



**Workforce Planning Board**  
of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin

**Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Youth Employment Study**

**May 2011**

Prepared by:

**HCA**

HARRY CUMMINGS AND ASSOCIATES INC.

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*Harry Cummings and Associates  
May 2011*

**Canada**  
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## **1.0 Introduction / Background**

In October 2010 the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin (WPB) initiated a study to provide information and comparisons in employment success among regular youth and youth with disabilities in Waterloo Region and Wellington and Dufferin Counties. The study is intended to provide a better understanding of how best to facilitate linking youth with service providers and employers with the objective of increasing employment rates among youth. The study is also intended to provide direction on the new types of services and resources that are required and how existing services and resources can be enhanced to better meet the needs of youth including youth with disabilities in exploring and pursuing employment opportunities.

The research was guided by a Project Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the social service and business sectors and carried out by an external consultant, Harry Cummings and Associates (HCA).

The youth experience in the workforce is a critical issue in Ontario today. The youth employment experience has been different than that of the adult population at large. We know, from labour force surveys and the 2006 Census, that youth unemployment rates have remained higher than the average over the long term. For most youth, the job search takes longer, and the discouraged worker phenomenon becomes an issue. It also appears that rural youth are poorly informed about the opportunities in their areas and future career opportunities.

Youth with disabilities face specific challenges during the job search process and several specific issues are worthy of exploration. These include employment and unemployment rates for youth; their job search knowledge or lack thereof, behaviour and experience of employed and unemployed youth; the availability and usage of job search services and resources; the means by which youth are marketing themselves to potential employers and the means by which employers are marketing job opportunities to youth.

Section 2 of this report provides an overview of the research methods used in this study including survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews. Section 3 presents the findings from the research and Section 4 presents the conclusions and recommendations.

## 2.0 Research Methods

A Project Steering Committee was established at the start of the study to provide guidance and advice on the research objectives and methodology and advice on issues as the research progressed.

The Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin was represented by Carol Simpson, Executive Director, who served as the Chair of the Steering Committee.

The other members of the Steering Committee include:

- Art Sinclair, Vice President, Greater KW Chamber of Commerce
- Barbara Moore, Georgian College, Orangeville Campus
- Cathy Harrington, Director of Employment Development Services, Lutherwood
- Charlie Matjanec, Employment Advisor, Conestoga College
- Chris Baginski-Hansen, Executive Director, 2nd Chance Employment Counselling
- Doug Boucher, Human Resources Coordinator, Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region
- Edward Pickersgill, Co-ordinator, Our Place Youth Centre
- Holt Sivak, Program Manager, John Howard Society
- Peter Cartwright, General Manager, City of Guelph Economic Development
- Val Millen, Special Education Community and Workplace Officer, Waterloo Catholic District School Board (retired)

The Committee provided assistance with the following activities:

- Identifying relevant resources (e.g. reports, data, key informants)
- Identifying / recruiting participants for the youth focus groups
- Identifying representatives from Educators/Training Agencies (e.g. high school, college, university institutions, and other organizations) and employers (e.g. representatives from different economic sectors) to participate in key informant interviews
- Reviewing and providing feedback on the various deliverables associated with the project including research instruments (e.g. youth focus group guide, key informant questionnaire, Internet survey), preliminary findings, and the final report.

A variety of data collection methods were used in the study including focus groups, key informant interviews and a survey. Additional details on the methods are provided below.

## Youth Focus Groups

A total of three focus groups were conducted with youth to gain a better understanding of:

- The types of job search services and resources used by youth
- The challenges youth experience trying to find and keep a job
- The way youth are marketing themselves to potential employers

HCA enlisted the aid of Doug Boucher (Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region), Holt Sivak (Cambridge Career Connections), and Chris Baginski-Hansen (2<sup>nd</sup> Chance) in recruiting participants and coordinating the focus groups. Representation was sought from a variety of youth including youth with disabilities and youth at risk.

The initial focus group was scheduled for March 2 at the Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region. The session was intended for youth with disabilities. A \$20 honorarium was offered to each participant as an incentive as well as assistance in covering travel expenses. Although a number of youth expressed interest in attending only a few youth confirmed they would attend and there were last minute cancellations. Only one youth attended the session. An interview was conducted with the one youth who agreed to be interviewed at the ILC.

