

# **Understanding the Realities** **Youth Employment** **in Canada**

INTERIM REPORT OF THE EXPERT PANEL ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT 2016

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Canada 

## **Expert Panel on Youth Employment**

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As a young Canadian, I believe it's an encouraging sign for the government to elevate and explore the complicated employment challenges faced by young workers. Our panel looks forward to helping this group engage in meaningful work that unlocks their full potential.

We have been asked to assess the barriers that young people aged 15–29 (aka “youth”) face in finding and keeping jobs and to highlight innovative practices to support their employment from both at home and abroad. This is our interim report that better contextualizes the panel's focus and summarizes some of what we've heard to date.

Young workers bring new ideas and a new approach to the workplace. But this value is not always recognized, and our generation is having a tougher time getting our foot in the door. Once we do, it's likely that we'll engage in precarious, short-term contract work that is frustrating and creates uncertainty. **The struggle is real.**

“Youth employment” is a huge issue that is larger than just a “youth” demographic. At present, it fundamentally affects a generation's ability to plan and save for the future.

Rather than just reading reports and talking to other experts, to deliver on this mandate we're reaching out to **actual young people** to better appreciate what their challenges are and how they might be overcome. We're also speaking with employers, researchers, career counsellors, service providers, and municipal and provincial governments.

We know that youth are a diverse group with varied needs and that complex challenges persist for Indigenous youth, youth in care, and youth with disabilities. Further, the experiences of youth in Victoria are just not the same as in St. John's or Iqaluit. On top of that reality, negative stereotypes around “entitlement” and “laziness” persist for young workers. **Not cool.**

In a short time, our initial conversations have prompted connections to some long-standing policy debates: What are the best ways to support the ambitions of young entrepreneurs? Can a basic income cushion youth during key transitions? Would a more liveable wage help youth clustered in low-wage work? Might the experience of a gap year help people gain a stronger sense of what they want to do in life? In the new year, we will dig deeper into cutting-edge interventions that have the potential to help younger people score jobs that match their skills and interests.

Last thing — if you read the appendices, you'll see that each of the seven incredible experts on this panel are young, too. That's refreshing, but it's not up to our generation alone to solve the structural problems that young people face when it comes to navigating this new non-linear labour market. There's a role for public employers, the private sector, non-profit leaders, parents, peers, and the education system to play. There's a role for you, too.

We could not be more excited to lead and engage you in this policymaking exercise and present our final report in the new year. **Let's do this.**

**VASILIKI (VASS) BEDNAR**  
**CHAIR, EXPERT PANEL ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**



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We often read that the youth unemployment rate has always been higher than the general population. But why is this true?

This report is an update on our work so far to find out. We are pleased to share what we have heard and update you on our efforts to draft and deliver our final report to the government in March 2017.

## What We Already Know

Youth are a diverse group of people experiencing a series of significant changes in their lives. Many are focusing on their studies. Others may be traveling, taking time off from school or work, caring for their families, or struggling with personal issues. Many youth are looking for work or seeking to improve their employment situation, yet are facing significant barriers to doing so<sup>1</sup>. When it comes to finding a first job, many youth face the same fundamental challenge: you can't get a job without experience; and you can't get experience without a job.

We know that the job market into which young people are entering today is different from that experienced by their parents. In Canada and around the world, new technology is changing the types of jobs that are available and the skills that industries now require. In response, employers are organizing work in new ways, including choosing to hire workers for short-term, temporary contracts or on a part-time basis rather than for “permanent” full-time positions. Youth today are entering the workforce at a time of greater inequality. As they struggle to save and plan for their futures, some may feel like they will fail to achieve the same quality of life that their parents had.

## What We've Done So Far

On October 17, the Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour invited us to Ottawa to launch the Expert Panel on Youth Employment. Her message to us was: “be bold.” Having accepted this challenge, we started our journey by learning. We combed through reports, tables and graphs, seeking the answers to some key questions: How many youth in Canada are unemployed? Which

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1 For more information and statistics on youth employment, see Annex A.

young people in Canada are most likely to struggle to find work? In what sectors are they working? What programs already exist for youth who need help? What programs exist to help youth elsewhere around the world from which we can learn? Having used this research to establish a basic understanding of the issues, we wanted to hear from youth, thought leaders and organizations.

We are now pounding the pavement, working the telephones, skyping, leveraging social media and hanging out in meeting rooms across the country to learn the views of Canadians<sup>2</sup>.

November has been a busy month for us. We have talked to young people, experts, employers, community organizations and service providers in our communities. We've organized more than 120 discussions with over 300 participants<sup>3</sup> in cities and regions all across Canada including: Victoria, Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Rimouski, Sherbrooke, Halifax, Charlottetown, St. John's, Nunavik, and Eeyou Istchee in Quebec.

These conversations have linked faces and names to the data. We're learning about the lives that are impacted when young people face barriers to employment. We're also learning about the positive changes youth can make in their workplaces when they are given the opportunity to do so. With each new connection we make, we more deeply appreciate the dynamics of youth employment in Canada.

We have also reached out to young Canadians through our [Facebook page](#) and on Twitter, where our [#youthpanel](#) has reached almost 700,000 users. We're inviting these career carvers to complete our online survey and share their perspectives, and each week, we engage youth by asking them a different question about their employment experiences on social media.

We are consulting closely with those who hire and support youth to learn about what obstacles they experience in hiring and supporting youth through their employment challenges. Through a separate survey, employers and others can tell us about the innovative things that they're doing to support youth employment and share their ideas about what more should be done to improve job opportunities for young people in Canada.

Finally, we're also taking submissions by e-mail: [jeunes-youth@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:jeunes-youth@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca).

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<sup>2</sup> To learn more about who we are, see Annex B.

<sup>3</sup> See Annex C for a list of organizations with which we have met.

## What We've Been Hearing

The following comments reflect some of what we have learned. They are by no means the full story.

### Barriers to employment

#### Pathways to the labour market

This generation has been told that the best path to a good job requires a post-secondary degree. In general, this is sound advice that reflects the high employment rates and wages of post-secondary graduates.

At the same time, we heard from service providers, educators and young people that youth face challenges finding a good job, despite having followed this advice. For example, we heard that young people often don't know where or even how to find work and that the reliance they put on their personal network is unreasonably high. Many young people complete hundreds of online job applications without receiving any response. Others are only offered jobs for which they feel overqualified. They've told us that they have the most success when they tap into personal and family networks to find a job; and for those who lack such networks, trying to build them can be very intimidating.

