals to develop portfolios and organizations to set up recognition systems using portfolios. The province of Saskatchewan is also researching the possibility of establishing a provincial RPL centre to provide research, materials, tools, qualified advisors and assessors, and mobile or satellite services to assist providers and receivers of RPL.

## **Component 2.4. Others**

**2.4. a) Provide any other institutional arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3.**

Two additional arrangements are noted in provincial reports. In the province of Manitoba, capacity building and practitioner training are currently receiving particular attention. Universities in the province of Saskatchewan stress the need to link recognition processes to rewards for faculty, in particular, tenure and promotion to encourage more positive attitudes toward PLAR duties.

## Component 3: Description of Technical Arrangements

### Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework

- 3.1. a) What term does your country use for ‘Recognition of non-formal and informal learning’? Please provide the original term in your own language as well as the literally translated term in English. Please describe if the term has certain connotations, implications, specific associations, etc.**

The term most commonly used for “Recognition of non-formal and informal learning” in Canada is “Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition” (PLAR).

PLAR is most commonly defined in Canada as the identification, measurement, and recognition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired outside educational institutions through work and other life experience. PLAR processes are used by postsecondary educational institutions to determine eligibility for program admission and academic credit, and to assist adult learners to develop meaningful personal, educational, or career plans. It should be noted that PLAR is also being increasingly used to assess the prior academic learning of immigrants when adequate evaluations of their academic credentials are not possible.

*Prior learning* refers to knowledge, skills, (and attitudes) that have been acquired outside of the sponsorship of educational institutions at any time prior to undertaking an assessment. For example, learning acquired through work, on-the-job training, community activities, volunteering, non-credit courses, independent study, or life experience in advance of a prior learning assessment are considered prior learning. Some postsecondary institutions are explicit in their inclusion of “attitudes” in their definitions of prior learning. Others include attitudes implicitly by embedding them in the learning outcomes or learning objectives of courses and programs.

The term *assessment* refers to the identification, measurement, and verification of prior learning and the exercise of judgment as to whether it has the appropriate balance of theory and practice and sufficient breadth and depth to meet pre-set criteria.

*Recognition* is the comprehension and acceptance of learning expressed through formal communication. Recognition in the postsecondary context is expressed in at least three ways: first, through the granting of access to an educational program; second, through the awarding of academic credit; third through self-recognition — a learner’s recognition of her or his own past learning achievements and future potential.

The provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan have recently moved to using the term RPL as a more inclusive expression of recognizing different sources of prior learning. They include credit transfer in their definitions of RPL. Nova Scotia Community College has also recently adopted the term RPL. In British Columbia, the terms PLA, PLAR and PLFAR (prior learning, flexible assessment and recognition) are used.

Some additional details are provided in the British Columbia, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan provincial reports.

- 3.1. b) Describe if recognizing of non-formal and informal learning is linked to qualifications, qualification systems, or qualifications framework in your country. Provide data, if any, on the impact of such linkages.**

Canada does not have a national qualifications system or qualifications framework. However, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a growing component of educational and occupational

qualifications processes. Recognition is increasing at postsecondary institutions, (usually after credit transfer and foreign credential assessments have identified transferable course credits). As a result, this recognition is contributing to the awarding of educational credentials. Apprenticeship training programs and regulatory bodies are also increasingly using PLAR, thus allowing non-formal and informal learning to contribute to occupational qualifications.

Every province offers standardized examinations called General Educational Development tests (GED), which entitle successful candidates to recognition of learning deemed equivalent to secondary school education. This qualification is accepted by many postsecondary education and training institutions for entry into specific programs.

**3.1. c) What kinds of qualifications (e.g., certificates, diplomas, degrees, licences, etc.) are more linked to recognition of non-formal and informal learning? What are the difficulties or obstacles in linking recognition of non-formal and informal learning to qualification framework?**

Recognition of non-formal and informal prior learning in Canada is primarily linked to the awarding of academic credit toward postsecondary credentials, most commonly college certificates and diplomas and, less frequently, undergraduate degrees. PLAR is rarely used to award credit in graduate degree programs. Recognition is also associated with secondary school diplomas in some jurisdictions such as Ontario. The Government of Nova Scotia has also established the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning that includes the assessment of prior learning in awarding High School Graduation Diplomas for Adults. The establishment of this diploma was driven partly by labour market demands as well as provincial demographics indicating that 30% of Nova Scotians 25 years and older did not have a high school diploma (Statistics Canada, 2000).

As regulatory bodies take on the task of assessing prior learning, recognition of non-formal and informal learning is becoming increasingly linked to the qualifications frameworks of regulated occupations and their occupational licences, certifications, and registrations (e.g., medical laboratory technology, optometry, nursing, massage therapy) as a means of recognizing the knowledge and skills of immigrant professionals.

In academic settings, among the greatest obstacles to recognition are the lack of clearly articulated learning outcomes and the preponderance of assessments that use academic course content rather than outcomes as criteria. Also, since PLAR often has little or no budget allocations and in many cases is an add-on responsibility, there is an additional burden placed on staff and faculty.

**3.1. d) Describe if there are differences in such linkages depending on whether the qualifications are professional or academic recognition? Can the link to the qualification systems legitimacy of such recognition be a means for establishing 'legitimacy' both in working life and in the educational system?**

In Canada, most professional licensing standards are aligned with postsecondary program standards through cooperation among the stakeholders. Graduates of professional college and university programs are often required to take national or professional licensing examinations, but the expectation is that most graduates will be successful.

Although PLAR in both the educational and licensing/certification contexts is increasing, there is generally no collaboration when it comes to establishing the PLAR processes of each, since licensing and educational program standards have different emphases and support for PLAR varies. Over time however, alignment between the two processes is likely to improve. For example, the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators is currently working with the universities to improve alignment between

educational programs and the nationally established professional competencies. In this process, they are also collaborating to establish a comprehensive PLAR process that is aligned with both.

**3.1. e) If your country has a national qualification framework or in the process of establishing one, has the development towards recognition of non-formal and informal learning been of the drivers for your country to establish one? Is the development of the qualification framework and its implementation in practice with the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in parallel?**

Canada does not have a national qualification framework. No province has such a framework and PLAR has not been a driver to establish one at either level. However, in 2007, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada issued the *Statement on Quality Assurance in Degree Education in Canada* expressing their expectation that all postsecondary institutions in Canada will work to develop, enhance, and maintain quality assurance standards and procedures that reflect best practices. Relating to new degree programs, the procedures adopted by the ministers recommend that institutions publish academic policies with respect to prior learning assessment, ensure appropriate forms of assessment of prior learning for admission to programs, and make available full, accurate and truthful material regarding prior learning assessment policies. Implementation of these expectations is in the early stages at Canadian institutions.

**3.1.f) What are some potential threats of recognition of non-formal and informal learning to higher education institutions, employers, and individuals? How can resistance from the higher education sector be overcome to embed the recognition of non-formal and informal learning into the qualification framework?**

There are a number of recurrent issues that dominate resistance to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Canada. Concerns relate to

- loss of academic control over what learning “counts” and the possibility that the classroom will no longer be seen as the place where all postsecondary level learning takes place
- inadequate theoretical grounding
- the credibility of programs and institutions — diluting academic standards
- quality assurance of programs and graduates
- likelihood of students’ subsequent success
- transcription of credits acquired through PLAR
- challenges from other students
- acceptability of programs and graduates by professional bodies/labour market
- time commitments and workloads of faculty and staff
- institutional capacity to deliver gaps training
- employer control
- individuals’ confidence in their own learning because of the perceptions held by others
- costs of PLAR
- difficulty in finding qualified assessors

A variety of measures are suggested by the provinces to help overcome higher education's resistance to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning including the following:

- pursuing a formal framework to support activities and facilitate standardization of activities, best practices, and sharing of information
- direct involvement in the evolving policy and practice of PLAR
- demonstrating to faculty and institutions that PLAR is rigorous and effective without taking away from or “watering down” the academic level of the student body
- demonstrating through research that PLAR is a tool for recruitment and retention
- awareness building, open dialogue, professional development for faculty
- identification of champions to provide leadership and mentoring support
- acceptance and promotion of PLAR by senior administration
- awareness building of rigour among candidates

### Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

- 3.2. a) Describe any formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning, if they exist. What are general policies, objectives, and legislative, regulatory or sectoral agreement frameworks for such credit arrangements? How are the arrangements used — at similar levels, between different levels, or between different sectors? Provide data, if any, of actual users (number of users, at what level, which sector, transition path, etc.).**

Canadian postsecondary institutions award credit for non-formal and informal learning through a variety of means. Some institutions award unassigned or general academic credit; others award specific credit for course, module, or program level learning outcomes. Most institutions that award credit for prior learning have written policies and procedures, a maximum limit on the amount of credit that can be awarded, and formal transcription policies.

For example, the province of Ontario has a provincial policy that colleges must make PLAR available for as many credit courses as possible in programs of instruction in which enrolment is eligible for provincial government funding. Written guidelines are also provided on how credits acquired through PLAR should appear on transcripts. The province also has a policy on PLAR at the secondary school level. See Ontario's provincial report for more information as well as data on the number of assessments conducted at Ontario's colleges from 1993–94 to 2004–05.

When considering applications from college graduates, most universities make no distinction between academic credits acquired at Canadian colleges through taking courses or through PLAR. This is sometimes a matter of policy and sometimes because credits acquired through PLAR are indistinguishable from other types of credits. However, there may be limits on the number of credits toward a program of study that can be granted through PLAR.

Some regulatory bodies accept non-formal and informal learning as equivalent to required coursework if expected knowledge and skills demonstrated through PLAR are found to be the same. This varies by occupation and province.

There are no sectoral agreement frameworks for credit arrangements for non-formal or informal learning.

See Component 4.2.b) of the Manitoba provincial report for more detailed information on PLAR practices at various levels of education in that province and Component 2 for additional information on New Brunswick. Some data are available in Component 3.2.a) of the report from Saskatchewan. The report

from British Columbia also provides helpful information on PLAR credit guidelines and arrangements in that province.

**3.2. b) Who is/are responsible for credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning? Is it different from the arrangements for formal learning?**

Individual educational institutions are responsible for granting credit for formal, non-formal and informal learning. The only exception is in apprenticeship training programs where in some provinces/territories, governments grant credit for prior learning acquired in the workplace.

Faculty are generally the assessors. Registration staff normally administer the transcription of credit. Transcription policies vary by province and can vary across institutions.

In licensing/certification processes, some regulatory bodies use credential assessment agencies to assess formal academic learning but conduct the assessment of non-formal and informal learning internally. Other regulatory bodies conduct academic credential assessment internally but contract out the assessment of non-formal and informal learning. Still others undertake both types of assessment internally.