Ongoing discussions with Doug Boucher, Holt Sivak, and Chris Baginski-Hansen determined that the best way to ensure a reliable turn-out at the focus group sessions was to run the sessions as part of ongoing youth programs. This approach was adopted in scheduling the next three sessions:

Focus Group 1      Hosted by and conducted at Cambridge Career Connections  
March 9  
8 youth attended this session

Focus Group 2      Hosted by and conducted at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance, Guelph  
March 14  
6 youth attended this session

Focus Group 3      Hosted by Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region and  
conducted at Kids Ability Centre, Waterloo<sup>1</sup>  
March 24  
9 youth attended this session

The first two focus groups targeted youth in general and youth at risk while the third focus group targeted youth with disabilities. The focus group guide is presented in Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> Andrena Lockley-Brown, Public Awareness and Education Coordinator, Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region assisted with coordinating the focus group.

Given the high response rate for the Internet survey (see below) it was decided to take extra measures to engage more youth with disabilities. A day of one-on-one interviews was scheduled with youth from Conestoga College with the help of Charlie Matjanec, Employment Advisor for students with disabilities. A total of 4 interviews were completed. The same questions used in the focus group were used in the interviews.

### Internet Survey

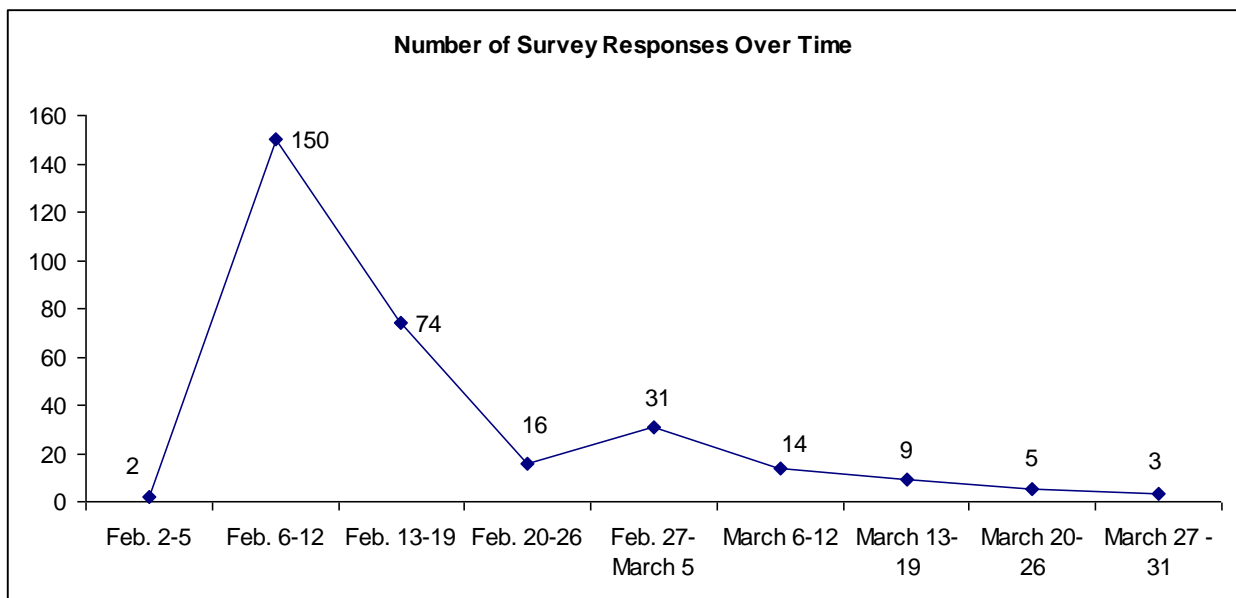
An Internet survey was developed and implemented to engage more youth in the study. The survey was designed to gain a better understanding of:

- The types of job search services and resources used by youth
- Youth participation in school coop programs, government wage subsidy programs and involvement with temporary staffing agencies
- The challenges youth experience trying to find and keep a job

The Internet survey was conducted between February 2 and April 1, 2011 and targeted youth between the ages of 15 to 29. Members of the Steering Committee promoted the survey through their network. A total of 304 individuals responded to the survey. Just over 70% of the respondents completed the survey within the first three weeks (Figure 1). After screening out the individuals who were under the age of 15 or over the age of 29 and the individuals who did not report their age the final sample amounted to 223.