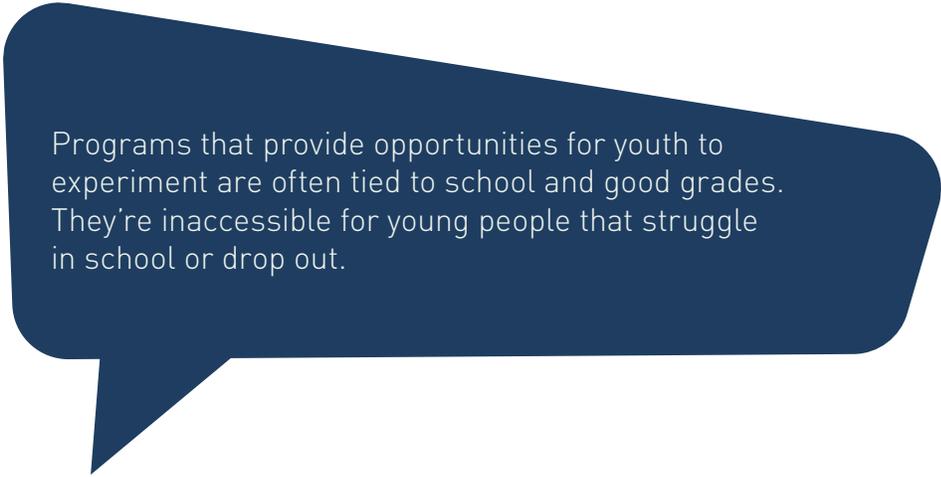
Young people told us about the toll trying to find a job can take on their mental health. We heard about high levels of anxiety among youth – even including those who have access to high levels of education, work experience and support. Some youth described how uncertainty about work can increase feelings of depression, frustration and anger that were already present.

#### Soft-skills and navigating the transition to the workplace

We were consistently told that in addition to education or technical skills, resiliency and soft-skills like problem solving, communication and interpersonal skills, and critical thinking can make the difference for young people in getting a job. However, too few youth have been given the opportunity to hone these skills in high school and throughout their post-secondary education. Those who work part-time find that these jobs often fail to help them develop the relevant and transferrable skills required by the careers they want.



A job is not success.  
Employability is success.  
Employability is about resilience.



Programs that provide opportunities for youth to experiment are often tied to school and good grades. They're inaccessible for young people that struggle in school or drop out.

### Having the time and space to experiment

Some people we spoke with noted a lack of opportunities for young people to gain diverse experiences. At school, they learn to succeed in a very structured environment. When they take their first job, they are faced with a far less-structured environment without clear rules or expectations. This can limit their ability to succeed early-on in the workplace. Others commit to furthering their education by seeking a four year degree in a particular subject, only to realize when they do their first co-op — or when they get their first job after graduating — that it wasn't the right career for them.

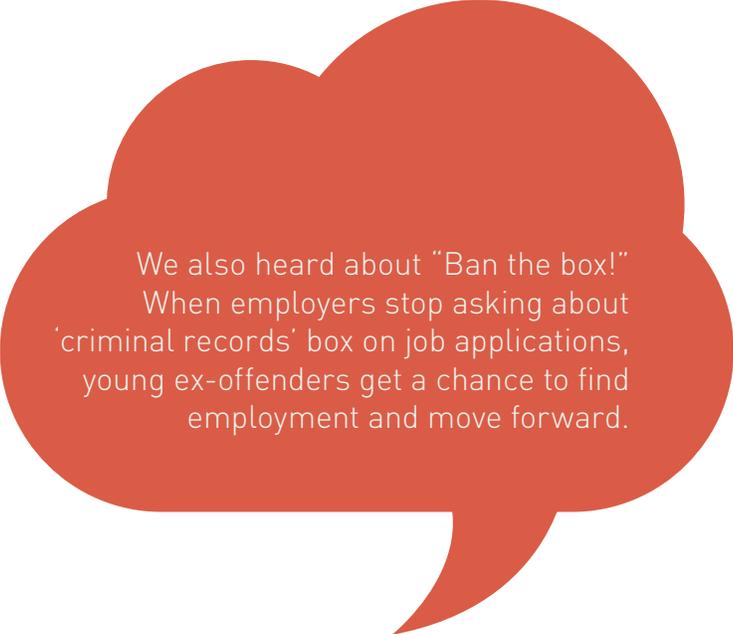
Some youth told us that they used volunteering to expand their horizons. Others participated in projects in their communities that led them to discover an interest in a new career path. With the time and space to explore opportunities like these, young people are better prepared to identify and succeed in their chosen career.

### Complex and varied barriers for some young people

For some youth, finding employment is more complicated than just needing to work on soft-skills. Many young people are dealing with complex barriers like homelessness, experience with the criminal justice system, food insecurity, young children, the effects of childhood trauma, and mental health challenges. For youth with disabilities, additional challenges include a lack of previous work experience and obtaining appropriate accommodations at work.



Why do we put mailing addresses on our resumes anyway?



We also heard about “Ban the box!”  
When employers stop asking about  
'criminal records' box on job applications,  
young ex-offenders get a chance to find  
employment and move forward.

Service providers spoke of several recurring themes: the need for basic financial support; the importance of meeting youth’s physical and developmental needs; and the need for personalized support — ideally provided by one professional — to help youth to navigate transitions. Even seemingly simple issues such as a lack of basic identification (e.g., SIN numbers, Canadian certifications, and/or a driver’s licence) and of a bank account can be a barrier to get a job or access employment services for some young people. Racism and other forms of discrimination can also be real barriers to youth employment. During the hiring process, employers may discriminate (consciously or unconsciously) based on the name or address on a young person’s resume. Once employed, discrimination can also be a barrier to advancement in the workplace.



A secure online cloud could help store key  
documents and identification for homeless youth.



Social enterprises are innovating to bring young people and employers together in small towns through mentorship and project-based employment.

### Youth living in rural and remote areas

We also heard about challenges facing young people in rural areas and small communities. A lack of available transportation was often raised, as some youth can't get to some jobs, even if they are available.

There are also fewer potential job opportunities and training supports available to a young resident of a small town. As a result, youth are often forced to leave their communities to advance their careers or education.