**3.2. c) How is a credit counted? Number of hours of a course? Please specify how credits are counted on what base in your country.**

Generally speaking, a credit is a “standard used to express the value of each component (course, work experience, research, etc.) of a program by attributing, in accordance with a convention, a certain number of points that can accumulate until the total set for delivery of a diploma has been reached.”

The use of credits and the methods by which they are calculated, vary by province, institution, and even program. Generally, credits are awarded on a course-by-course basis. Credit corresponds to a specific number of hours of nominal learning time (an estimate of the total learning time required from an average student to enable them to achieve the outcomes of a course). Nominal hours may include the direct teaching time, supervised and unsupervised study, and assessment required to achieve the course outcomes, or it may include only direct contact hours. In some cases, credits may be awarded in blocks. Credits for non-formal and informal learning are generally awarded in the same manner as formal learning although credit for achieving whole program learning outcomes may also be awarded.

For more specific provincial information see the reports of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan.

**3.2. d) What are the incentives or disincentives for participants to gain credit and providers to give credit?**

Under current arrangements, participant incentives to gain credit include

- the opportunity to receive academic credit for prior learning including secondary school equivalency accepted by many colleges, universities, and employers
- shortened educational programs
- less repetition of pre-existing learning
- improved educational planning

- lower costs (child care, transportation, books, time)
- increased self-esteem and confidence
- higher employability

Institutional incentives to provide credit include

- a vehicle to attract potential learners to attend their institution
- a means of extending a relationship with alumni by attracting them back to learning
- providing a way to ensure local control of processes, methods, and tools
- improved use of institutional resources
- fostering higher completion and retention rates
- promotion of partnerships with business and industry
- eligibility for government funding

In addition, employers can add value to their organization by providing PLAR services to their employees for their professional development. Employers have commented on enhanced productivity in the workplace after implementing PLAR.<sup>4</sup>

Participant disincentives include

- time-consuming
- complexity of the process
- conflicting personal and family pressures
- educational structures do not always allow for shortening of programs
- negative impact on student eligibility for government financial assistance
- strong writing skills required by portfolio assessment
- cost of assessments (often charged in addition to tuition)
- lack of advising support

Institutional disincentives include

- the time and effort required to implement the process and then in mentoring and conducting assessments
- cost to institutions in terms of faculty and assessor time
- policies, procedures, and new reporting and tracking methods.

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<sup>4</sup> Arscott, Crowther, Ungarian, & Young; 75

- inadequate funding to train and compensate advisors and assessors and to create tools and resources, administrative procedures, and gap training
- no recognition for faculty or assessors, often with no increase in pay

**3.2. e) Describe, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your VET system through credit system: e.g. the dual system to integrate experiential learning.**

Canada does not have a national VET system. Only the province of British Columbia has reported on this item (see report).

**3.2. f) Provide data, if any, how the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is integrated in your HED system through credit system: e.g., research on the growing number of take-up of internships, etc.**

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is most commonly integrated into Canada's higher education credit systems by awarding academic credit for prior learning that meets expected course and program learning outcomes. However, little statistical data is available. The provinces of Ontario and Saskatchewan have provided statistics, which are located in their reports in the appendices of this report.

### **Component 3.3. Assessment methods and procedures**

**3.3. a) Describe the assessment arrangements. Who carries out assessments, and with what type of approaches? Who validates the results of the assessments? How long will the assessment procedures take? If methods or procedures vary depending on sectors, list the name of the sectors and the methods used for the recognition for the sector. What assessment procedures do participants go through to get their non-formal and informal learning recognized? Describe different stages.**

Assessment arrangements vary across provinces, institutions, and occupational organizations (e.g., regulatory bodies). However, some generalizations can be made regarding assessments at the postsecondary level.

In colleges and universities that engage in the assessment of non-formal and informal learning, assessment procedures are relatively similar. Most assessments are course-based, and the faculty who teach the courses are the assessors. In some institutions, the results of assessments are approved by academic supervisors (e.g., program deans). Assessment tools may be those already used in traditional course delivery or they may be designed specifically for PLAR. This varies by course, faculty preparedness, and available human and financial resources. The time required for assessments also varies depending on the number and type of assessments being used.

Assessment methods are determined by individual faculty or at the department level. Challenge examinations, which are the most common method of assessment, generally do not exceed 3 hours. Portfolios may be assessed by individual faculty or teams of faculty. External experts may be used, but this is rare. Other methods of assessment include written assignments, case studies; product assessments; written essay and short-answer exams, multiple-choice exams, structured interviews; oral exams and presentations, journals, and performance/skills demonstrations. In some instances, self-assessment tools are provided as a preliminary self-screening tool for learners.

Assessment procedures can be grouped into three stages: i) pre-assessment that involves providing learners with information and advising; ii) assessment including identification and verification of prior

learning in relation to institutional learning expectations (meeting standards and expected learning outcomes); iii) and post-assessment that includes learner feedback and the opportunity to appeal.

For more information on individual provincial and institutional practices, see the reports of the provinces of British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan.

**3.3. b) Describe different types of assessment methods and procedures. Provide data on advantages and challenges for the different types of assessment (e.g., competence-based assessment, summative assessment, portfolio assessment, etc.) What are the principle drivers of costs of different types of assessments to different actors? Provide evidence, if any, of certain types of assessment may become beneficial or a barrier to participants (e.g., psychological, financial, etc.).**

Although policies are in place in both colleges and universities, most assessments are conducted by colleges. The most common method of assessment is the challenge examination (54%). Portfolio assessment ranks equal to demonstrations at 23% (Aarts et al., 1999, 2003). Increasingly, more than one assessment method is used before granting academic credit.

In the area of apprenticeship and trades, assessment tends to be competency based. Supporting documentation is usually required to substantiate work-related experience. Alternative processes include interviews and written and practical examinations.

The drivers of institutional costs of assessment include the number of human resources required to develop, pilot, and deliver assessments. Assessments that are individualized in delivery are also more costly than those using standardized written examinations that can be written by many candidates at the same time. Demonstrations that require specific equipment and specially designed assessment tasks such as Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) are also costly.

The following table presents the range of assessment methods that may be used by Canadian postsecondary institutions engaged in PLAR. The chart was compiled from a review of publications and practices of several postsecondary institutions. The extent to which these methods are used varies by program and institution. Summative assessment characterizes PLAR whether they are conducted by portfolio assessment or different types of examination.

**Table 6: Assessment Methods and Tools**

Assessment Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Written Examinations</b>			
Multiple choice	Candidates select the appropriate answer from several possible responses.	Efficient and reliable. Allow a wide sampling of content. Many items can be	Question construction can be difficult and time consuming. May encourage guessing.

Assessment Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
True/False	Candidates state whether statements are true or false.		
Matching	Candidates select a second statement that best fits with each presented statement.		
Fill-in-the-blank	Candidates complete phrases or sentences by filling in the blanks.		
Short answer	Candidates provide short answers to questions or complete sentences.	<p>Require recollection of correct answer.</p> <p>Relatively easy to construct.</p> <p>Guessing is minimized.</p> <p>Allow wide sampling of content.</p> <p>Test candidate ability to organize, compose and write rather than merely recognize or recall.</p>	<p>Difficult to score.</p> <p>Tend to emphasize factual knowledge, rather than higher thinking skills, performance or attitudes.</p>
Essay	Candidates respond to questions or directions by organizing and writing an answer.	<p>Easy to prepare.</p> <p>Candidates use their own words.</p> <p>Measure complex cognitive learning.</p> <p>Eliminate guessing.</p>	<p>Testing is limited to a narrow sampling of content.</p> <p>May encourage “padding”.</p> <p>Difficult to evaluate objectively or achieve reliability in scoring and requires good scoring guides/model answers and clear criteria.</p> <p>Favours candidates with high language skills.</p>
Situation-based	Candidates organize and write a response	Able to measure complex,	Time-consuming and

Assessment Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
problem solving	to a problem usually presented in a real-life context.	cognitive learning. Candidates use their own words. Relate learning to real world situations. May test several competencies at once.	difficult to construct. Difficult to achieve reliability in scoring and requires good scoring guides. May reduce the range of content that can be sampled.
Standardized exam	Exam designed for large scale application. Often multiple-choice and true/false format. Many are norm-referenced.	Can often be graded by computer. Can compare performance across organizations and jurisdictions. Are considered more objective than other methods	Are culturally bound, limiting objectivity. Subject to error in selecting answer out of sequence. Ratio of correct to incorrect answer design limits quality of assessment tool.
<b>Oral Examinations</b>			
Structured oral test	Candidates respond to pre-set questions (and answers). Notes are kept on responses.	Tend to be more reliable than an unstructured oral test. Provide direct assessment of specific knowledge and skills.	Less personal Require training in interviewing skills and rating scales. Can cause candidate anxiety. May advantage candidates with strong verbal skills and comfort in speaking.
One to one interview	A face to face interview during which questions may flow from candidates' responses.	Allow for a more complete assessment than pre-set questions. Useful in combination with portfolio assessment.	Require training in interviewing skills and rating scales.
Panel interview	Candidates are interviewed by	Moderate subjectivity.	Costly to conduct. Group process must be

Assessment Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
	several examiners.		planned.
<b>Performance Assessments</b>			
Simulation (OSCE)	Candidate performs in a simulated real life situation	Provide “controlled” sample of real life/work activity. Allow testing of complex integrated skills.	Require clear criteria and standardized test conditions. May be costly.
Presentation	Candidate verbally presents learning.	Provides candidate control over demonstration.	Depend on candidate confidence.
Skills demonstration	Candidate physically presents learning.	Clear demonstration of skill level and problem-solving ability in relevant contexts. Excellent for measuring application and synthesis levels of the taxonomy.	Can be costly and time consuming.
Role play	Actors or peers take on roles to simulate a problem	Practical — replicating “real world” skills as much as possible.	In group work, may not be a fair assessment of each individual’s ability. Can create performance pressure unrelated to skills being assessed.
Observation	Observer assesses behaviour in a natural setting. Criteria for assessment are set in advance.	Opportunity to observe the real practice context  Often more comfortable for candidates than simulation.  Allow for collaboration with employees.	Complicated to set up.  Can be time consuming and costly. A rating sheet is critical to prevent unfair test conditions.  Can involve unplanned, uncontrolled events.
<b>Product Assessments</b>			
Work sample	A sample of work is provided by candidate.	Provides a real life context. Direct, practical and learner-centered.	A rating sheet is critical to prevent unfair test conditions. Don’t allow for

Assessment Method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
		Useful when knowledge and skills are difficult to observe during product creation.	observation of process.
Portfolio	An organized collection of materials that present and verify skills and knowledge acquired experientially.	Enable reflection on learning. May demonstrate cross-cutting knowledge and skills.	May require supplementing with interviews. May favour candidates with stronger writing skills. Require assessor training.
External training program review	Assessment of workplace training and occupational training programs for academic equivalency and credit.	Eliminates assessment of individual achievements based on successful completion of program. Essentially credit transfer.	Can be costly. Training programs often don't have sufficient structure to justify academic credit.