The Internet survey is presented in Appendix B.

**Figure 1: Number of Internet Survey Responses**



## Employer Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with a small number of employers representing different economic sectors to better understand the type of job opportunities for youth and the way these opportunities are being promoted to youth. The employer questionnaire is presented in Appendix C.

The employers were identified from the network maintained by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin. A total of 32 businesses were contacted and invited to participate. The following businesses agreed to participate and were interviewed by phone:

- Hybrid Turkeys Inc.
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital
- YMCA-YWCA of Guelph
- Challenger Motor Freight
- Frey Building Contractors
- Sun Life Financial
- Rosmar Welding

## Educators/Training Agency Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with a small number of Educators/Training Agencies (e.g. representatives from high school, college, university institutions, and other organizations) to better understand the type of job search services/resources being made available to youth and how the delivery of these services has changed in recent years. Educators/Training Agencies were also asked to comment on what further changes are needed in terms of service delivery to help improve youth awareness and access to job opportunities. The educator/training questionnaire is presented in Appendix D.

Key informant interviews were conducted with the following organizations:

- ARC Industries, Guelph
- Cambridge Career Connections, Cambridge
- Centre for Career and Employment Services, Georgian College, Orangeville
- Continuous Intake Coop Program - College Heights Secondary School, Guelph
- Disability Services – Employment Advisor, Conestoga College, Guelph Waterloo
- Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region, Waterloo
- Lutherwood Employment and Housing Centre, Kitchener
- 2nd Chance Employment Counselling, Guelph
- Tri County Training, Ayr

Most of the interviews were conducted by phone but several were conducted in person and included a site tour.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> On site interviews were conducted at the Continuous Intake Coop Program - College Heights Secondary School, Tri County Training, and ARC Industries.

### 3.0 Findings

#### 3.1 Youth Survey

A web based youth survey was conducted between February 2 and April 1, 2011 targeting youth between the ages of 15 to 29. A total of 304 individuals responded to the survey. After screening out the individuals who were under the age of 15 or over the age of 29 and the individuals who did not report their age the final sample amounted to 223.

#### Age

As shown in Table 1, the 223 respondents represent 15 different ages from 15 years to 29 years. The average age of the respondents is approximately 19 years and the median age is 18 years. Approximately 65% of the respondents are in the 15-19 age range while 22% are in the 20-24 age range and 13% are in the 25-29 age range.

**Table 1: Survey Respondents by Age**

Age (years)	#	%
15	1	0.4
16	59	26.5
17	34	15.2
18	28	12.6
19	21	9.4
20	6	2.7
21	11	4.9
22	8	3.6
23	12	5.4
24	13	5.8
25	7	3.1
26	11	4.9
27	4	1.8
28	4	1.8
29	4	1.8
Total	223	100