### Indigenous young people

We spoke with many Indigenous youth and organizations that work in and with Indigenous communities. From these ideas, several stand out. While Indigenous youth face a lot of the same barriers as other youth across Canada, many are also dealing with challenges that reflect intergenerational experiences of colonization and discrimination. As a result, many of those consulted expressed a desire for the principles of reconciliation to be better reflected in employment and training supports.

We also heard about the poor quality of education in the North. We were told about supportive and welcoming workplaces that provide access to mentorship and training from Elders. Some Indigenous youth spoke about wanting to increase employment opportunities in their local communities, for example by having financial support to open small businesses related to cultural activities.

We were told that when youth have a strong sense of who they are and what they're good at, they're more likely to understand or seek meaningful employment opportunities. For some, building a sense of cultural identity and pride can be a motivating factor.



We heard from business owners that of course they want to hire youth. But understanding the different programs and regulations — all while running a business — can be a lot of work.

## Employer attitudes and perceptions

Through our early meetings with employers, service providers and young people, a nuanced story about the attitudes and perceptions of employers has begun to emerge — a key piece of the youth employment puzzle.

On the one hand, the employers we met with often expressed a positive view of young people and what they can offer the workplace, including their energy and enthusiasm.

On the other hand, we heard from some service providers that employers are not always aware of what a young person can contribute. A potential employer's focus on formal work experience can cause them to ignore or downplay valuable skills that youth may have gained from experiences outside a work setting.

Some young people told us that they were worried about feeling mistreated by employers, especially those in more precarious employment situations, including unpaid internships. Others spoke about feeling like they don't have the opportunity to suggest changes to improve traditional workplaces.



Recognize skills gained outside of employment and training.

Overall, it seems that employers that have adjusted their workplaces to appeal to youth are more successful in attracting and retaining young workers. We learned that these modifications can include providing opportunities for personal and professional development and ensuring that youth feel like their work has meaning. Employers need to be ready, willing and able to accept the risk of making the effort necessary to overcome the barriers to integrating youth into their workforces, especially for those youth who are less job ready.

## Future of work

### Transferable skills

Young people, employers, and service providers all told us repeatedly: “we don’t know what kinds of jobs will exist in 20 years.” For youth, this reality is daunting: they are worried that they could spend years preparing for jobs that could quickly become obsolete. In this context, many service providers and employers advise young people to focus on the development of transferrable skills, adaptability, and resilience. Many of those consulted noted that these are the same skills that lead entrepreneurs to be successful. In a similar way, we often heard that youth should adopt an “entrepreneurial mindset” that could enhance their creativity and equip them with the problem-solving skills that would help them to meet their future head-on.

### Precarious work AKA Gig-economy

Many young people and service providers are concerned with what they call the “gig-economy:” An economy characterized by short-term contracts, no benefits, no stability, and no vacation. Some youth thrive in this environment. Excited about forging their own path, these youth have the support they need from friends or family to help them to manage any associated risk.



Many young people experiencing the changing nature of work first hand feel like they are shouldering all of the risk while employers get all the rewards.

However, other youth engaged in precarious work find it to be too much to manage. A full-time and full-year job is what these young people want; instead, they are forced to work multiple jobs and hope that they never get sick. Many young people do not understand their rights in the workplace, and worry about losing their job if they speak up or ask for help when problems arise. Often, they quit. As one youth said: “This organization isn’t investing in me; why should I invest in them?”



Entrepreneurship is not just about starting a business. It’s about learning how to solve problems and generate ideas!

## Entrepreneurship

### Learning how to solve problems

A world characterized by greater uncertainty and more flexible work situations has led many young people to become self-employed and start their own businesses. These young entrepreneurs want the chance to make a positive impact on their world by creating something unique and their own. While entrepreneurship is only a small part of the employment equation, it can have a big impact. We heard from many entrepreneurship accelerators and incubators that those who try — regardless of the result — learn skills that will serve them for life, including an ability to self-advocate, be adaptable, take risks, and be resilient.

### Barriers to entrepreneurship

Each young person hoping to start a business faces the barriers common to most entrepreneurs, including the lack of experience, credibility, networks, and start-up money. While some youth can use their family and friends to build networks and get access to funding, many youth from low-income communities struggle to get access to start-up money and may lack the social capital of their peers. Immigrant youth can struggle to get a visa that allows them to start a business. Youth living in remote and rural areas may have limited access to innovative programs like incubators and accelerators that exist in urban areas.

## Ideas on our radar

Through our consultation, we heard amazing stories of the great work already being done across the country. These examples have raised some interesting ideas, and we look forward to learning even more in the coming months.

### Better coordination and stronger collaboration

Young people don't differentiate between a program that is federal, provincial or municipally-funded. For us, this demonstrated the importance of the various actors in the system working together — an idea that was raised by several people during our consultations. Development of a common framework or approach across the system would help to identify and bridge any existing gaps in the delivery of youth employment services.

### Cohort and peer-based learning

Several service providers told us about the success they were having with cohort-based systems and learning models. These programming models provide young participants with peer and intergenerational support that can amplify learning through shared networks and resources that are critical to finding a good job. Providing opportunities for participants to serve as role models to inspire and support other young people who were not in the program can also expand the impact of a particular program by increasing its reach.

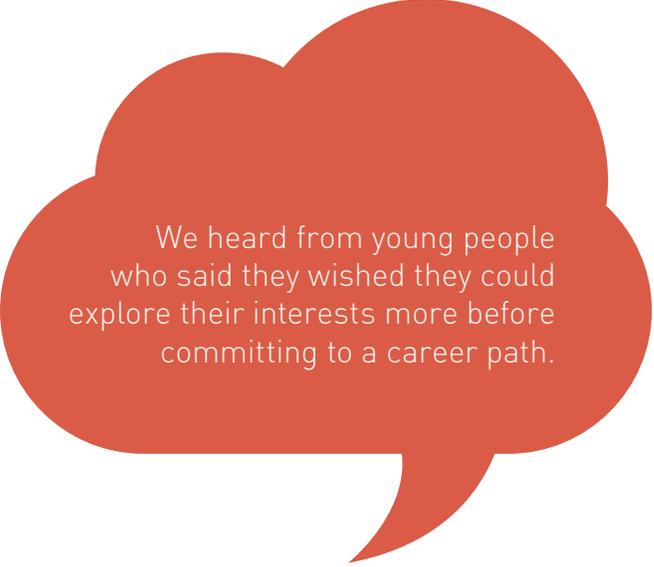
### Mentorship

Mentorship — having someone help a young person to navigate the complicated world of employment — came up again and again in our meetings. Guidance is required in navigating school to work transitions, finding a first job, accessing training supports, making educational and career decisions and juggling other difficult real-life situations.