Source: Van Kleef, J. (2006). Building PLAR Through Theory: The Case for Implementing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Adult Education Practice Settings. (Compiled from institutional data collection). Master's thesis. St Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia, Canada.

For provincial commentary on assessment methods and their costs, see the reports of Alberta, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan. The British Columbia report describes the province's unique approach to PLAR as a component of a broader concept of "flexible assessment".

**3.3. c) Describe the current relationship between academic standards, professional standards, and occupational standards in your country. Who owns and controls such standards?**

Academic standards are generally set by individual universities and colleges. Some educational programs are accredited by occupational bodies. In these cases, these bodies have input into the setting of educational program standards and sometimes program content. For example, in Ontario, the educational standards for nursing programs are established by the universities in accordance with registration standards set by the regulatory body, the College of Nurses of Ontario. For more information on how provinces may establish and manage academic standards, see the British Columbia provincial report.

"Professional standards" generally relate to the standards set for certain designated occupations. "Occupational standards" is a more generic term and includes occupations that are not considered "professions." Professional standards are established by the professions themselves, usually authorized by provincial legislation. However, these standards are usually set in consultation with other relevant stakeholders such as employers and educators. In occupations that are not regulated, employers set performance standards.

Standards for certified, skilled trades are usually established by provincial/territorial governments in consultation with employers and other stakeholders. Standards for Red Seal apprenticeship programs (see Component 1.1.c) are nationally set through inter-provincial/territorial cooperation.

**3.3.d) Has the issue been raised in your country of how the assessment practice should be balanced with the right of individuals to have their learning completely independent of assessment and recognition processes be retained? Describe the debate to date, if any.**

No information is available on this point.

**3.3. e) How is the recognition of non-formal and informal learning quality-assured in your country? Who is responsible for the quality assurance process? How is the issue of quality assurance treated in the internationalization context?**

Provincial/territorial governments have played an important role in providing postsecondary institutions with direction and financial support to develop PLAR policies and procedures and initiate implementation, but quality assurance is largely the responsibility of individual organizations (colleges, universities, regulatory bodies). Postsecondary institutions engaged in PLAR are generally aware of the standards established by the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) in the United States in the 1980s, and a set of standards set by the now disbanded Canadian Labour Force Development Board in the 1990s. In 2000, a project funded by the federal government and coordinated by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) developed initial benchmarks for PLAR practitioners. A few provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) have provincial policy frameworks for PLAR/RPL, which postsecondary institutions and other stakeholder groups are encouraged to follow.

A set of principles and “good practice characteristics” developed from research conducted by the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning (CIRL) in 2006 have recently been made publicly available and are now used by a number of standard-setting organizations.

A research initiative on Quality Assurance in PLAR is currently underway, funded in part by the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL). The project involves the Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology in Saskatchewan, Ryerson University in Ontario, the University of New Brunswick, and the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning (CIRL) and will provide a framework for examining quality assurance in PLAR in postsecondary education. The project is scheduled for completion in November 2007.

#### **Component 3.4. Others**

No further information is available.

## Component 4: Stakeholder Behaviour

### Component 4.1. Characteristics of stakeholders

**4.1. a) Identify all possible stakeholders involved (with specific characteristics) and complete a list below concerning non-formal learning and informal learning in your country to complement the list for Component 2.2. The 2.2 list is to map out governance and the role of government while this list aims to map out the relationships between providers of non-formal learning or types of informal learning, recognizers of such learning, recognition to be received, regulatory of such recognition, and main users of such recognition. Please note, due to the difference of nature of non-formal and informal learning, that the grid for non-formal learning uses a provider of non-formal learning or an input-side as a starting base — first column — as non-formal learning seems to be more recognized after going through a non-formal learning programme. On the other hand, the grid for informal learning uses output/skills as a starting point because it is not feasible to list all types of informal learning where there is no such supplier as the individual is the active entity to create such learning opportunities. Therefore, there is a separate grid for non-formal and informal learning. The annex also aims to examine characteristics of users for aggregation of data, but please provide micro-level data about users in this section.**

PLAR in Canada examines both non-formal and informal learning using the same range of assessment processes and recognition mechanisms. No distinctions are made. The following table summarizes the requested information on stakeholders involved in recognizing non-formal learning in Canada.

**Table 7: Stakeholders Involved in Recognizing Non-Formal Learning**

Providers of Non-Formal Learning	Recognizers of such Non-Formal Learning	Types of Recognition Received	Regulator of Recognition	Main Users of Recognition
Colleges on contract to deliver the workplace-sponsored training	Employers	Course and program outcome credit toward certificates and diplomas	Employers	Workers
Community-based adult literacy providers	Colleges Employers	Eligibility for further academic upgrading and other training programs	Colleges	Workers Unemployed
Professional and occupational associations	Colleges Universities  Profession regulators	Academic credit Course exemptions Academic program admission  Licensing/certification /registration	Postsecondary institutions  Professional/occupational	Professionals  Immigrants Professionals

Providers of Non-Formal Learning	Recognizers of such Non-Formal Learning	Types of Recognition Received	Regulator of Recognition	Main Users of Recognition
	Occupational associations  Employers	Employment Advancement in employment Advancement in apprenticeship	associations  Employers  Government s' Apprenticeship Offices	returning to workforce  Workers  Skilled tradespersons
Employers	Colleges Universities  Regulatory bodies  Governments Employers Unions	Academic credit  Licensing/certification  Apprenticeship credit Employment	Employers Government	Program applicants Enrolled students Applicants for occupational licensing, certification, (including immigrants)
Unions	Unions Employers	Union advancement Employment advancement	Unions Employers	Workers
Private and community-based trainers	Secondary schools Colleges Employers	Academic credit Employment Advancement in employment	Secondary schools Colleges Employers	Students Workers Job Applicants
Adult Learning Centres (Manitoba only)	Secondary schools	Academic credits	Secondary schools	Adult learners

See Components 2.2.a) and 2.2.b) for general information on various stakeholders. Available information on participants/users is also included in Component 4.3.a).

The following table summarizes the requested information on stakeholders involved in recognizing informal learning in Canada.

**Table 8: Stakeholders Involved in Recognizing Informal Learning**

Types of Skills Gained by Informal Learning	Recognizers of Such Informal Learning	Types of Recognition Received	Regulator of Recognition	Main User(s) of Recognition
Essential skills	Colleges Secondary schools  Governments Employers Unions	Program admission Academic credit  Admission to apprenticeship Employment	Colleges Secondary schools  Governments Employers Unions	Academic upgrading students  Low-skilled employed and unemployed course and program applicants Low-skilled employed and unemployed skilled tradespersons
Technical knowledge and skills	Colleges Universities Secondary schools  Professional regulatory bodies  Governments Employers Unions	Program admission Academic credit  Permission to write licensing exams Exemption from licensing pre-requisites  Permission with write trade certification exams Employment Advancement in employment	Colleges Universities Secondary schools  Professional regulatory bodies  Governments Employers Unions	Program applicants Enrolled students  High skilled applicants (including immigrants)  Skilled tradespersons Workers

Types of Skills Gained by Informal Learning	Recognizers of Such Informal Learning	Types of Recognition Received	Regulator of Recognition	Main User(s) of Recognition
Cognitive skills	Colleges Universities Secondary schools Professional regulatory bodies  Governments Employers Unions	Program admission Academic credit  Permission to write licensing exams Exemption from licensing pre-requisites  Permission with write trade certification exams Employment Advancement in employment	Colleges Universities Secondary schools Professional regulatory bodies  Governments Employers Unions	Program applicants Enrolled students  High skilled applicants (including immigrants)  Skilled tradespersons Workers
Skills Related to Professional Practice	Professional regulatory bodies	Permission to write licensing exams Exemption from licensing pre-requisites (e.g. clinical practice)	Professional regulatory bodies	High skilled applicants (including immigrants)

The provincial report of British Columbia provides additional categories of recognition that are available in that province.

## Component 4.2. Access

### 4.2. a) What are the eligibilities to go through the recognition process? If it differs in different sectors/levels (e.g. HE, VET, upper secondary, basic education, professional, etc.), describe different eligibilities for different levels/sectors.

In colleges and universities, eligibility to undertake PLAR is determined by individual institutions and practices vary. In some provinces and institutions, learners must be enrolled students; in others, this is not a requirement. In some cases, pre-requisite courses must be successfully completed before PLAR eligibility is established. In many instances, applicants must pass an English or French language test.

Professional regulatory bodies have a range of eligibility criteria for their PLAR processes including previous degree or diploma completion, licensed status in countries of education, graduation from an

approved or accredited institution, language competency in English or French, criminal checks, previous work experience, Canadian work experience, knowledge of the Canadian workplace context, and knowledge of Canadian jurisprudence.

**4.2. b) How many educational institutions (in comparison with the total number of educational institutions) at different levels practise the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as an admission policy?**

Statistics on institutions offering PLAR specifically for admission purposes are not available. The following table presents the number of public postsecondary institutions that recognize non-formal and informal learning for admission and/or academic credit. PLAR policies are in place at these institutions but PLAR activity may be isolated to particular programs. Volume of activity varies, with low activity dominating. PLAR in apprenticeship programs involves the granting of credit for workplace components and/or for classroom requirements.

More specific information on PLAR activities is provided in the provincial report of Manitoba.

**Table 9: Number of Public Institutions that Recognize Non-formal and Informal Learning**

Province	Level	# Institutions Offering PLAR	Total # Institutions
British Columbia	University	6	6
	College	12	12
	University College		
	Institute	3	3
	Secondary school	4	4
	Apprenticeship		

Province	Level	# Institutions Offering PLAR	Total # Institutions
Alberta	University	1	4
	University College	2	7
	College and Institute	16	16
	Secondary school		
	Apprenticeship	Province-wide	Province-wide
Saskatchewan	University	2	2
	College and Institute		
	Secondary school	1	13
	Apprenticeship		
Manitoba	University	3	3
	University College	1	2
	College and Institute	(at least) 1	4
	Secondary school	(at senior levels)	
	Apprenticeship	Province-wide	Province-wide
Ontario	University	(at least) 2	23
	University College		
	College and Institute	24	28
	Secondary school		
	Apprenticeship		
Quebec	University	Not available	Not available
	College		
	Secondary school		
	Apprenticeship		
New Brunswick	University	4	4
	College	1	2
	Secondary school		
	Apprenticeship		
Nova Scotia	University		10
	College		2
	Secondary school		
	Apprenticeship		
Prince Edward Island	University	(in development) 1	1
	College	(non-credit) 1	1

Province	Level	# Institutions Offering PLAR	Total # Institutions
	Secondary school Apprenticeship		
Newfoundland and Labrador	University College Secondary school Apprenticeship	1 1	1 2
Northwest Territories	University College Secondary school Apprenticeship	0	0 1
Yukon	University College Secondary school Apprenticeship	0	0 2
Nunavut	University College Secondary school Apprenticeship	1	0 1

Primary source: Provincial/territorial reports; Secondary sources: *Colleges and Schools in the Provinces and Territories of Canada*, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, Directory of Universities, and individual institutional Web sites.

