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January 18, 1997

## **Communication Breakdown Between Youth and Employers Leads to High Unemployment**

**Ottawa** – Why is the jobless rate for Canadian youth so persistently high? This is the question posed by *Youth and Work in Troubled Times: A Report on Canada in the 1990s*, published today by the Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN).

"Young people are finding it harder than ever to find jobs that provide a decent income and entry into a career," says Richard Marquardt, an Ottawa-based researcher and author of the CPRN Working Paper W|01. "This is especially true of youth without postsecondary qualifications, but even these are no guarantee."

The research looks at what is happening to Canadian youth as they make their way into the job market. It addresses the current transition patterns from school to work, the labour market experiences of young people as they make these transitions, and brings into focus some key issues for policymakers.

"Prior to this study, the limited information available about the difficulties faced by youth as they leave school and enter the work force had been scattered across many sources," says Judith Maxwell, President of CPRN. "We felt that it was important to pull this information together. The employment experiences of youth reflect the changing structure of the labour market – a labour market that is very different than it was a decade ago."

The study indicates that there has been a substantial decline in traditional entry-level jobs in the goods-producing industries as well as in public administration, health and social services, and education. The major growth areas for young people have been in service industries. While some of these have been in managerial and professional occupations, many of them have been in sales and services – predominantly part-time or temporary jobs, with low wages and few or no benefits.

*Youth and Work in Troubled Times* suggests the need for greater social cooperation around the school-to-work transition. Cooperative-education and other business-education partnerships play

important roles in informing students about the skills needed upon entering the job market. In addition, entry-level training programs can ease the school-to-work transition. Currently, training programs for youth in Canada are limited, and the study found that well-educated young males working in larger firms receive the majority of training offered by employers.

Marquardt writes that, "a number of policy approaches can be used to improve access to education and training opportunities for youth. These include renewed 'stay-in-school' initiatives; improved early childhood education, especially for disadvantaged groups; re-examination of the benefits associated with 'income contingent repayment loans' to assist more youth to complete postsecondary studies; and increased flexibility in program delivery to allow students to hold jobs while in school."

Another critical issue is the rapidly declining level of public expenditures for postsecondary education. While the importance of postsecondary education is increasing dramatically, public funding is plummeting. This threatens to lead to a sharper class division in Canada.

"We cannot allow the education system to become inaccessible to Canadian youth," says Maxwell. "Young people are the future of this country – the future of the work force. Governments and employers must acknowledge that this is a crisis situation and take immediate action to address it."

*Youth and Work in Troubled Times: A Report on Canada in the 1990s* is one of several publications prepared for CPRN's Employment and Training Project. The synthesis report on training for the new economy, will be published in the spring of 1997. The project was funded by Human Resources Development Canada, the Canadian Labour Force Development Board, the New Brunswick Labour Force Development Board and the provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Ontario.

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CPRN is a national not-for-profit research institute whose mission is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians, in order to help build a more just, prosperous and caring society.

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