

November 16, 2006

Alberta Youth Show PSE Key to Better Jobs

Ottawa – Young Albertans are earning more, receiving more employment benefits, working in more skilled jobs and report more job satisfaction when they have post-secondary credentials. That's the main finding of CPRN's new study, *Pathways of Alberta Youth through the Post-secondary System into the Labour Market, 1996-2003*.

The authors, Harvey Krahn and Julie Hudson of the University of Alberta, followed the progress of more than 2,600 grade 12 students from 58 high schools in Alberta as they made their way into the workforce until about age 25. A very high percentage (88%) enrolled in a post-secondary program at some point, and 60% earned at least one PSE credential. The study suggests that Alberta's efforts to improve access to PSE, including the placement of colleges and training institutions in mid-sized communities, are paying off. The authors call this the Kevin Costner policy formula: "if you build them, they will come."

The study also points out that youth from more advantaged families are more likely to participate in and complete PSE programs – and that the participation rate for Aboriginal youth is still unacceptably low.

A unique aspect of this study is its description of youths whose pathways don't lead directly from high school to PSE and on to a job. The authors discovered that young people's interrupted and detoured journeys involve barriers such as parenthood or finances, while others involve a rethinking of aspirations and options. The authors point out that while it is tempting for policy-makers and educators to get youth through high school, PSE and into jobs quickly, flexibility should be built into the system for those who need to take more time or even change their minds about PSE choices.

"We need to understand better how to help our young people find pathways to success in the labour market," said Ron Saunders, Director of CPRN's Work Network. "This study makes an important contribution to that goal."

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The study is available at www.cprn.org/en/doc.cfm?doc=1568. For more information, please contact:

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