**4.2.c) Describe the situation of access to information and communication. Is there one-stop information service centre or help-desk concerning questions which may arise about the recognition system? What medium has been used (leaflet, CD-ROM, website, etc)? If there is a website, please provide the figure of ‘click ratio (how many clicks per month – please provide all the records available since the launch of the website.’). Attach an example. What media channels have been used to publicize the existence of such medium (newspaper, journals, free journals, publicity on the metro, etc)? Specify the names of such media channels.**

There are no national, provincial, or territorial one-stop information service centres responsible for responding to questions about the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. Individual organizations provide information services according to their mandates.

Postsecondary institutions vary in the extent to which they provide PLAR-specific information on their Web sites. For example, at the University of New Brunswick, the College of Extended Learning serves as the main point of contact for PLAR. Students can access information through the university calendar, Web site and print brochure. See [http://extend.unb.ca/deg\\_cred/gen\\_info/gen\\_info\\_prior\\_learning.php](http://extend.unb.ca/deg_cred/gen_info/gen_info_prior_learning.php). Other institutions such as SIAST in Saskatchewan make extensive use of their Web site and CD-ROMs to market its RPL services. Nova Scotia Community College provides initial information on its Web site,

and additional information through a designated individual identified as the institutional contact. Several institutions produce PLAR information brochures and hold PLAR orientation sessions. Many colleges also have designated PLAR facilitators or coordinators who may be assigned on a full-time or part-time basis.

Most governments do not engage directly in providing information on PLAR. However, there are exceptions such as British Columbia where the Ministry of Advanced Education has a PLA section on its public Web site. See the provincial report for details. Additional detailed information is provided in the provincial reports of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Since most organizations do not have dedicated PLAR inquiry services, accurate statistics on inquiries related strictly to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning are not available.

### Component 4.3. Participation

#### **4.3. a) How many people have actually taken up the process at different educational levels? Provide any evidence on the patterns of participants (gender, age, socio-economic groups, ethnicity, employment status, marital status, educational levels and their family educational levels).**

There are no national data available on the number of PLAR assessments conducted by postsecondary institutions. Most institutions do not keep statistics. However, data that do exist indicate that participation levels in postsecondary institutions are low (Aarts et al.1999, 2003; Wihak, 2005). Limited data are presented in the provincial reports of Alberta, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Saskatchewan. No institutions collect data on the demographics requested in the above question. The only province to collect assessment data on a provincial basis is Ontario, which reports on the number of assessments conducted in community college programs that receive funding under the provincial operating grant (see Ontario provincial report).

The *Slice of the Iceberg* (1999) research referenced in Component 1.4.e reported that 65% of those who undertook PLAR were female. This proportion was similar in research conducted by Douglas College in British Columbia (1996, 2000). The *Slice of the Iceberg* study found that the majority of PLAR learners were mature students of whom 52% were over the age of 30 and whose average age was 33. The study indicated that 63% of PLAR learners were part-time students at the time of their engagement in the PLAR process. The study did not examine family educational levels.

From the demographics of the participants, the study developed an overall profile of a typical PLAR learner. She is an English-speaking, white, female aged 33 years. She has past postsecondary education and has only recently returned to college. She is attending college through part-time studies or continuing education. She is also employed on a full-time basis and, through work and on-the-job training, has acquired more than five years of prior learning related to her program of study. She found out about PLAR while a student and decided to undertake assessment because she could obtain academic credit for her prior learning while continuing to work full-time. She could also save time and money by taking fewer courses. She learned about PLAR either through college personnel and publications or through her workplace. The availability of PLAR was an important factor in her decision to stay in her program, and it helped her graduate from the program. She undertook PLAR during the first year of her program. She found that PLAR had many benefits, the most important of which were that it confirmed and gave value to her prior learning, that it helped her move more quickly through her program, that it lightened her course load, saved her money, and improved her self-confidence. The PLAR process created no disadvantages with respect to her subsequent studies. She was satisfied with the results and would recommend PLAR to others.

A project on PLAR in the field of human services conducted by Athabasca University in 2007 found that 94% of participants were women. The *Gateways Project* also found that 86% were over the age of 35 years. Many had experienced barriers to returning to postsecondary education because of a combination of factors including family obligations, employment, and lack of a suitable program in their community.

**4.3. b) Provide details of any survey – national household survey, user survey, etc. – that explains any linkage of the background of participants and the uptake of the recognition process.**

No national surveys or research have linked participant backgrounds and the uptake of non-formal and informal learning recognition processes beyond the demographics noted in Component 4.3.a. However, in the *Feedback from Learners* (2003) study, researchers found that the majority of PLAR learners did not identify with any designated groups (rural, ESL, visible minority, single parent, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons). There was also no difference between the educational histories of PLAR learners and students in the same programs who did not undertake PLAR.

**4.3. c) Provide evidence, if any, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning worked as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the ‘learning leads to learning’ and ‘training leads to training’ track? Who constitutes the ‘disadvantaged group’ in your country?**

Disadvantaged groups in Canada are considered to include:

- persons with disabilities
- women
- visible minorities
- those whose first language is not English or French
- single parents
- social assistance recipients
- unemployed and underemployed
- First Nations and Métis peoples
- immigrants
- refugees
- rural and northern residents

There is no Canadian research on PLAR’s value to disadvantaged groups. As noted earlier, the largest Canadian study ever conducted in postsecondary education, *Feedback from Learners* (2003), found that the majority of the 7,292 PLAR learners did not identify with any designated group (rural, ESL, visible minority, single parent, persons with disabilities, Aboriginal persons). It also found that the vast majority of PLAR candidates were already enrolled students (Aarts et al., 1999, 2003).

On the positive side, research carried out by the Nova Scotia PLA Centre with adult learners on social assistance indicated that PLAR, and portfolio development in particular, resulted in increased participant self-esteem, self-confidence, and participation in further learning activities. Self-recognition of skills and learning appeared to be the key. Thus, the recognition by participants themselves of their non-formal and informal learning can be viewed as an innovative pathway for disadvantaged groups to get on the ‘learning leads to learning track.’

Information on additional initiatives that support disadvantaged groups are reported in the British Columbia report and in Component 1.4.e of the Alberta provincial report.

## Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives

**4.4. a) Provide evidence of any, if not all, that the recognition of non-formal and informal learning functions as a transitional or multi-directional pathway in your country (e.g., a way to further studies, shorten study period, find a job, change a job, get a better salary, etc.). If it functions as a way to find a job from the unemployment status, is there any evidence that the length of unemployment influences the transition.**

Research studies on the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a transitional tool are limited. Wihak (2005) states that Canada is “lacking follow-up studies of the effect of PLAR with individuals with a longer-term pattern of unemployment, such as social assistance recipients, parents returning to the workforce after lengthy breaks for childrearing and/or prisoners.”

Perhaps the most relevant study in this area was a three-year Workers in Transition project conducted by the Centre for Education and Work in Manitoba in 2006. The study measured the long-term effects of a six-week course in portfolio development as a labour market tool to assist workers in employment transition. Three hundred workers took part in the study, across five provinces. The researchers made 17 findings indicating a positive impact on participants’ ability to identify their knowledge and skills, select, find, and obtain relevant employment, and recognize training needs. Ninety-five percent of participants also concluded that the portfolio course helped them to identify their transferable and occupational skills. A key observation made by the researchers was that the opportunity to identify and reflect on one’s skills in a guided way and put them into a context of a job search is very important to workers in transition.

The *Gateways* project conducted by Athabasca University (2006) in Alberta and a University of New Brunswick project (2005, reported in 4.1.a) on internal PLAR processes, provided some data on disciplines in which recognition most often occurred.

Perceived results of recognition include

- admission to programs
- expedited program completion
- academic credit
- higher long-term participation in lifelong learning and formal courses
- enhanced quality of life that comes with academic achievement
- recognition of credentials
- professional certification
- increased self-confidence and self-awareness
- financial savings
- time savings
- new employment
- clarity on career goals, paths
- more time for family and other activities
- improved motivation to return to learning

Another project that contributed to individual transitions through PLAR was a national demonstration and evaluation project undertaken by the PLA Centre Halifax for Human Resources Development Canada. The project provided leadership training and portfolio learning program services through Employment Assistance Services (EAS) agencies in Nova Scotia. Approximately 60 EAS staff completed the Centre's PLAR Practitioner Certificate program. They, in turn, provided Portfolio Learning programs for about 650 EAS clients over a three-year period. Although the project did not achieve numbers sufficient to permit significant quantitative data, the extensive qualitative data produced overwhelmingly positive results, which included the effectiveness of the portfolio learning approach in reintegrating marginalized populations, and a strong agency commitment to continue delivery as an integral part of service provision and value evaluation research.

Additional examples are cited in the report of the province of Alberta.

**4.4. b) Provide evidence, if any, of detailed case studies where the actual length of studies was shortened by their recognition of non-formal and informal learning (e.g. number of such cases, the maximum and minimum reduced length and, thus, the costs of the study, the most practiced subject areas, etc.)**

The research study conducted by Arscott et al. at Athabasca University (2006) indicated that adult learners who went through PLAR produced awards of academic credit that represented, on average, a year of full-time study for each participant. Additional information can be obtained at:

<http://gateways.athabascau.ca>

As noted earlier, 57% of the participants in the *Slice of the Iceberg* (1999) study reported that PLAR shortened the length of their program of study. No additional details are available.

Programs and statistics that implicitly indicate shortened length of study through PLAR are cited in the British Columbia report's description of the Integrated Studies program at Simon Fraser University and in the Saskatchewan report.

**4.4. c) Provide data, if any, of the returns of investments for different stakeholders. Any evidence of better private returns of investment (earnings) afterwards? Any evidence of fiscal returns? Any evidence of recognition that this type of learning contributes to democracy and citizenship as social outcome of learning?**

A study by the Conference Board of Canada (Bloom & Grant, 2001) identified a major learning recognition gap in Canada which, if eliminated, would provide \$4.1 to \$5.9 billion in additional annual income to Canadians.

Apart from this study, there is a general paucity of evidence on how educational institutions, learners, workers, and employers might directly benefit from PLAR. HRSDC has noted that, given Canada's relatively high proportion of immigrants, some of whom face barriers to labour market participation upon arrival in Canada, recognition of prior learning may serve as a means of helping remove some of these barriers, thus potentially contributing to the democracy and citizenship as well as the economy.