We were told that youth who face additional challenges are often unwilling to engage in a system they believe that continues to fail them. The importance of bringing services to the youth rather than expecting them to seek out and access these services made a particular impression on us. Service providers told us that having a knowledgeable mentor who can establish a relationship of trust with a young person through frequent contact over the long term is key to success. Even after a program has ended, continued formal check-ins on a regular basis can reinforce and build on the progress that has already been made. Service providers told us that this type of programming depends on stable and predictable program funding.

### Flexible and holistic programming

We heard from service providers that many young people cannot qualify for employment services because they do not meet the entrance standards of the program. Some mentioned, for example, the fact that Canada Summer Jobs only accepts full-time students.



We heard from young people who said they wished they could explore their interests more before committing to a career path.

Services need to be flexible and tailored to meet individual needs — enabling them to address the real and diverse set of issues that affect the lives of young people. Allowing organizations to come together and pool their resources to create innovative solutions based on local needs is another example of the need for flexibility in developing program eligibility parameters.

### Exposing young people to options

Service providers and educators told us about the importance of offering job pathways from sources different than the school (i.e., co-op). Many young people want to forge their own paths rather than being told to take a specific job or feeling trapped in a particular career path. Many tell us they just want the opportunity to try new things and experiment; others need counselling and the time to think about their plans or build confidence and self-esteem. Supporting these youth requires investment in short-term, project-based, or even experiential learning opportunities that allow youth to experiment and try different things in a low-risk environment outside of post-secondary education.



Some programs promote sustainable pathways to employment in their communities by training young participants to become program coordinators in the future.

At the same time, we heard about programs that provide relevant work experience to students. In Canada this is often termed “work-integrated learning.” These programs can provide students with a structured “pipeline” to a job, particularly students who are mid-way through their studies or are close to graduating. Although the skilled trades provide yet another avenue for young people, we heard that society does not place an appropriate value on a trades education.

We were reminded that access to these sort of opportunities should not be limited to young people of certain backgrounds. Accordingly, special efforts may be required to break down barriers to access for young people who may be dealing with additional challenges. Some of these youth told us they can feel unfairly judged for their choices and have trouble accessing supports because of this. One young person told us: “I felt punished for having a baby.”

### Leadership opportunities for businesses

Our meetings with the business community revealed that many businesses are implementing innovative and ambitious plans to support youth employment. Many businesses have tried to make sure their entry-level jobs are stepping stones for young people that provide valuable transferrable skills. We think that there may be potential to expand these initiatives.

### Current state of data on young people

High quality and timely data is critical to inform policy decisions. The collection of data over time is critical to understanding employment trends and career pathways. Although there are a large number of official surveys and data sources that include young people, policy and program design would be better informed by longitudinal surveys that do not currently exist. Opportunities to use existing sources in a more coordinated way could free up resources that could be dedicated to the pursuit of such important research.

## Where We're Going From Here

We have learned a great deal from everyone with whom we have spoken and engaged online; and we are eager to continue this engagement into the New Year in order to reach the range of voices and communities that we have not yet engaged with.

Beginning in early January, roundtables will be held across Canada, including in Ottawa, Moncton, Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Quebec, Vancouver and Toronto. Participants will be presented with some key facts on youth employment and some early findings.

Once all of the roundtables have concluded, we'll consider everything we've heard and read and come to a consensus on our key findings and recommendations.

In March, we will deliver our final report to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister and Minister of Youth, and the Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour.

Through our work as an Expert Panel, we hope to give voice to the young people of Canada and deliver recommendations that will help the Government of Canada have a positive impact on their employment prospects and future careers. Through our work, we also hope to recognize the excellent work already being done across the country and help to build partnerships among the people, organizations and business that are already engaged in promoting youth employment in Canada.

Thank you for taking the time to read our report. We look forward to the work ahead!

Want to get involved? Contact us at [jeunes-youth@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:jeunes-youth@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca) or through social media using [#youthpanel](https://twitter.com/youthpanel).

# Backgrounder

## Youth Employment and Associated Programs

Regardless of the condition of the Canadian economy, Canadian youth are more likely to be unemployed than the rest of the general population. Between 1990 and 2015, the average rate of unemployment for youth (15–29) in Canada was 11.8%<sup>4</sup>, nearly 4 percentage points higher than workers 15 years and older (8.1%).

In addition, a recent report from Statistics Canada found that full-time employment among young people (17-24 year olds, excluding full-time students) has declined significantly since the late 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Even among youth who are working full-time, their jobs have become increasingly temporary in nature. The growing prevalence of temporary work has also been seen in many other OECD countries.

Despite the decline in full-time work over the past several decades, young people in Canada are more likely to be employed on average than youth in the G7 and other OECD countries.

	Participation rate (%) — 2015	Employment rate (%) — 2015	Long-term unemployment rate (%) — 2015
<b>Canada</b>	<b>64.2</b>	<b>55.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>
Australia	67.3	58.5	18.0
France	36.9	27.8	28.8
Germany	48.8	45.3	22.5
Italy	29.0	17.3	55.7
Japan	43.0	40.7	25.0
United Kingdom	62.0	52.5	21.9
United States	55.0	48.6	11.4
<b>OECD Average</b>	<b>47.2</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>21.8</b>

Source: OECD, Ages 15 to 24, Annual Labour Force Statistics (2015). \*Share of unemployed persons (15 to 24) who have been unemployed for one year or longer.

Location matters: young Canadians living in the Prairie Provinces can face different social and economic conditions than their counterparts in the Atlantic Provinces. Youth living in remote or rural communities face different challenges to those faced by young people living in the country's large, urban centres. Generally, youth unemployment rates tend to reflect the conditions of provincial or local labour markets.

4 Note: These data are based on an average of 8 months during the school year. Data include all youth (students and non-students).

5 Source: Statistics Canada (2015), "Perspectives on the Youth Labour Market in Canada, 1976 to 2015" <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/161205/dq161205a-eng.htm>

	Unemployment rates by Province and Territory (15–29 year olds and 30–64 year olds), 2015	
	15–29 (non-students)	30–64
Newfoundland	16.0%	12.3%
Prince Edward Island	14.9%	9.2%
Nova Scotia	12.3%	7.3%
New Brunswick	14.3%	8.4%
Quebec	10.8%	6.5%
Ontario	10.6%	5.2%
Manitoba	7.8%	4.4%
Saskatchewan	7.9%	3.9%
Alberta	8.4%	5.2%
British Columbia	9.3%	5.1%
Nunavut (2011)	20.3%	13.4%
Northwest Territories (2011)	12.9%	8.8%
Yukon (2011)	15.5%	8.1%

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2015. Data for Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon from National Household Survey, 2011.

