

Stalled Transitions for Youth *United Way responds to youth challenges*

November 12th, 2009 – Calgary, AB – United Way released its second Resiliency Report today. The Youth Resiliency Report speaks about the impacts the recession is having on youth (ages 15-24) in Calgary and makes recommendations on actions.

“Our first Resiliency Report came out last June, it looked at the impacts the recession made on the whole community, but we saw future concerns for our youth,” says Ruth Ramsden-Wood President of United Way of Calgary and Area.

“We spent the summer talking with youth in focus groups, and talking with our partnering agencies – what we’ve learned is concerning. Our youth need more attention. For the next generation to be successful these issues can not be ignored,” she says.

Historically, in a recession, we know demand for young workers is the slowest to recover. In October 2009 the youth unemployment rate was 15.3 per cent. Economic development in Calgary over the past six years led to an increase in labour demand and countless job opportunities for youth. But the recession has changed that. Youth are now valuing education more than ever.

Youth are experiencing:

- Fear and anxiety - They are wondering how they will support themselves
- Frustration – They don’t know where-to-look or where-to-turn for help
- Lack of shelter- Lack of employment increases homelessness
- Lack of Food – The Calgary Food Bank reported that between June and August of 2009 more than 700 emergency food hampers were provided to youth.

LeeAnne Sicker, Executive Director of the Urban Society for Aboriginal Youth (USAY), says more youth are having difficulties entering the workforce.

“More youth are coming to us looking for help because they can’t find a job. I am a youth myself and I realize these struggles are not easy. A lot of youth are going back to school because they realize school will help their future careers, but school is expensive and that’s a challenge as well,” says LeeAnne Sicker.

United Way’s responses are designed to address these challenges:

- Help with job search and school training:
 - An additional \$100,000 will go to United Way agencies, like USAY, that run successful job training programs
 - An additional \$20,000 will go to the Youth Bursary Fund that addresses barriers to employment (for example, funding bus passes so youth can get to interviews and jobs)
- Create and distribute Hope in Hard Times Guide for Youth – This guide is a where-to-turn guide for all youth who are looking for employment direction.
- Continue to promote 211, a help line for finding human service agencies

The Youth Resiliency Report and Hope in Hard Times Guide for Youth are available online at www.calgaryunitedway.org

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