

Chickens, Eggs and A Scary Number

When it comes to literacy and essential skills, nearly five in 10 Ontarians, above the age of 16, lack what they need in order to succeed in today's economy (information from the 2003 International Adult Literacy Survey). Ontario is in the middle of the pack, behind provinces such as Saskatchewan and Alberta, but better than New Brunswick and Quebec. The flip side of this is that 48% of us could use some skills upgrading, especially if we are still in the labour force and hope to remain there for awhile.

The challenge is that a fair number of us in that 48% would rather not know that about ourselves. If we're lucky, we have tricks up our sleeves to compensate for the gaps in our essential skills, and/or we rely on others close to us, to navigate our way through. The downside though, is that we may not really appreciate that if we were to improve our essential skills, it could open doors for us in terms of finding new or better paying employment, continuing our education or becoming a more active members of the community.

Many of us who live here in the beautiful upper Ottawa Valley do so because we love it here. A big part of that is our ability to take care of ourselves and our families financially. That is not always easy to do given the local Renfrew County economy. If you've got work, you want to keep it or find something that pays better. If you're out of work, then finding a job is front and centre.

Here's where the chicken-and-egg (what comes first?) debate comes into play. You could argue, for example, that rather than upgrade your skills now, it's easier to wait until a potential job comes along and retrain according to the jobs requirements. The trouble with that approach is, by the time you're skilled and ready, that job has very likely gone to someone who already had the required skills. A better approach would be take advantage of the free training offered at the Training and Learning Centre and learn a new skill like emailing or internet or brush up on those rusty skills like fractions or algebra.

In the end, having a solid toolkit of essential skills at your disposal is truly "what comes first". The Training and Learning Centre is here to help. For more information on our FREE service call 613-628-1720.