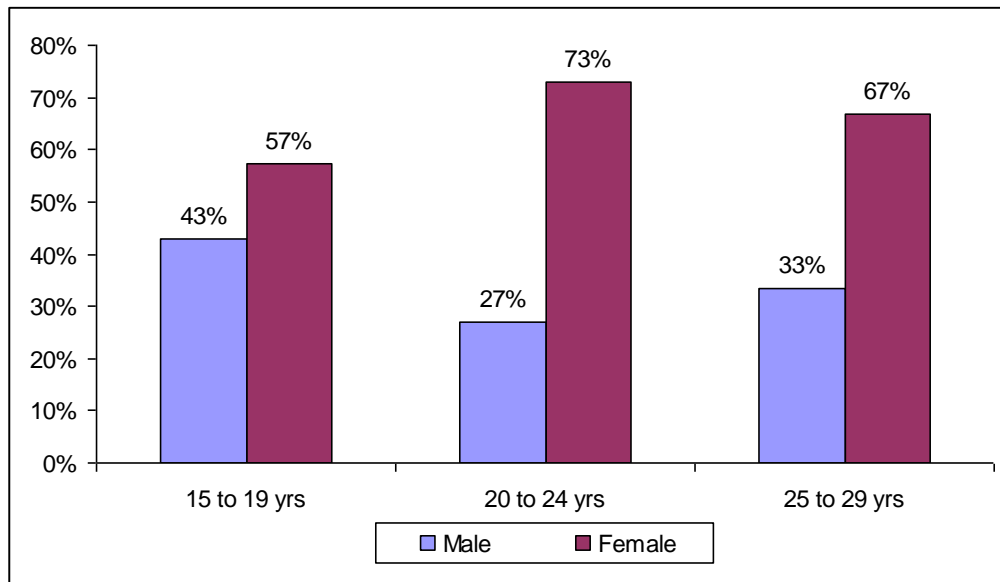
## Gender

Females account for 62% of the total respondents and males for 38% (Table 2). Males and females are more evenly represented in the 15 to 19 year age group (43% vs. 57%) but males only represent a third or less of the total respondents in the 20 to 24 and 25 to 29 age groups (Figure 2).

**Table 2: Survey Respondents by Gender**

Gender	#	%
Male	82	38.0
Female	134	62.0
Total	216	100

**Figure 2: Survey Respondents by Age Group and Gender**



## Place of Residence

Approximately 50% of the survey respondents reside in Waterloo Region while 14% reside in Wellington County and 5% reside in Dufferin County. A further 31% of the respondents reside in neighbouring or nearby counties/regions (Table 3).

**Table 3: Survey Respondents by Place of Residence**

Place of Residence	#	%
Waterloo Region	109	50.2
Wellington County	31	14.3
Dufferin County	10	4.6
Other	67	30.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100</b>

Other Place of Residence			
<u>County / Region</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>County / Region</u>	<u>#</u>
Perth	27	Lambton	1
York Region	7	Niagara	1
Grey	7	Simcoe	1
Huron	4	Ottawa	1
Middlesex	4	Chatham-Kent	1
Bruce	3	Hamilton	1
Essex	2	Brant	1
Oxford	2	Toronto	1
Peel Region	2	Hastings	1

Approximately 62% of the survey respondents reside in major urban centres where the population is in excess of 100,000 (e.g. Cambridge, Kitchener, Waterloo, Guelph, Toronto) and 38% reside in small urban communities or rural areas (Table 4).

**Table 4: Survey Respondents by Place of Residence, Urban vs. Rural**

Place of Residence	#	%
Major Urban Centres (100,000+)	135	62.2
Small Urban Centres / Rural Areas	82	37.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>100</b>

## Place of Birth

The large majority of the survey respondents (91%) were born in Canada as were the majority of their parents (79%).

## Highest Level of Education

Overall, 63% of the survey respondents reported that they did not / have not completed high school while 8% reported a high school diploma as their highest level of education. Just over 4% of the respondents have completed some college courses while 1% graduated from college. Just over 8% of the respondents have completed some university courses while 15% have graduated from university (Table 5).

**Table 5: Survey Respondents by Highest Level of Education**

Level of Education	#	%
Completed some high school	137	63.4
Graduated from high school	18	8.3
Completed some college or similar type course	9	4.2
Graduated from college or similar type program	2	0.9
Completed some university courses	18	8.3
Graduated from university	32	14.8
Total	216	100

Table 6 shows the distribution of survey respondents by age group, place of residence and highest level of education. In the 15 to 19 age group, the large majority of respondents (119 of 134, 89%) have not completed high school.

In the 20 to 24 age group, approximately 22% of respondents (11 of 49) have not completed high school while 41% have completed some college or university courses and 27% have graduated from college or university.

In the 25 to 29 age group, approximately 17% of respondents (5 of 30) have not completed high school while 13% have completed some university courses and 70% have graduated from college or university.