Youth unemployment rates across the country were lower in 2015 compared to the average over the past 25 years. There were significant improvements in Newfoundland and Labrador and Saskatchewan. The only exception is in Alberta. In 2015, the unemployment rate of youth was higher than it was on average since 1990. This could be explained by the recent drop in oil prices. Despite this recent increase in the youth unemployment rate, it still remains second lowest in the country.

Although youth work in every sector of the Canadian economy, in 2015, youth (33.7%) were more likely than workers 30+ (13.4%) to be working in the Retail Trade and Accommodation and Food Services sectors. This is especially true for working students (55.2% of whom work in these sectors) and for youth between 15 and 19 (62.4% of whom work in these sectors). In general, as youth become older and leave school to enter the labour market, their participation in the Canadian economy broadens out to a wider variety of sectors.

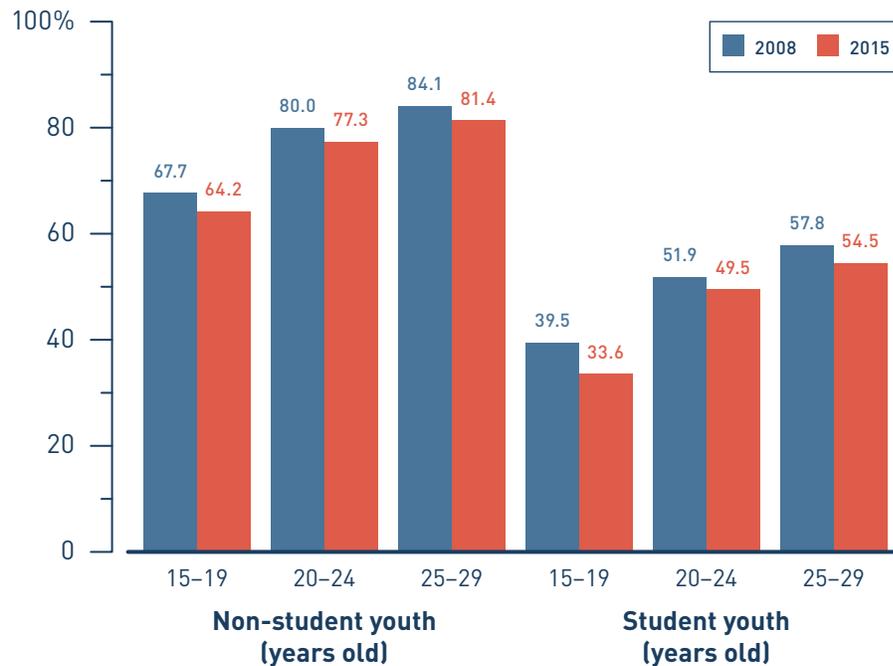
Health Care and Social Assistance (10.5%) and Construction (7.9%) are the 3rd and 4th most common sectors in which young people (15–29) in Canada work. However, construction work is far more common for 15–19 year old non-students than is employment in Health Care and Social Assistance. This suggests that construction is a sector in which less-educated youth (i.e., high school graduates or youth departing high school early) can find a job more easily at a young age. In contrast, employment in Health Care and Social Assistance may be more common among older youth because these jobs often require higher levels of education.

## The legacy of the recession

While there are positive trends in youth employment in Canada, many Canadian youth continue to experience the legacy of the 2008–09 recession, as the share of employed youth in Canada has not yet returned to pre-recession levels.

### Non-student and Student Youth Employment Rates

By age group, 2008 and 2015



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2008 and 2015).

Note: Data are based on an average of 8 months during the school year

In 2015, 860,000 (or 12.6% of all) youth in Canada were jobless, not in school or in training, and were either looking for work or had left the labour force entirely. The longer a youth remains jobless, the harder it can be for them to find and keep employment. The long-term effects of such unemployment may include ‘scarring’ — having extra trouble finding a job in their field — and an inability to recover lost wages.

Some youth are struggling to find stable, full-time work. A higher percentage of Canadian young people worked in part-time temporary positions in 2015 than did so in 2008. Although temporary and part-time jobs can help youth to earn some income to support their education, many would prefer to be working full-time if they could. In 2015, of the approximately 665,000 youth who were working part-time, almost half would have preferred to have a full-time job.

In a job market that increasingly requires higher levels of education to compete successfully, **youth with less education** find getting work particularly difficult. In 2015, youth without a high school diploma had an employment rate of 53.9%, significantly lower than youth who had completed their post-secondary education (86.2%).<sup>6</sup>

Other groups of youth — including, but not limited to Indigenous youth, recent immigrant youth and youth with disabilities — also tend to struggle more to find work. These groups in particular may face unique challenges that can lead to greater vulnerability in the labour market.

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, **Indigenous youth** had poorer employment rates than their non-Indigenous peers (43.6% versus 60.5%) and were much less likely to participate in the labour market. Indigenous youth living on-reserve fared even worse, with an employment rate of 21.7%, compared to a rate of 50.3% for Indigenous youth living off-reserve.