**4.4. d) Provide data, if any, of practices of fiscal incentives for employers (e.g. tax incentives).**

Financial incentives to provide PLAR has been part of public policy strategies to promote PLAR in postsecondary institutions since the 1990s. However, there is no information available on fiscal incentives for employers.

**4.4. e) Has the government made an explicit statement about promoting equity and social cohesion by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning? If so, what kinds of schemes exist?**

In a presentation at the 2005 national conference on PLAR, the federal government representative stated “the Government of Canada is committed to building a more globally competitive and sustainable economy and socially cohesive society. To that effect, we need to address the barriers that foreign-trained Canadians and immigrants face when accessing the labour market, including lack of recognition of foreign credentials and work experience.” Social cohesion was defined as conditions in which “All Canadians are able to participate fully in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Canada so as to have a true sense of contributing and belonging.” Many of the PLAR initiatives that federal and provincial governments have funded over the years have been targeted to improve economic and social cohesion through the promotion of adult learning and immigrant integration.

**4.4. f) Describe a situation in your country if stigmatization exists for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning (as opposed to the formal recognition) in the academic word and/or in the labour market? If yes, have there been any attempts to change such effects and to increase up-take of such recognition? What strategies have been tested so far?**

In some jurisdictions (e.g. Ontario, Saskatchewan), institutional policies have been established to ensure that credits acquired through the recognition of non-formal and informal learning are recorded in student records but not on their transcripts. One basis for these policies is a concern that institutions to which these students might subsequently apply may discriminate against them. Some universities have expressed concern about accepting credits acquired at colleges through PLAR.

Quality assurance in PLAR is a distinct area of concern among postsecondary institutions. In a British Columbia survey of colleges and universities by the Ministry of Advanced Education (2001) a lack of universal PLAR policies, procedures, and quality assessment practices were noted. In Saskatchewan, a concern that RPL may lead to a decline in quality or standards in educational institutions was identified as a motivating factor in the development of the province’s Recognizing Prior Learning Provincial Policy Framework (2004).

**4.4. g) Describe any incentives or levers that promoted public-private partnerships in the recognition practices in the labour market? What schemes or incentives exist to encourage SMEs to engage in the recognition arrangements?**

Little specific information is available on incentives or levers that promote public-private partnerships. However, the federal government has supported standards development and competency assessments by sector councils and industry has received incentives and tools on a project basis to recognize competencies that are gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. Although standards and competencies may be developed at a national level for different sectors, actual recognition is awarded by employers.

Financial incentives have also been provided to sector councils to develop recognition strategies with employers in their sectors (e.g., Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council).

## **Component 4.5. Others**

**4.5. a) Provide any arrangements of collective bargaining that exists in your country. If there are accomplishments gained by collective bargaining for recognition of non-formal and informal learning, please provide details (driving forces, technical arrangements, beneficiaries, etc.)**

In most provinces in Canada, faculty of postsecondary institutions are members of unions/societies. However, no detailed information is available on the use of the collective bargaining process to address workload issues related to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The exception is Ontario where PLAR was a faculty workload issue raised by the union in the early years of implementation in the colleges (1993–96). Informal arrangements with union locals were made with each institution on how faculty should be remunerated for the time spent preparing and delivering assessments. Arrangements varied from cash remuneration, to time off in-lieu or to allocations of time on workload reports. Union representatives participated in the implementation of PLAR in Ontario colleges through membership on advisory committees, working groups, and pilot projects.

**4.5. b) Provide any other technical arrangements that you think are the most important characteristics that exist in your country, which have not been addressed in above Component 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.**

There are inter-governmental and non-governmental initiatives in Canada, both public and private, that actively advocate and facilitate the recognition and credentialing of non-formal and informal learning. Included are:

- an Atlantic consortium of provincial governments currently exploring the possibility of establishing an International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition service that will service the Atlantic region by providing credential assessment and facilitate prior learning assessment.
- the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), a non-profit association that includes practitioners, advisors, and assessors across Canada and works toward the development of educational and human resource development services which are more flexible and responsive to changing needs and circumstances of adults. CAPLA also advocates for continuous learning opportunities and formal acknowledgment of previous learning experiences.
- The Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning (CIRL), a social purpose enterprise comprised of a network of professional researchers, academics, and advisors dedicated to improving the ways in which Canada recognizes the knowledge and skills of its people (learners, workers, immigrants, employers, governments, regulatory bodies) through project management, research, and consulting.
- the Conference Board of Canada, a not-for-profit organization, which researches and analyzes economic trends, as well as organizational performance and public policy issues. The Conference Board has conducted research on the financial costs of not recognizing prior learning in Canada and has been a vocal supporter of PLAR initiatives.
- the Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Network, a multi-stakeholder group that provides PLAR practitioner professional development and networking opportunities, information and advice to stakeholders including government, and promotes credible PLAR practice and research.
- the Halifax PLA Centre, a federally funded non-profit organization that normally engages in PLAR advising, delivering of portfolio development workshops, and PLAR practitioner training, research, consultation, and project management with groups interested in implementing PLAR.
- Canadian Virtual University
- Workplace Learning PEI, developed in 1997 to help workplaces keep pace with economic change. Working in partnership with businesses, unions, and other organizations, Workplace Learning offers information sessions and workshops on PLAR and portfolio development, and practitioner training and certification.

There are a number of provincial councils across Canada that support development of PLAR strategies in education. The Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) and the Manitoba Council on Postsecondary Education are two that have proactively participated in provincial policy development, institutional implementation, PLAR awareness projects, and facilitation of professional networking.

## Component 5: Case Studies on Benefits and Barriers

Please provide some evidence with case studies if such benefits [of recognition] are identified in your country. On the contrary, if tension or resistance exists as barriers to such benefits, please also describe such cases.

The following table presents initiatives that address the various benefits of PLAR. The provincial/territorial reports, in which additional details are provided, are noted in parentheses.

Question	Case Study
<b>Component 5.1. Economic benefits</b>	
<b>5.1.a)</b> Shortening the formal education process and thus reducing direct costs of learning and opportunity costs for individuals.	Early Childhood Education (Saskatchewan report) Continuing Care Assistant (Saskatchewan report) Nursing Re-entry (Saskatchewan report) Building Systems Technicians Project (Saskatchewan report) Flex-Track option for Classroom and Community Support Program through on-site or on-line assessment (British Columbia report) Gateways Project: Producing Results in Prior Learning (Alberta report)
<b>5.1.b)</b> Increasing the visibility of non-formal and informal learning outcomes and thus enhancing potential benefits for future economic gains.	Saskatchewan Outfitting Industry project (Saskatchewan report)
<b>5.1.c)</b> Improving the allocation of human capital within organizations by matching the appropriate demands and supplies of skills and competencies.	College of Midwives of Manitoba PLEA project cross-referencing with nursing (Manitoba report)
<b>5.1.d)</b> Reducing skills shortages or skills mismatch by allowing more mobility within the labour market (occupational mobility).	Red Seal trade examinations to assess skills in skilled trades (HRSDC report).
<b>5.1.e)</b> Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by the active use of the potential labour population (older workers, women, immigrants, unemployed youth, etc.).	Work Ready Skills Passport project facilitating entry into entry-level construction jobs (Manitoba report).
<b>5.1.f)</b> Ensuring labour force to support economic growth by improving productivity of the current labour force.	Bristol Aerospace: Competency-Based Training Framework — documenting competencies for next assessment phase (Manitoba report) Boeing Competency Identification (Manitoba)

	report) United Food and Commercial Workers Security Officer Training Initiative designing PLAR to assess new mandatory qualifications (Manitoba report)
<b>Barriers</b>	Lack of awareness among employers Slow, cumbersome PLAR procedures SME concerns about investing and then losing workers Difficulty educational institutions have in responding quickly to employer needs
<b>Component 5.2. Educational benefits</b>	
<b>5.2.a)</b> Reshaping the established concept of education from ‘terminal education’ to ‘lifelong learning.’	<i>Brandon University: First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling Degree (B. FNAC) initiative</i> Assiniboine Community College: Comprehensive Health Care Aide project Red River College of Applied Arts, Science and Technology: PLAR in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Diploma Program Red River College of Applied Arts, Science and Technology: PLAR in the Certificate in Adult Education (CAE) project University of Winnipeg PLAR/Adult Learner Supportive Department Developmental Studies program University of Manitoba/Manitoba Labour and Immigration/ Council on Post-Secondary Education: Internationally-Educated Engineers Qualification Pilot Program For details on all of the above initiatives, see Manitoba provincial report.  Gateways Project (Athabasca University, Alberta 2006).
<b>5.2.b)</b> Providing flexible personalized learning pathways.	Career Pathing Project (Saskatchewan report).
<b>5.2.c)</b> Raising educational attainment levels by increasing the completion rates of secondary education qualifications.	Ontario provincial policy on PLAR in secondary schools (Ontario report) British Columbia provincial policy on PLAR in secondary schools (British Columbia report)

	Manitoba Adult Learning Centres (Manitoba report)
<b>5.2.d)</b> Increasing the tertiary participation rates of non-traditional learners.	No provincial data available
<b>5.2.e)</b> Improving the teacher work force through more flexible entrance to teaching occupation.	No indication that PLAR is used to promote access to teaching profession. However, the college systems of Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Saskatchewan require all new faculty to undertake internal certificate programs in teaching and learning that include training in PLAR.

<b>Barriers</b>	Ad hoc procedures and lack of institutional strategic direction. See Red River College in Manitoba for example of strategic plan.
<b>Component 5.3. Social benefits</b>	
<b>5.3.b)</b> Building social institutions to arrange smoother transition from education to work and from work back to education; increasing sociocultural equity and social cohesion by providing pathways for formally excluded disadvantaged groups to be included.	Fisher River Project (Manitoba report) The CD/CED Training Intermediary Internship Program (Manitoba report) PLA Centre, Halifax projects and services in Nova Scotia <a href="http://www.placentre.ns.ca">www.placentre.ns.ca</a>
<b>5.3.b)</b> Leading to the better societal values (e.g., promotion of democracy, intercultural understanding, better health, lower criminal rates)	No Additional Case Studies below.
<b>5.3.c)</b> Enhancing flexibility to allow more mobility within the education and training sector (e.g., between VET and HE and from FE to HE).	Mount Royal College project in nursing (Alberta report)
<b>5.3.d)</b> Building a stepping stone for prisoners to be re-integrated into a society.	No provincial/territorial data available. See 5.5.a below
<b>Barriers</b>	Funding issues
<b>Component 5.4 Personal benefits</b>	
<b>5.4.a)</b> Empowering individuals to have more control over where and when they learn.	Adult Learning Centres survey (Manitoba report) Individual learner case summaries (Manitoba report)
<b>5.4.b)</b> Developing the aspirations of those who have “dropped out” to resume learning and to complete a qualification.	No data available
<b>5.4.c)</b> Reducing the stigma of qualifications associated with non-formal and informal learning.	Ontario provincial policy requiring colleges to leave “PLAR” off official transcripts
<b>Component 5.5 Others</b>	
<b>5.5.a)</b> Describe any cases where you identify other benefits or barriers to such benefits.	See 5.5 a) Others – See Additional Case Studies below under 5.5 a)
<b>Barriers</b>	Financial cost of PLAR Time involved Writing skill level required for portfolios Lack of ongoing advising

## Component 5.5. Others

### ***Additional Case Studies***

The following are additional informative case studies collected by CMEC that relate to the questions posed in Components 5.1 to 5.5.

