

For Immediate Release

MAJORITY OF CANADIANS SAY YOUTH ARE UNPREPARED FOR THE JOB MARKET

Survey shows most Canadians see need for investment in skilled trades and internship programs

(TORONTO) September 18, 2013 – Canadian youth are settling back into school this month, with their sights firmly set on their future careers. But some are unprepared for the job market when they graduate, creating industry-specific labour shortages that weigh heavily on the economy, says Pathways to Education Canada.

The not-for-profit, which helps youth in low-income neighbourhoods graduate from high school by providing mentorship, tutoring and financial assistance, recently commissioned a survey with Vision Critical that found most Canadians (54 per cent) believe youth are not even moderately prepared to meet the needs of the emerging job market.

It also found that Canadians see a need for greater investment in mentorship areas to help prepare youth for the job market, with 66 per cent citing a need for skilled trades and apprenticeship programs, 42 per cent citing a need for employment internship programs. The two areas led the need for increased investment, with vocational skills training coming in third (38 per cent).

"There is a mismatch between the skills being learned by today's youth and the skills needed for Canada's growing industries," says David Hughes, president and chief executive officer of Pathways to Education Canada. "One of the best ways for students to leverage what they learn in school is participation in internship or mentoring programs, particularly when hands-on experience is increasingly demanded by employers."

Pathways is helping to fill educational investment gaps with a new internship and employment program. New donor, Northbridge Financial Corporation, has pledged \$1-million over five years to help Pathways formalize the program in all of its locations. Students are already taking advantage of internship opportunities in Toronto, including two at Northbridge's head office.

"It's up to companies to provide these important opportunities for youth to get hands-on learning," says Ilda Dinis, vice president of corporate marketing and communications at Northbridge Financial Corporation. "Our support of the Pathways program is a great example of the private and non-profit sectors working together to prepare the next generation of recruits."

Pathways works with high-school-aged youth in low-income areas to address the gaps they face, including lack of networking opportunities and financial supports. While existing programming provides mentors, tutors and financial assistance to help students succeed in high school, the new internship and employment preparation program provides specific opportunities to gain experience and get a leg up on their prospective careers.

"The things I've learned in the office this summer have taken my education and knowledge of the insurance industry to a whole new level," says Belinda Truong, Pathways student and intern at Northbridge Financial. "There are so many opportunities in the insurance industry that I had no idea about. My internship has not only given me valuable experience on the job, but has helped me build relationships that will serve me throughout my career."

Individuals and organizations can help give Canadian students in low-income communities the opportunity to graduate high school and to participate in the internship program by fundraising and making a direct donation to Pathways. For more information, visit <http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca>.

About Pathways to Education Canada – www.pathwaystoeducation.ca

Pathways to Education Canada is a charitable organization that helps youth in low-income communities graduate high school and successfully transition into post-secondary education or training. Pathways addresses systemic barriers to education by providing leadership, expertise and a community-based program proven to lower dropout rates. Founded in 2001, Pathways operates in 13 communities across Canada, with programs in Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Recently recognized with a 2013 World Innovation Summit for Education Award (WISE) for its innovative and effective work in education, Pathways plans to expand nationally and leverage its knowledge to serve more students across the country.

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