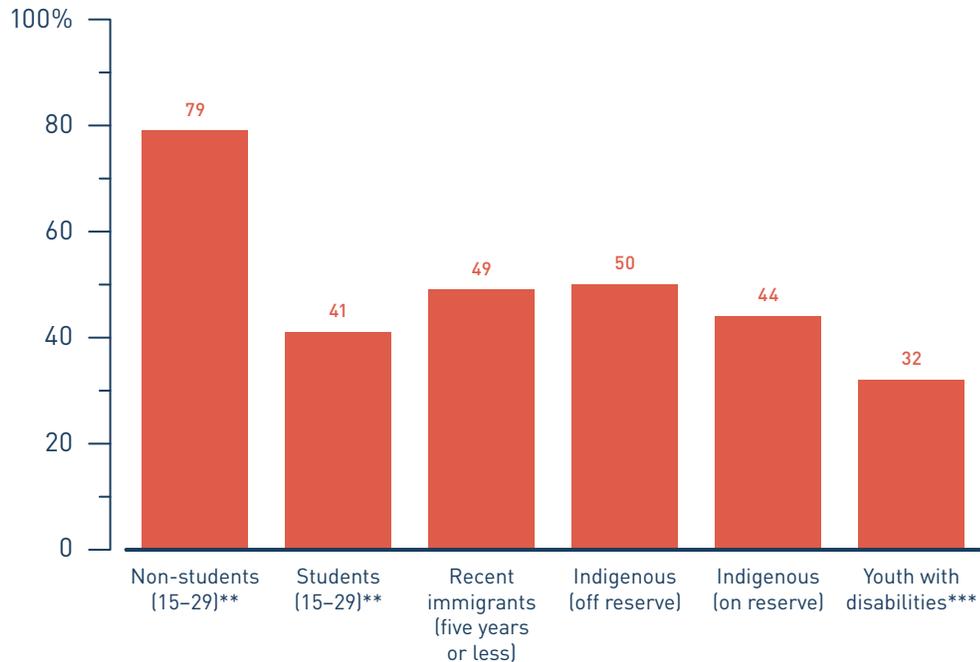
While labour market outcomes for immigrant youth improve as their time spent in Canada increases, and many immigrant youth benefit from having family support, **recent immigrant youth** (those in Canada for 5 years or less) still tend to struggle in the labour market relative to their Canadian-born peers. In 2011, only 48.9% of very recent immigrant youth were employed — compared to 61% of youth born in Canada.

**Youth with disabilities** can also struggle to find and keep a job relative to their peers who do not have a disability: in 2012, youth with a disability had an unemployment rate of 25.9%, compared to 15.3% for youth without disabilities. Youth with more severe and mental/psychological disabilities have even higher rates of unemployment.

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<sup>6</sup> Note: These data are based on an average of 8 months during the school year and do not include current students. The employment rate is the proportion of all youth who have a job.

## Employment rates for young people in Canada (15–29 years), most recent data source available\*



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey (2015), 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability (youth with disabilities), and 2011 National Household Survey (Indigenous youth and recent immigrants).

### Notes:

\*Students and non-students aged 15 to 29 (2015), recent immigrants and Indigenous youth (2011), youth with disabilities (2012).

\*\*Estimates are based on 8 months average for the calendar year (i.e., January to April and September to December).

\*\*\*For persons with disabilities, the employment rate is for youth aged 15 to 24.

## Program and policy landscape for youth employment

Current programs in Canada that are targeted at improving youth employment outcomes are numerous, broad-based and multi-faceted, and are delivered by a wide variety of service providers, including the Government of Canada, provincial / territorial governments, non-profit organizations, and private businesses.

Both the federal and provincial governments use an assortment of tools to support youth employment, including:

- Wage subsidies;
- Hiring incentives (e.g. tax credits);
- Training/skills upgrading;
- Pre-employability supports;
- Co-ops/ Work Integrated Learning;
- Providing labour market information; and
- Grants.

A broad range of federal policies and programs exist to support the employment of vulnerable youth, in particular. Central to this employment programming is the *Youth Employment Strategy (YES)*, an initiative intended to help young people to obtain the information, skills, and work experience they need to successfully transition into the labour market. A horizontal initiative led by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) in collaboration with 11 other federal departments and agencies<sup>7</sup>, YES is comprised of three program streams, each with its own specific objective:

- **Career Focus:** to subsidize the participation of post-secondary education (PSE) graduates in internships (typically 6–12 months in length) and give them the information/experience they need to make informed career choices regarding work and/or further education;
- **Skills Link:** to provide youth facing barriers to employment (e.g., those with lower levels of education, recent immigrants, those living with disabilities, and/or those residing in rural/remote areas) with a combination of pre-employability supports, skills development and work experience; and
- **Summer Work Experience:** to provide wage subsidies to employers who hire high school and post-secondary students (who may or may not be low-skilled) for summer employment.

Ongoing and incremental funding for YES (including operating and maintenance) in 2016–2017			
	Career Focus	Skills Link	Summer Work Experience
Ongoing Funding	\$87,499,567	\$112,438,401	\$127,990,878
Incremental Funding	\$26,028,625	\$134,768,943	\$117,300,000
Total Funding	\$113,528,192	\$247,207,344	\$245,290,878

In addition to YES, the Government of Canada provides other employment policies/programs to provide groups — including youth — with opportunities to work and/or train, including labour market programs for persons with disabilities, collaborations with Indigenous communities, and partnerships with employers and post-secondary institutions.

The Government of Canada is also providing comprehensive Labour Market Information through sites like the job bank (<http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/home-eng.do?lang=eng>) to help a variety of groups (including students, career counsellors, parents, employers) to access timely, targeted information that will enable them to make informed decisions.

<sup>7</sup> These include: Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada; Canadian Heritage; Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada; Parks Canada; Global Affairs Canada; National Research Council Canada; Environment and Climate Change Canada; Agriculture and Agri-foods Canada; Natural Resources Canada; and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The federal government is helping students to pursue higher education. The Government of Canada has increased the maximum amount of the Canada Student Grant for low-income students to \$3,000/year for full-time students and \$1,800/year for part-time students. Additionally, the Government is proposing to increase the threshold for eligibility and extending more flexibility in repayment requirements to assist students and families.

In addition to the programming offered by the federal government, every provincial and territorial government offers programming to support youth employment, although considerable variations exist across jurisdictions with regards to the youth target population, eligibility criteria, and the nature, mix, and size of the investments being made.

Provincial and territorial governments provide employment supports to post-secondary students (e.g. job search/matching and resume writing services and work experience in specific industries or tailored to local needs) as well as summer job opportunities and targeted support for underrepresented youth (such as Indigenous youth or visible minority youth). Provincial/territorial programs may also place particular emphasis on addressing specific demographic and labour market needs. For example, governments in the Atlantic provinces tend to focus on retaining youth with post-secondary education by providing internships and similar work opportunities; whereas the Manitoba government tends to focus on supporting Indigenous youth; and the Alberta government leverages/promotes opportunities for youth in the skilled trades.

Recognizing the benefits of collaboration, senior officials in the federal government are increasingly seeking opportunities to share information with their provincial and territorial counterparts on their respective programs to support youth.

