

A strong democracy starts with literacy

Frontier College hosts national forum examining the vital role literacy has in civic engagement.

WINNIPEG, SEPT. 16 , 2019 – On September 17, Frontier College—Canada’s original literacy organization—will host a national forum to discuss how Canadians’ literacy skill levels have a direct effect on voting, volunteering, and advocating. The forum will be held in Winnipeg, conducted in collaboration with Elections Canada and sponsored by Canada Life who have supported Frontier College’s literacy programs since 1995 and are the Founding Sponsor of the National Forum.

As the federal election approaches, and the increased challenges that today’s complex digital information influence brings to democracy, the question of engagement and inclusion is more pressing than ever. About one in two – or 49% of adult Canadians – don’t possess the required level of literacy to meet the demands of the 21st century knowledge-based economy (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, 2013).

The forum will focus on how civic engagement is vital to our everyday lives, as it is the vehicle through which we are able to change and improve the quality of our society. Voting, volunteering, or advocating, provides people with a sense of belonging, social responsibility, and understanding of their communities and low literacy skills act as a barrier to those who wish to participate in their communities. It can impact their understanding of the voting process and make them feel like they do not belong – thereby denying them a voice. ([Click here for discussion paper](#))

“At Frontier College, we support people who are facing challenges every day with reading, writing, and numeracy,” says Stephen Faul, President and CEO, Frontier College. “We are hosting the forum to educate and demonstrate how literacy is a key component of a fair and prosperous society.”

“Literacy is considered one of the building blocks of lifelong learning. At Canada Life, we believe people who develop their literacy skills can improve their ability to advocate for their causes, volunteer in their communities, and engage as informed citizens,” said Debbie Down, Director, Community Relations at Canada Life. “It’s our pleasure to support the work Frontier College does to help improve the well-being of Canadians through literacy.”

The forum is free to attend. Simultaneous conferences will be held in Whitehorse, Vancouver, Cortes Island, Edmonton, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Montreal, Quebec City, Halifax, and Iqaluit, and will be live streamed in its entirety via <http://video.isilive.ca/frontiercollege/2019-09-17/registration.html>

Questions for the panel are welcome via email literacy@frontiercollege.ca and on twitter [@frontiercollege](https://twitter.com/frontiercollege).

Date: Tuesday, September 17, 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. CDT (Registration opens at 11:00 a.m.)

Location: Delta Hotel Winnipeg, 350 St. Mary Avenue

Who: **Lisa Drouillard**
Director of Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement
Elections Canada

Stephen Faul
President and CEO
Frontier College

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Averee Fontaine
Program Assistant
Frontier College

Margo Goodhand
Former editor-in-chief of the Edmonton Journal and the Winnipeg Free Press

Amel Zaazaa
President
Foundation Paroles de Femmes

Moderated by **Dave Angus**, President, Johnston Group

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About Frontier College

Frontier College is a national charitable literacy organization, established in 1899 on the belief that literacy is a right. We work collaboratively with community-based agencies to provide targeted, innovative literacy and numeracy support for individuals throughout Canada. Each year, over 40,000 children, youth, and adults participate in our free programs in more than 150 communities throughout the country. For more information about Frontier College visit www.frontiercollege.ca and follow Frontier College on twitter: [@frontiercollege](https://twitter.com/frontiercollege)

About Great West Life, London Life and Canada Life

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life are leading insurance, wealth management and benefits specialists, focused on improving the financial, physical and mental well-being of Canadians. Under the new Canada Life brand, we help Canadians achieve their potential, every day. Our customers across Canada have trusted us to provide for their financial security needs and deliver on the promises we have made. Together, we serve the financial security needs of more than 13 million people across Canada and provide a wide range of products and services for individuals, families and business owners.

As an Imagine Caring Company, we support the principles of corporate citizenship and benchmarks for community investment established by Imagine Canada. Our companies contribute at least one per cent of pre-tax profit in support of the communities where our employees and customers live and work. This includes \$13.3 million in contributions to non-profit, charitable and community organizations in 2018.

For more information, please contact:

Meredith Roberts
Frontier College
416-923-3591 ext. 324
416-624-6778 cell
mroberts@frontiercollege.ca

Liz Kulyk
Director, Media & Public Affairs
Canada Life
204-926-5012
media.relations@canadalife.com