

Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada

Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada collaborated on the release of *Women and Men in Canada: A Statistical Glance*, which includes gender-based data on education and literacy of Canadians. In addition, Statistics Canada recently released *Women in Canada 2000: A Gender-Based Statistical Report*, which includes a detailed analysis of education, training and literacy issues for women in Canada.

Human Resources Development Canada

Established in 1998, the National Literacy Secretariat works in concert with the provinces and territories, the literacy community, non-governmental organizations, business and labour to support five types of literacy activities that complement the literacy training provided by Canadian provinces:

- improving access to literacy programs;
- conducting research;
- sharing and co-ordinating information;
- raising awareness of literacy issues; and
- developing learning materials.

The Secretariat also works with a number of federal departments, such as Health Canada, the Department of Justice Canada and Corrections Canada, to promote literacy issues and develop initiatives specific to their jurisdictions.

In 1998, the Government of Canada announced the Canada Education Savings Grant program, which is designed to improve access to education by encouraging Canadian families to save for their children's post-secondary education. To encourage systematic saving over the long term, the Government of Canada, through Human Resources Development Canada, provides a grant of 20 percent on the first \$2000 of annual contributions made to a Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) for children up to 17 years of age. Upon attending a post-secondary educational institution, the beneficiary becomes eligible to receive the funds from the grants and accumulated tax-sheltered investment income held in the RESP. Currently, more than one million Canadian children have RESPs.

In 1998, the Government of Canada introduced The Canada Millennium Scholarships initiative to help Canadians gain access to post-secondary education. The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation was established as an independent body to manage the \$2.5 billion fund and provide some 100 000 scholarships annually to post-secondary students across Canada. That same year, the federal government also announced the Canadian Opportunities Strategy, a co-ordinated set of measures to expand access to higher education in Canada. Under the Strategy, the Canada Student Loans Program was improved to better assist Canadians in managing their student debt. Measures include tax relief for interest on student loans; interest relief for more graduates; an