#### **5.1. a)**

#### **Feedback from Learners: A Second Cross-Canada Study of PLAR, Pan-Canadian Case Study (2003)**

**Feedback from Learners: A Second Cross-Canada Study of PLAR (2003)** was a study of learner experience with and perceptions of PLAR that surveyed 1,000 adult learners who had undertaken PLAR at seven colleges across Canada. The study found that 30% of respondents investigated PLAR because of its potential to save them time by shortening their academic program; 57% found that PLAR did in fact shorten their program of study. Twenty percent of participants reported that PLAR helped them gain employment in their field of study.

#### **Dimensions of the Experience of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, New Approaches to Lifelong Learning Case Study (2001)**

*Dimensions of the Experience of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition* (2001) examined Ontario university student perspectives on PLAR. The researchers also found that the students in the study were highly self-directed and that time and cost were the two most profound savings associated with PLAR. The authors concluded that PLAR has the potential for producing students capable of gaining greater self confidence and control of their own learning. The small size of the study (17 adult learners) prevents generalizations being drawn from its findings, but it does strengthen our understanding of adult learner awareness of and support for PLAR.

#### **PLAR in Fire Service Education, Justice Institute of British Columbia (2003)**

The Justice Institute of British Columbia is a postsecondary organization providing education and training for the police, fire service, paramedics, courts, correctional services, and other public safety functions. It supports opportunities for flexible delivery of a continuous learning system and recognizes learning acquired through relevant experience. The Institute provides assessment and recognition for candidates using an on-line Web-based system that maximizes flexibility and speedy assessments. Currently, only one course (Instructional Techniques) is available for assessment but this is about to be expanded. The process begins with an on-line self-assessment tool using 36 questions based on critical learning outcomes of the course. This is followed by an invigilated 60-question multiple-choice knowledge examination and a performance assessment by an approved referee based on 18 criteria and the submission of products such as a lesson plan. This PLAR process has been operating successfully for six years and is accepted by the international fire service accreditation body.

#### **5.1. c**

#### **Cancer Care Ontario and Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (2007)**

A project currently underway in a partnership between the Ontario government and Cancer Care Ontario (an umbrella organization that steers cancer treatment and prevention services) is using PLAR to assess the knowledge and skills of medical radiation therapists to determine if they have the necessary learning to move to a new advanced role as clinical specialists in radiation therapy. Pre-established occupational competencies are the criteria against which all candidates are assessed. PLAR methodologies include portfolio assessment, case study examinations, and structured interviews. Employers interested in

exploring use of the advanced role are participating as PLAR assessors and work placement hosts for a defined period of training and practice at the advanced level. Evaluation of the PLAR component will be completed by the end of 2007. The incentive in this case was government funding to assist in the development of all aspects of the project.

### **Career Advancement in Corrections PLAR Project, Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology (SIASST) (2007)**

SIASST offers a two-year equivalent diploma program in Correctional Studies. A PLAR component has been added for individuals who are currently employed with three years experience and have acquired relevant prior learning through their employment in the criminal justice field. Assessments are offered at the program level and include a range of methodologies including review of evidence files, interviews, and challenge examinations. Detailed candidate guides and self-audit packages are provided. Top-up training is available if assessments indicate that some learning outcomes have not been achieved through prior learning.

#### **5.1. d**

### **Continuing Care Assistant PLAR Project, Nova Scotia (2006)**

To address labour market shortages and the introduction of entry-to-practice standards in Nova Scotia's Continuing Care sector, the Department of Health initiated the development of a PLAR approach to certification for Continuing Care Assistants. A project team comprised of the provincial Health Care Human Resource Sector Council, Nova Scotia Community College, and the PLA Centre collaborated on a process targeting individuals employed but not certified, unemployed persons with relevant experience, and candidates from outside Nova Scotia. The PLA Centre trained Registered Nurses as PLAR advisors/assessors who were subsequently matched with applicants to support the identification, analysis, and demonstration of prior learning relative to the learning outcomes articulated by the sector. Assessment results in a Statement of Standing that details achievements and remaining training needs. Successful completion of training gaps leads to eligibility to write the provincial certification examination.

**Tending the Field: PLAR for Continuing Care Assistants** provided the first province-wide opportunity for individuals with relevant experience and knowledge to have that learning formally recognized. In 2006–07 the program assisted 88 learners. Administration continues through the Nova Scotia Association of Health Organizations.

### **Cook Certification, Articulation, and Core Competency Mapping, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC)**

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council is an industry sector council whose mandate is to provide leadership and direction for human resource development in Canada's tourism industry. A key interest is to support labour mobility and to address issues related to the supply of qualified workers. The Council offers courses and certification to individuals who demonstrate achievement of the national occupational competencies for Professional Cook, Line Cook, and Kitchen Helper.

The Council is engaged in several initiatives designed to further the goal of a systematic national approach to the recognition of competencies in non-regulated occupations in the tourism sector. One of these projects involves the occupation of "cook" and the mutual recognition of professional competencies by the various stakeholder groups that offer a cook credential. Professional credential-issuing organizations include the Canadian Culinary Institute, community colleges delivering cook training programs, the CTHRC, and the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship. CTHRC certification has also been established as a basis for awarding immigration applicants occupation-related points. This project is in the early stages but its ultimate goal is a full credit transfer system across programs run by all deliverers.

### 5.1. e

#### **A Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Model for Nursing Baccalaureate Equivalency, College of Nurses of Ontario (2005)**

The regulatory body, the College of Nurses of Ontario, developed a PLAR model to evaluate the learning of internationally educated nurses and facilitate their entry into professional practice in Ontario. The model included foundation principles to guide development, criteria for applicant eligibility, process quality assurance criteria, and a step-by-step assessment sequence. The initiative featured a collaborative development process used by the CNO to engage relevant stakeholders and potential assessing agencies. Responsibility for implementing the model has been given to a university which will work in collaboration with the CNO to provide prior learning assessments on their behalf.

#### **Workplace Integration for Newcomers Project, Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources Coordinating Committee (MAHRCC), Manitoba (2007)**

The provincial sector council has established an industry-based model for assessment and training of immigrants in three targeted occupations: welder, CNC machining set-up operator, and laboratory technician. The Workplace Integration program identifies immigrant candidates, occupational competencies, interested employers, and subject matter experts to conduct assessments. The process involves preliminary interviews, confirmatory assessments, candidate self-assessment and observership in the workplace, and performance-based assessments. Skill gaps are addressed by workplace on-site and off-site training, low-wage employment, and intermittent assessments. Successful completion of all competencies results in an employer-based certificate and a list of confirmed competencies. Five other sectors are involved in this project and additional occupations are planned for subsequent phases of the project.

#### **Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) and the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (2007)**

NAIT and the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers have developed a partnership, now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, for immigrant engineers and engineering technologists. Candidates undertake a PLAR self-assessment by completing a questionnaire based on competencies from several areas of the engineering technology profession. Based on their score, candidates are interviewed by a representative of the Alberta Association of Science and Engineering Technology and a representative of the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. This preliminary assessment results in a rating for each applicant. Selected candidates receive English language training, an introduction to computers, AutoCAD and technical writing training delivered by the Mennonite Centre over a period of four months. Successful completion of this training is followed by enrolment at NAIT in a special training program that delivers the critical components of the 2 year diploma program in engineering technology. The program is approximately 25% of the length of the regular engineering technology program. Graduating technologists are assisted by the Mennonite Centre, which works with the engineering firms to arrange employment — about 60 candidates each year. The program is highly successful and there are now employers on a wait list for graduates. NAIT has recently commenced a similar program for internationally educated accountants.

### 5.1. f

#### **Dalhousie University, School of Public Administration (SPA): 2000 to present**

In 2000, the Government of Nova Scotia approached Dalhousie University to develop and deliver a fully-funded Master's in Public Administration (Management) program for mid-career public service professionals, in order to prepare them for senior leadership succession as an ageing workforce created increased rates of retirement.

A partnership of the School of Public Administration and the PLA Centre, the Centre's Skills and Learning Portfolio Program is used to provide a basis for admission of candidates who do not meet the

normal admission requirements for an undergraduate degree. Since 2000, well over 50 such candidates have successfully gained entrance to the MPA(M) through the portfolio process, have performed well, and have graduated at high rates.

#### 5.2. a

##### **The Gateways Project, Athabasca University, Alberta (2006)**

The Gateways Project was designed to examine program-based PLAR activities of 124 adult learners at one university, three colleges, and one university-college in four jurisdictions across Canada. By October 2006, 60 of the participants had been awarded 1,861 credits representing about 620 3-credit courses at the college and university level. The awards represented a consistent savings of the equivalent of one year of full-time study and 4.3 years of part-time study for each participant. The credits saved participants an average of one year's tuition as well as attendant living costs and potential loss of income. Many of the learners reported that they would not have returned to education without having had their prior learning recognized. Researchers made several recommendations that encouraged further developments in PLAR.

##### **Yukon College Early Childhood Education, Yukon Territory (2006)**

Yukon College participated as a pilot site for the Gateways Project noted above. The project used portfolio development to record and assess sixteen students' prior learning against the competencies required for completion of Early Childhood certificates and diplomas. As a result, Yukon College issued ten diplomas and one certificate based on this alternative evaluation process and identified what gaps in learning required additional course-taking. Other students gained course credits toward a Degree of Professional Arts through Athabasca University.

##### **Holland College Program-based PLAR Model (2007)**

In February 2007, Holland College established Canada's first program-based PLAR model for institution-wide implementation at the college level. It incorporates learning gap analyses and individualized learning plans for students. Programs or program clusters will develop strategic plans for implementation based on the model, which is designed to be flexible and student-centred. Programs are provided with institution-wide policies and guidelines; portfolios are the primary tools used in assessment. Individual course-based prior learning assessments will also be available including demonstrations, challenge examinations, video reviews, oral examinations, projects, checklists and logbooks, and various forms of portfolio assessment. Informal PLAR will also be possible for enrolled students and determined in negotiation with program faculty. Assessment services will be team-based.