**Table 6: Number of Survey Respondents by Age Group, Place of Residence and Highest Level of Education**

		Completed some high school	Graduated from high school	Completed some college or similar type course	Graduated from college or similar type program	Completed some university courses	Graduated from university	Total
15 to 19 yrs	Major Urban Centres (100,000+)	71	4	0	0	1	0	76
	Small Urban Centres / Rural Areas	48	8	2	0	0	0	58
	Total	119	12	2	0	1	0	134
20 to 24 yrs	Major Urban Centres (100,000+)	5	5	3	0	10	11	34
	Small Urban Centres / Rural Areas	6	0	4	1	3	1	15
	Total	11	5	7	1	13	12	49
25 to 29 yrs	Major Urban Centres (100,000+)	2	0	0	0	3	17	22
	Small Urban Centres / Rural Areas	3	0	0	1	1	3	8
	Total	5	0	0	1	4	20	30

## Employment Status

Overall, approximately 57% of the survey respondents are employed. About 48% of the 15 to 19 age group are currently employed compared to 69% of the 20 to 24 age group and 72% of the 25 to 29 age group.

A slightly higher proportion of male respondents are employed compared to females (62% vs. 55%) and a slightly higher proportion of respondents from small urban centres / rural areas are employed compared to respondents from major urban centres (55% vs. 61%).

As shown in Figure 3, respondents with higher levels of education have higher employment rates.

**Figure 3: Survey Respondents by Employment Status and Highest Level of Education**

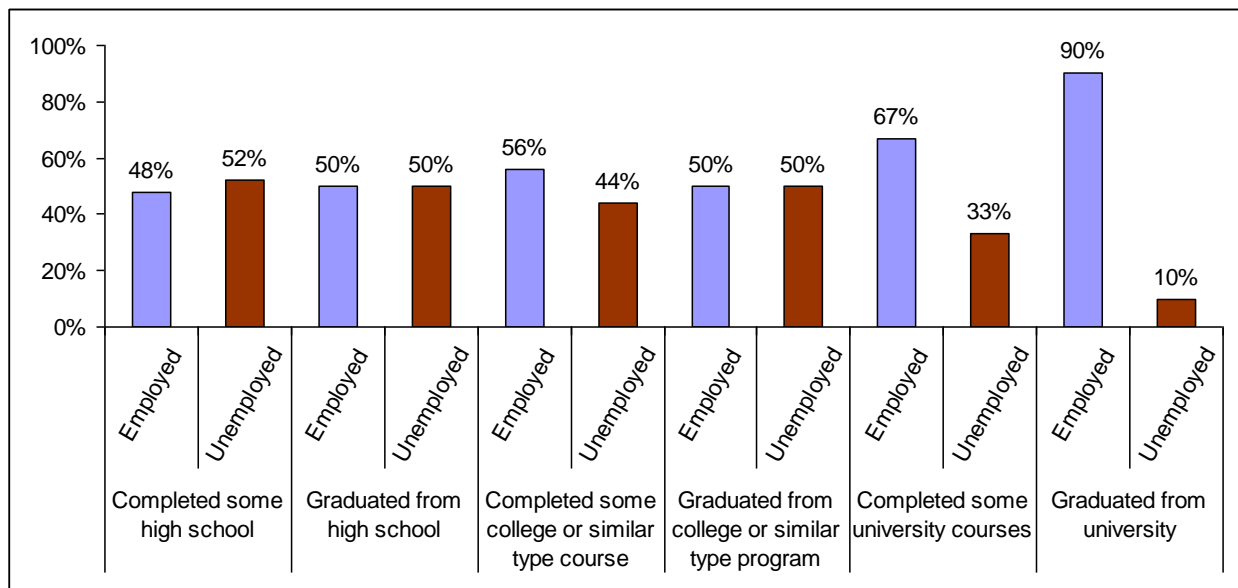


Table 7 shows the distribution of survey respondents by employment status, age group and highest level of education. In the 20 to 24 age group, 92% of the respondents with a university degree (11 of 12) are employed while only 45% of the respondents who partially completed high school (5 of 11) are employed. In the 25 to 29 age group, 89% of the respondents with a university degree (17 of 19) are employed while only 20% of the respondents who partially completed high school (1 of 5) are employed.