## Meet the Panelists

**Vasiliki (Vass) Bednar** (Toronto, Ontario)  @VassB



Vasiliki (Vass) Bednar is an Action Canada Fellow and the Associate Director of the Cities research program at the University of Toronto's Martin Prosperity Institute at the Rotman School of Management, where she works at the intersection of business and public policy. The self-described “millennial work star” recently completed the Civic Action DiverseCity Fellowship and is the co-host and co-producer of a weekly radio show called “DETANGLED” on CIUT 89.5FM, where she makes the complex colloquial for a young urban audience. Vass’ spirited playfulness is her edge in the policy world, where she uses humour to make complicated ideas more accessible.

In 2012, she opened TEDxToronto with a talk about Making Public Policy More Fun and co-hosted the event the following year after reading an article about TED’s challenges engaging women speakers. In early 2014, she delivered the University of Toronto’s annual Hancock lecture, about how to be a policy “player.” She was previously a senior advisor to the Wynne government and is active in public policy debates as a member of the Banff Forum, Equal Voice, Better Budgets Toronto and board member of the Couchiching Institute on Public Affairs. Her work has been published in the Ottawa Citizen, the Globe and Mail and the IRPP Policy Options blog.

Vass holds her Master of Public Policy (MPP) from the University of Toronto’s School of Public Policy & Governance and is a graduate of McMaster’s Arts & Science program where she earned the President’s Medal for Leadership.

## **Adrianna MacKenzie** (Halifax, Nova Scotia)



Adrianna MacKenzie is the Program Director for Pathways to Education in Spryfield, Nova Scotia. She has been working in the field of Community Youth Development for 16 years within the non-profit sector including with HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development and as an independent consultant. Adrianna has helped to develop systems change management processes for provincial government departments, as well as facilitator training sessions to building the capacity of youth serving organizations.

Adrianna previously sat as president and voting member on The Gordon Foundation for Children and Youth’s board of directors. Adrianna is driven to find best practices as well as opportunities to be innovative in order to best serve communities and improve the lives of its members.

Adrianna went to Saint Mary’s University to receive her BA Criminology and received her Bachelor of Education from Acadia University. She volunteers with community projects including community gardening and local placemaking projects.

## Paulina Cameron (Vancouver, British Columbia) @p\_a\_cameron



Paulina is an impact-driven leader. She currently serves as the Regional Director for BC & Yukon at Futurpreneur Canada — a national NPO providing early stage resources, mentorship, and financing to startup entrepreneurs aged 18–39. Paulina is joining Simon Fraser University’s team of innovative leaders as a Visiting Professor at the Beedie School of Business, teaching Introduction to Entrepreneurship and Innovation. In 2008, Paulina was a founding director of Young Women in Business and grew the organization to be Canada’s largest non-profit providing personal and leadership development of millennial women. Previously, Paulina gained her business expertise working at KPMG in audit and management consulting, obtaining the CPA, CA designation.

Paulina frequently coaches + advises rising stars, and is committed to advancing diversity and youth engagement. She has been recognized in the community for her significant contributions, including being awarded the Vancouver Board of Trade’s inaugural Wendy McDonald Award, The International Alliance for Women Top 100 Award in Washington DC, the KPMG National Leadership Award, and was a finalist for the YWCA’s Women of Distinction Awards, in the Young Woman of Distinction category.

## Robyn Bews (Calgary, Alberta) @robynbews



Robyn Bews, is the Executive Director of WORKshift at Calgary Economic Development. She also leads an initiative called the Talent Hub for Calgary Economic Development. This initiative seeks to find employment opportunities for our displaced world-class talent in Calgary in regions facing talent shortages.

As a result of Robyn’s leadership, advocacy and management, WORKshift has grown from Canada’s first regional telework project to a national not-for-profit and the defacto brand for all things related to flexible work in Canada.

In her work, Robyn has advised hundreds of private and not-for-profit organizations across North America and municipalities around the world by offering a holistic ecosystem approach for organizations to make their WORKshift program a reality. She is the co-author of *Workshift*, a book dedicated to supporting organizations and their leaders successfully adopt flexible cultures.

Robyn has a commerce degree from Acadia University. She has worked as a marketer for multinational organizations including TELUS Communications and the United Nations.

## Sonya Gulati (Toronto, Ontario)



Sonya Gulati is a passionate and visionary leader skilled in applying evidenced-based analytics, economic methodologies and strategic frameworks to complex, multi-faceted business problems. She is currently a Manager with KPMG’s Public Sector Advisory Practice. Sonya has also held successively senior roles in economics and strategy within TD — in Canada and the U.S. — and in the public sector at the provincial and federal levels. As a Senior Economist within TD Economics, she had a mandate to analyze public policy, authored in-depth research publications and served as a TD spokesperson, both in Canada and the U.S. She also has experience and a strong background in strategic planning, strategy development and risk management.

Sonya holds an Honours Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Toronto, a Masters of Arts degree in Economics from McMaster University, and a Masters of Business Administration from the Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto.

## María Eugenia Longo (Quebec City, Quebec)



María Eugenia is a Professor at the National Institute of Scientific Research, Urbanisation Culture Société, in Québec and member and director from January 2017 of the Observatoire Jeunes et Société a large network of academics and researchers interested in youth. She is also member of the International Sociological Association (ISA) and Secretary of RC30 Sociology of Work.

She has taught and worked as a researcher in French and Argentinian universities. She has published about young people careers in Quebec, Argentina and France, youth work aspirations and values, youth temporalities, employment informality, biographical turning points, work programs for young people; and also about processual and longitudinal analyses, among others. She currently coordinates the research project “Young people precariousness and Programs: convergences and divergences around employment in Quebec, France and Argentina” (FRQSC) and also co-leads the project “Successful life. Social norms and socio-professional aspirations in a changing world” (SSHRC). She acted as an expert for public consultations and institutions focusing on youth, as Secretariat à la Jeunesse du Québec and Institut National de la Jeunesse et l’Éducation Populaire in France.

Maria holds a Post-doctorate from Sherbrooke University in Canada, a Doctorate in Sociology and Social Sciences from Aix-Marseille University in France and Universidad de Buenos Aires in Argentina. Her areas of specialization are: life course, work, youth, employability programs, temporality, and international comparison.

## Michael Redhead Champagne (North End, Winnipeg, Manitoba) @northendmc



Michael Redhead Champagne has spent nearly two decades speaking out and leading by example. He takes a hopeful and solution oriented approach to youth engagement, facilitation, community organizing and mobilization.