##### **A Slice of the Iceberg: Cross-Canada Study of PLAR (1999)**

*A Slice of the Iceberg* reported the results of a pan-Canadian case study of PLAR at seven colleges across Canada over a 5-year period. The academic activities of 3,500 adult learners who undertook PLAR were compared with the academic activities of 12,000 students who did not undertake PLAR. The study found that the PLAR learners had educationally relevant, college-level prior learning that could be successfully assessed and recognized within postsecondary educational settings. PLAR learners were successful students who earned solid grades in their courses acquired through PLAR and in their courses delivered through traditional means. Their average course grades were as high or higher than the average course grades of traditional students in the same programs. Their pass rates were higher. They took more courses than traditional students and graduated at a higher rate. Their graduation grade point averages were slightly higher. PLAR also was found to strengthen adult learners' confidence in their own capacities to learn and motivated adults to pursue further education.

The follow-up study, **Feedback from Learners: The Second Cross-Canada Study of PLAR (2003)**, extended the longitudinal data analysis by another three years for a total 8-year databank of 7,292 PLAR learners and 14,198 assessments in 2,547 different courses in 345 programs and 9 discipline categories. This second study had similar findings as the first.

#### **5.2.d**

The study, *Feed-back from Learners: The Second Cross-Canada Study of PLAR (2003)*, reported on the high impact of PLAR on adult learners' decisions to return to school (74%) and to stay in school (78%).

#### **5.3. d**

##### **Portfolio Learning for Offenders, Correctional Services Canada (2002)**

CORCAN is a branch within Correctional Services Canada (CSC) that focuses upon developing the employability of offenders as part of their rehabilitation process, and offers education/training programs and support to inmates. In 2002, the Halifax PLA Centre's Portfolio Learning program was piloted at two correctional institutions in the Atlantic Region. The success of these pilots led to the adoption of the PLA Centre's leadership training PLAR Practitioners Certificate program to build capacity for ongoing Portfolio Learning programs in all five Atlantic Canada correctional institutions. A comprehensive evaluation framework has been developed and discussions are underway with CORCAN and the PLA Centre and its research partner PRAXIS regarding further program development and evaluation.

#### **5.4. a**

##### **Portfolio Development for People in Transition, PLA Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia**

The PLA Centre, Halifax is an independent, collaborative, community-based centre providing advising and support services to adult learners in transition. The Centre uses a Portfolio Learning process as the major focus of its work in the traditional context of 'bridging' for those seeking access to and academic credit in formal education and training, and also for those seeking other ways to use their experiential as well their credentialed skills and learning.

A broad diversity of adult learners in transition who access the Centre include unemployed and under-employed persons, low literacy adult learners, persons with disabilities, women trying to re-enter the workforce, prison inmates, and persons facing systemic barriers such as the Aboriginal and African Nova Scotia communities, and mid-career public service professionals.

Normally, the Centre offers its Portfolio Learning program as a facilitated process for a group of 8-12 participants meeting once a week over a ten-week period. The program enables participants to systematically and comprehensively identify, articulate, provide evidence for and present the complete range of the skills and knowledge they have acquired through their work and life experience as well as their formal education and training. The process builds confidence and motivation, identifies learning strengths and gaps, clarifies future employment possibilities, and develops learning and action plans to participate more fully in economic and civic life.

The Centre also offers a PLAR Practitioners Certificate program and has trained and certified a number of professional staff to provide Portfolio Learning programs and services for their clients.

#### **5.5. a**

##### ***Feedback from Learners: A Second Cross-Canada Study of PLAR (Aarts et al., 2003)***

The survey of 1,000 adult learners who had undertaken PLAR at seven colleges across Canada found that 49% of respondents reported that PLAR saved them money in the long run, and 47% reported that it lightened their academic course loads. The single most important benefit was identified as PLAR's confirmation of the value of respondents' experiential learning.

The study examined adult learners' perceived barriers to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. These included:

- PLAR process is too time-consuming, particularly portfolios

- the cost of assessment
- lack of information and lack of clarity of information
- location and scheduling of assessments
- reading and writing skills required for assessment, especially the portfolio
- family and personal pressures
- perception that the process is too time-consuming
- misunderstandings about the value given to experience rather than learning
- negative impacts on financial aid
- lack of advising/counselling
- lack of availability

**Building PLAR through Theory: The Case for Implementing Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in Adult Education Practice Settings (2006)**

This study found that the literature on PLAR is replete with commentary on the value placed on PLAR by those engaged directly or indirectly in its implementation. Beneficiaries include adult learners, academic institutions, and public policy makers as well as society as a whole. The following is an abbreviated excerpt from this research on the benefits of PLAR. The full text and complete citations are presented in the original study.

*PLAR's Value to Adult Learners*

From an adult learner's perspective, the practical value of PLAR lies in its capacity to promote access to postsecondary courses and programs and award academic credit or advanced standing for learning obtained outside the classroom. These benefits are reported to save students' time.

A second value is the positive impact that PLAR has on learner self-esteem, confidence, and motivation to complete their studies. The overwhelming reason for taking an interest in PLAR, according to the learners in a study by Aarts, Blower, Burke, Conlin, Lamarre, et al. (2003), is that it confirms the value of learning acquired through life and work experience. This was followed by a perceived benefit that learners did not have to sit through classes where they already knew the material, and were able to move through their programs of study quickly.

In a research study of Canadian university students who had undertaken PLAR, Thomas, Collins, and Plett (2001) report learner feedback that PLAR is a significant factor in learner decisions to return to formal education. Aarts, Blower, Burke, Conlin, Lamarre, et al. (2003) found that adult learners considered PLAR to be an important factor in their decisions to stay in and successfully complete their programs. This finding supports earlier research on the positive impact of PLA on learner persistence (Billingham & Travaglini, 1981; Pearson, 2000). Billingham and Travaglini found five factors that were predictive of success in a program. One of these factors was the number of credit hours transferred into the program or obtained through credit for prior experiential learning options.

This finding is supported by Pearson (2000). He studied several hundred part-time students eligible to apply for PLA credits through portfolio assessment over a 10-year period at one college in the United States. His findings indicated a strong association between portfolio and student persistence with PLA doubling the odds of persistence for an average student.

In a U.S. study of adult learner participation in PLA, Freers (1994) concluded that 97% of learners confirmed that an important benefit of PLA is the valuing of their prior learning. This finding supports

Mark and Dewees' (1984) earlier findings that PLA represents "a respectful recognition by an institution that adult learners should not be required to repeat old learning" (p18). Freers also found that 73% of learners felt that PLAR had helped them define their educational goals. Aarts, Blower, Burke, Conlin, Ebner-Howarth, et al. (1999) made a further finding that learners who investigate PLAR but decide not to pursue it nevertheless consider it to be an important factor in helping them to consider attending college.

Boornazian (1994) examined how the PLA process reflects respect for diverse starting points and learning styles in adults using self-assessment. By drawing on several case studies conducted at a New England college in the U.S., Boornazian demonstrated how portfolio development creates a foundation for students' understanding of their own learning and for becoming better students. He concluded that coaching and collaborative learning environments create a sense of trust, support, and mutual respect and help learners view their capabilities in terms of college-level learning.

A year later, in another U.S. college study, Mullen (1995) found that students who participated in PLA had more effective study habits and attitudes than students who did not. Factors included in the study were student behaviour in relation to promptness in completing academic assignments, lack of procrastination, freedom from wasteful delay and distraction, studying procedures, attitudes toward teachers and their classroom behaviour and methods, and acceptance of institutional objectives, practices, and requirements.

Freers (1994) also studied PLA at a community college in the United States and reported that 70% of respondents reported a greater number of employment opportunities as a result of the PLAR process and 55% attributed PLAR to their obtaining a better paying job. Furthermore, 69% anticipated an increase in the amount of salary that they would probably earn in their lifetime as a result of the process. Interestingly, however, this optimism was not shared by all respondents. A conflicting 64% of study participants reported that the process had not been a factor in the advancement of their specific careers.

There appears to be no specific research studies on how useful PLAR has been in Canadian workplace settings, although 48% of respondents to a survey by Douglas College (1996) reported that PLAR had made a difference to them on the job by helping them to gain confidence in their own abilities, improve their communications skills, and better apply their technical skills. The impact of PLAR in the workplace would be a valuable subject for future research in Canada.

### *PLAR's Value to Institutions*

From an institutional perspective, PLAR is reported to have both academic and administrative value including a positive association between receiving credit for prior learning and student persistence.

Losak (1979) found that American students who had taken the standardized CLEP examination graduated significantly sooner than those who did not. Caldwell (1977) also reported that students who received one year's advanced standing through CLEP were not disadvantaged in any way as a result of their prior learning assessment and graduated in three years at the same rate as those who stay for four years. These students also took advanced courses at the same rate and had similar grades in these upper level courses to students who enter without advanced standing. The research of Arnold (1998) provides a succinct review of university faculty perspectives that suggest that the value of PLAR lies in improved quality of the teaching and learning experience through the facilitation of critical reflection, self-directed learning, and personal and career development. All of these results represent greater institutional achievement in serving quality education for adult learners.

From an administrative perspective, the research suggests greater efficiencies in the use of human and material educational resources. Because students are not required to attend courses for which they already have the required knowledge, skills, and attitudes, duplication of learning is eliminated and teaching staff and other resources can be re-allocated to where they can be best used. In this manner, institutions can serve higher numbers of learners. This perspective is supported by Canadian researcher Evans (1995) who noted faculty and management reports that PLAR is an institutional image-enhancer in

terms of its capacity to serve adult learners. These findings also suggest that, to the extent that postsecondary institutions are fiscally accountable to government and their communities and accountable to graduates for the quality of their educational services, PLAR provides a beneficial service.

### *PLAR's Value in Public Policy*

From a public policy perspective, the value of PLAR rests in the opportunity it presents for governments to encourage more efficient use of educational resources, accelerate labour market entry, and promote the implementation of strategies that support lifelong learning. Since the early 1990s, most Canadian provincial/territorial governments have directly supported PLAR initiatives by providing funding and sponsorship of special projects, conferences, consultations, and networking events.

Additional commentary on the benefits of and barriers to PLAR is provided in the provincial reports of Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

## Component 6: Conclusions

**6. a) Which national goals, if any, in your country, are ‘the recognition of non-formal and informal learning’ most closely associated with? Are these goals associated with lifelong learning agenda or something else? If something else, specify.**

The recognition of non-formal and informal learning is closely tied to the lifelong learning agendas of the federal government and most of the provinces (see the reports of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador). PLAR is also recognized as a contributor to policy agendas relating to:

- social and economic equity
- improved labour supply, mobility, and efficiency
- educational access, affordability, equity, and efficiency
- transitions to learner-centred education
- immigrant integration

Challenges to achieving these goals include limited financial and organizational capacity to deliver PLAR (especially at universities), lack of top-up training opportunities once learning gaps are identified, limited use of competency-based approaches to teaching and learning, and quality assurance concerns.

Linking opportunities for higher education, training, and lifelong learning to the health and sustainability of communities and the economy is part of a current consultation being undertaken in British Columbia (see B.C. report).

**6. b) What strategies (short-term, mid-term and long-term) are needed to operationalize the ‘recognition of all types of learning outcomes — including formal, non-formal and informal learning’ in your country? What are the most challenging tasks for policy-makers in the due course?**

Provincial/territorial perspectives vary but common reference is made to the need for national and/or additional provincial/territorial PLAR frameworks that could expand acceptance and use of PLAR, improve its integration with other educational and economic development policy strategies, increase collaboration among stakeholder groups, and enable linkages with other program initiatives such as bridging programs that help integrate immigrants, facilitate re-entry to professions, and encourage work-to-school and school-to-work transitions. Other strategies cited by the provinces include one-stop PLAR centres and greater use of portfolios.

Some of the challenges include providing adequate resources for recognition activities, training and development of faculty and staff, lack of information, lack of best practices, the need to service large geographic areas with small dispersed populations, and a great diversity in stakeholder needs.

**6. c) Address important policy issues for your countries, which have not been addressed in any of the previous Components.**

The Province of Nova Scotia notes that it is committed to ensuring that children are successful in the early years which will lead to continued learning throughout their adult lives. *Learning for Life: Planning for*

*Student Success* and a follow-up report, *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*, have detailed initiatives to address quality education for students and their parents.

Family literacy is another area where lifelong learning is supported. Family literacy programs support the whole family learning together, which promotes lifelong learning.

These programs provide an environment for non-formal and informal learning to occur. As the province moves toward recognizing non-formal and informal learning, the learning gained through these initiatives will be valuable for adults who later want to enrol in formal programs.

Other issues raised by provincial/territorial reports include the need to better integrate PLAR with bridging programs, the difficulties of assessing the prior learning of individuals with limited English or French language skills, the challenges posed by employer- or regulation-based Canadian work experience requirements as prerequisites for employment or occupational licensing, and the difficulties faced by immigrants in applying their knowledge and skills in a new Canadian context.

How PLAR in the postsecondary sector relates to PLAR in the licensing/registration processes of regulatory bodies and the recognition of prior learning by employers are additional issues that have not been addressed.

Finally, in some provinces such as Manitoba, a holistic approach to labour force development incorporates the recognition of non-formal and informal learning as decentralized and systemic strategic components of current and planned strategies for education and labour market integration. In other provinces, the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is a stand-alone academic activity driven by the agendas of individual institutions.

**6. d) Please describe how much the ‘Lifelong Learning for All’ strategies are implemented at post-compulsory education level in your country?**

Provinces vary in the extent to which they have implemented their articulated support for lifelong learning. Strategies that have been implemented include access-oriented university and college admission policies for mature students, the establishment of adult secondary schools, and collaborative initiatives such as the one between Nova Scotia Community College and Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning in which students can earn adult secondary school diplomas and apply to work on a college program concurrently. Specific course and program fees for senior citizens and special-interest non-credit courses are also common.

**6. e) Please list some ‘factors’ which you think as unforeseeable and yet necessary conditions to realize the ‘Open Learning Society’ scenario, which gives value to formal, non-formal and informal learning.**

The following factors were suggested in the provincial/territorial reports:

- changes in established standards within various professions to expand the scope of recognition
- specific funding and resources
- improved operational processes for assessing and awarding PLAR
- centralized provincial/territorial strategies
- a communications strategy that informs the learner, postsecondary institutions, employers, etc. about the benefits of PLAR
- stakeholder will

- competition for students
- demographics

## Summary

In summary, Canadian public policy makers were the primary instigators of PLAR in the early 1990s but, as special funding was withdrawn, individual institutions became responsible for implementation. The federal government of Canada and a number of provincial/territorial governments have been proactive in their support for PLAR, providing policy support, project funding, conference support, and subsidizing institutional assessment activities.

Recognition of non-formal and informal learning in Canada is now at the stage of young adolescence. PLAR is relatively well known among most colleges and made available in some if not all of their programs. Universities are slowly but increasingly becoming familiar with the concept and the practice of PLAR, and some universities have developed formal policies. However, PLAR infrastructures do not guarantee activity, and in most provinces PLAR activity levels still appear to be low at both colleges and universities. PLAR is increasingly being used by regulatory bodies to recognize the knowledge and skills of immigrant applicants for occupational licensing/certification. It is less common among employers and rare among labour unions. The case studies in Component 5 provide a sampling of the range of ways in which PLAR is being investigated in Canada.

Canadian research on PLAR is growing and many projects experimenting with implementation have been undertaken. PLAR's benefits to learners are now relatively well documented. Cost and the time-consuming complicated nature of PLAR processes are major barriers to learners. Lack of information, cost, and concerns about quality assurance are important barriers to institutions.

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## Appendix 1: Tables for Comparison

### Tables for the Analysis and the Preparation of the Comparative Report

Two provinces provided information for this table: Saskatchewan and New Brunswick.

#### Saskatchewan

##### 3.1. Financial resources invested in recognition of non-formal and informal learning

<b>Table W1 -Total 2006-07 budget for recognition of non-formal and informal learning by source of funds</b>		
Source of funds	Expenditure on recognition of non-formal and informal learning	% of GDP
Public	\$500,000 provided in 2006-07 budget (Note* No designated funds for RPL in 2004-05 or 2005-06, other than salaries for two staff within the Department of Advanced Education and Employment, formerly Saskatchewan Learning)	negligible
Trade Unions	NA	NA
Private (other than individual)	NA	NA
Individuals themselves	NA	NA
Other 1	NA	NA
Other 2	NA	NA
Total	\$500,000 in 2006-07 No expenditures in 2004-05 or 2005-06	
Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment		

Table W2 - Total public expenditure on recognition of non-formal and informal learning — Year 2006-07		
Expenditure	% of all public expenditure	% of GDP
\$500,000	Unknown	Unknown
Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment		

**Notes to Table W2:**

This table concentrates on the first line of Table 1, that is, public funding of recognition of non formal and informal learning (*L1*). The only idea is to provide the proportion of the public budget that is devoted to recognition of non formal and informal learning.

Table W3 - Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total public educational expenditure — Year 2005-06 (most recent year available)		
Level of public expenditure on education	Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning (%)	Public expenditure on all other educational activities (%)
\$553.5 million	0	100%
Source: Saskatchewan Learning Annual Report 2005-06		

Table W4 - Destination of public spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning — Year 2006-07		
	Public expenditure (in local currency)	%
Buildings	0	
Staff	0	
Assessment, jury	0	
Incentives (ad campaigns, etc.)	0	
Other 1	In the 2006-07, provincial funding for recognition services was provided, to be allocated as follows: SIAST - \$250,000; Regional Colleges-\$105,000; Dumont Technical Institute - \$40,000; Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission - \$25,000; Recognizing Coordinating Committee -	

	\$80,000.	
Total	\$500,000	100
Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment		

<b>Table W5 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by level of government — Year 2006–07</b>		
<b>Level of government</b>	<b>Expenditure (in local currency)</b>	<b>%</b>
Central	Provincial Government – \$500,000	100%
Regional	NA	
Other local (please specify)	NA	
Cities	NA	
Other 1	NA	
Other 2	NA	
Total	\$500,000	100
Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment		

<b>Table W6 – Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total educational expenditure (whether public or not) — Year 2005–06</b>		
<b>Expenditure on education</b>	<b>Expenditure on recognition (%)</b>	<b>Expenditure on all other educational activities (%)</b>
\$553.5 million	0%	100%
Source: Saskatchewan Learning 2005–06 Annual Report		

<b>Table W7 – Destination of total spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning — Year 2006–07</b>		
	<b>Expenditure (in local currency)</b>	<b>%</b>

Buildings	NA	
Staff	NA	
Assessment, jury	NA	
Incentives (ad campaigns, etc.)	NA	
Other 1	No designated funds allocated in 2004-05 or 2005-06. For 2006-07 the provincial government budgeted \$500,000 to be allocated as follows: SIAST - \$250,000; Regional Colleges \$105,000; Dumont Technical Institute - \$40,000; Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission - \$25,000; and Recognition of Prior Learning Coordinating Group - \$80,000.	100%
Total	\$500,000 in 2006-07	100

Source: Government of Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment

**Table W14 - Distribution of participants in the recognition process by type of subject  
— Year 2005-06**

Type of learning outcomes recognised	Frequency			%
Total SIAST institution only 932	932			100
Community Service	494			53%
Science and Health	288			31%
Business and Entrepreneurial	74			8%
Nursing	60			6%
Industrial	7			1%
Technology	9			1%

Source: Saskatchewan Institute of Science and Technology PLAR Requests by Division 2005–06

**Notes to Table W14:** From the total number of participants, a distinction is introduced in terms of type of learning outcomes recognised; the country should provide the categories and a possibility is to do it by sector: agriculture, service, industry and to break these categories down as far as possible (see Table W10 or W44 as possible examples)

## New Brunswick

Though New Brunswick Community College has a Prior Learning Recognition policy, as per answers provided in 1.4 (a) and 2.1. The College has no database indicating the number of learners applying for prior learning recognition per year. By extension, the college does not have any information concerning the sex or age of the individuals or the type of credits or courses for which recognition is sought.

Implementation of the Prior Learning Recognition policy has been done within existing resources, with no earmarked monies set aside for this purpose. The college can offer no breakdown of associated expenditures or an overall total.

Participants in non-formal learning through the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) by grade level of registration and gender (2004-05)

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grades 1-6	247	249	496
Grades 7-9	180	279	459
GED preparation	277	310	587
<b>Total</b>	<b>704</b>	<b>838</b>	<b>1542</b>

Participants in non-formal learning through the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) by grade level of registration and gender (2005-06)

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grades 1-6	249	226	475
Grades 7-9	195	295	490
GED preparation	226	243	469
<b>Total</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>1434</b>

Participants in non-formal learning through the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) by educational attainment prior to entering CALP by grade level and gender (2004-05)

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grades 1-6	86	85	171
Grades 7-9	321	411	732
Grades 10-12	261	299	560
GED preparation	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>1466</b>

**Participants in non-formal learning through the Community Adult Learning Program (CALP) by educational attainment prior to entering CALP by grade level and gender**

**(2005-06)**

<b>Grade Level</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
Grades 1-6	89	88	177
Grades 7-9	348	423	771
Grades 10-12	257	331	588
GED preparation	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>1536</b>

**Participants\* in Non-Formal PLAR through the Apprenticeship Program**

**(2005-06)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
2005	86	2	88
2006	90	4	94
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>182</b>

\* Participants may or may not have received credit toward an apprenticeship program.

**General Educational Development (GED) and Adult High School Diploma Program  
Statistics for 2005–2006**

<b>GED</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Total</b>
	1179	294	1473
<b>AHSD</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>French</b>	<b>Total</b>
	58	116	174