The list of accolades for his work is both lengthy and well deserved. He was recognized as the 2016 Canadian Red Cross Young Humanitarian of the Year and in TIME Magazine as a Next Generation Leader. In 2016, Michael served on the Bank of Canada's bank note advisory committee with a task of creating a short list of women nominated by the public to appear on a new bank note. Michael has also received a Manitoba Aboriginal Youth Achievement Award as well as recognition as a CBC Manitoba Future 40 leader, a Manitoba Hero, and a Future Leader of Manitoba.

As the founder of AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities), he is committed to a wide variety of important community initiatives including Meet Me at the Bell Tower, AYO Politix, ARROWS Youth Engagement Strategy, 13 Fires, Fearless R2W and Winnipeg Water Wednesday. Michael has served as president of North End Community Renewal Corporation, a board member for the Circle of Life Thunderbird House and is currently serving on the board for Marymound Inc. His committee work currently includes United Way of Winnipeg's Council for Indigenous Relations and is an advisor to the Garden of Compassion initiative.

## Gabriel Bran Lopez (Montreal, Quebec) @GBranLopez



Gabriel is an entrepreneur and the President of the *Jeune Chambre de commerce de Montréal*, the largest youth chamber in the World. In 2009, he founded Youth Fusion, an award-winning charity that works to lower dropout rates, employs over 200 people in Quebec and Ontario, and works on a weekly basis with over 13,000 at-risk youth.

Gabriel is currently a director on the boards of Concordia University, the Bombardier Foundation, Québec-Cinema, and the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Furthermore, his involvement in all levels of government is multi-sectoral: at the municipal level, he was named Governor on the Council of Montreal's 375th Anniversary, and contributed to the development of the JE VOIS MTL/JE FAIS MTL movements; at the provincial level, he is a member of the Committee on Economy and Innovation as well as Special Advisor to the Minister of Culture for the renewal of Quebec's cultural policy.

Formerly the spokesperson for the *Quebec Entrepreneurship Contest* (2014 and 2015), Gabriel has been granted prestigious awards and recognition: *Mercuriades* by the Federation of chambers of commerce of Quebec (FCCQ), *Peace Medal* by the YMCAs of Quebec, *Social Entrepreneur of the Year* by Ernst & Young (EY), *Personality of the Week* by La Presse/

Radio-Canada (CBC), *Ashoka and Jeanne Sauvé Foundation* Fellow. Moreover, his work was highlighted by the Public Policy Forum of Canada, the Globe and Mail, the Association pour le développement de la recherche et de l'innovation du Québec (ADRIQ), the Regroupement des jeunes chambres de commerce du Québec (RJCCQ), Réunir Réussir (Chagnon Foundation), the Quebec Latin-American Chamber of Commerce, etc.

Gabriel graduated from Concordia University in Communication Studies. He is a former director on the board of Oxfam-Quebec, and has been for many years an active member of Quebec's taskforce on student retention and success.

## List of Organizations Consulted

This is a list of organizations that we have connected with to date. If you know of someone we should be talking to, including yourself, please reach out to us via [jeunes-youth@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:jeunes-youth@hrsdcc-rhdcc.gc.ca), or contact one of the Panel Members through social media. Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Aboriginal Youth Opportunities!	EY Canada
Alberta Health Services	Felix Global
Arts Co-op Program, University of British Columbia	Fonds de solidarité FTQ
ATB Financial	Freelance journalist
ATCO Group	GE Global
BDC	Generation Squeeze
Benevity	Graham
Bow Valley College	Imagine Canada
Calgary Board of Education	Ipsos
City of Calgary	JA Canada
Calgary Economic Development	KPMG
Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business	La FABRIQUE_A
Carthy Foundation	L'Auberivière
Cenovus	Leadership Success Group
CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals	Linkedin
Centre Urbanisation Culture Société de l'Institut National de la recherche scientifique	Long View Systems
Chaire de recherche du Canada sur les inégalités sociales et les parcours de vie	Manitoba Department of Education & Training, Workforce Development
Chebucto Connections	MaRs Studio Y
Choices for Youth	MARs/Starbucks
CityStudio	Marymount
CivicAction	McGill University
CMEC (Council of Ministers of Education Canada)	Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Government of Ontario
Calgary Connector Program	Metro
Canadian Association for Co-Operative Education	The Minerva Foundation
Communautique	Montreal International
Concordia University	Morneau Shepell
Conoco Phillips	Université de Montreal
DHR International	Université de Québec à Rimouski
DrYver group	University of Prince Edward Island
Durham Region Employment Network	New Era Immigration
East Prince Youth Development Centre	Observatoire Jeunes et Société
ECHO	Ontario Chamber of Commerce
Labour Program, Employment Equity	Ontario Department of Advanced Education & Skills Development
	Ontario Disabilities Employment Network
	Ontario Trillium Foundation
	Open Door Group
	PAYE (Partnership to Advance Youth Employment) at the City of Toronto

Perpetual Energy  
 Phoenix Learning Centre,  
 Phoenix Youth Program  
 PostMedia  
 Power Corporation of Canada  
 PWC  
 Quartier de l'Innovation  
 Quebec Film and Television Council  
 Quebec Manufacturer and  
 Exporters (MEQ)  
 RADIUS SFU  
 RBC Capital Markets  
 RCJJEQ.org  
 Redfox Health Living Society  
 Regroupement des Auberg-  
 es du cœur du Québec  
 Restaurants Canada  
 ROCAJQ (Regroupement des  
 Organismes Communautaires  
 Autonomes Jeunesse du Québec)  
 ROULO-BOULO "Job Bus"  
 SAFE Workers of Tomorrow  
 Saint Mary's University  
 Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy  
 SDS Consulting  
 SHAD  
 Sherbrooke University  
 Siemens  
 Simon Fraser University  
 Société de développement social  
 South Island Division of Family Practice  
 Southern Alberta Institute of Technology  
 Statistics Canada  
 TalentEgg  
 TD  
 The Next Big Thing  
 Leadership Success Group  
 The Livelihood Institute  
 Toronto Youth Cabinet  
 École de technologie supérieure  
 University of Calgary  
 United Way of Canada  
 United Way Toronto & York Region  
 Universities Canada  
 University of Lethbridge  
 University of Waterloo, Youth and  
 Innovation Research Project  
 Verbed Inc.  
 Virgin Mobile

Prince Edward Island Depart-  
 ment of Workforce and Ad-  
 vanced Learning and Skills PEI  
 West Air Sheet Metal  
 Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce  
 Winnipeg Poverty Reduction Council  
 Young Entrepreneurship Leadership  
 Launchpad  
 Youth Fusion  
 Youth Futures Council