**Table 7: Number of Survey Respondents by Employment Status, Age Group, and Highest Level of Education**

		Completed some high school	Graduated from high school	Completed some college or similar type course	Graduated from college or similar type program	Completed some university courses	Graduated from university	Total
Employed	15 to 19 yrs	55	5	1	0	0	0	61
	20 to 24 yrs	5	3	4	1	9	11	33
	25 to 29 yrs	1	0	0	0	3	17	21
	Total	61	8	5	1	12	28	115
Unemployed	15 to 19 yrs	56	7	1	0	1	0	65
	20 to 24 yrs	6	1	3	0	4	1	15
	25 to 29 yrs	4	0	0	1	1	2	8
	Total	66	8	4	1	6	3	88

Overall, approximately 14% of the survey respondents have stopped looking for work. About 19% of the 15 to 19 age group have stopped looking for work compared to 4% of the 20 to 24 age group and 7% of the 25 to 29 age group.

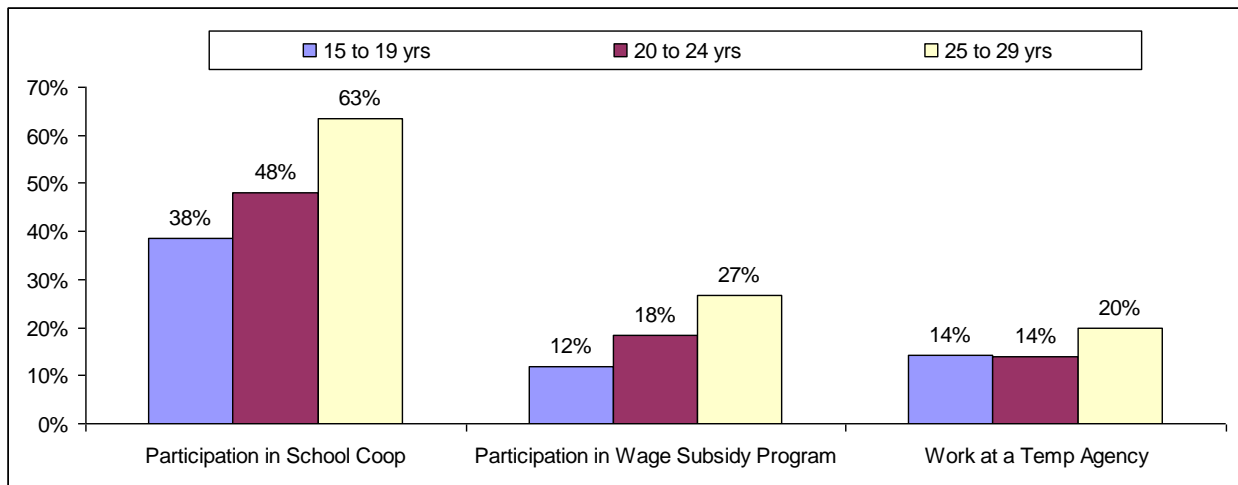
Approximately 44% of the survey respondents participated in a school coop program.<sup>3</sup> The proportion of male and female respondents that participated in a school coop program is very similar (46% vs. 44%) as is the proportion of respondents from major urban centres and small urban centres / rural areas (44% vs. 45%).

Approximately 15% of the survey respondents participated in a government wage subsidy program.<sup>4</sup> A slightly higher proportion of male respondents participated in a wage subsidy program compared to females (21% vs. 13%) as did a slightly higher proportion of respondents from small urban centres / rural areas compared to major urban centres (20% vs. 13%).

Approximately 15% of the survey respondents have found work through a temporary staffing agency. The proportion of male and female respondents that found work through a through a temporary staffing agency is very similar (15% vs. 14%). A slightly higher proportion of respondents from small urban centres / rural areas found work through a temporary staffing agency compared to respondents from major urban centres (19% vs. 13%).

Figure 4 shows the increase in participation rates in school coop programs, wage subsidy programs and temporary staffing agencies across the three age groups.

**Figure 4: Survey Respondents by Participation in School Coop Programs, Wage Subsidy Programs, and Temporary Staffing Agencies**



<sup>3</sup> These programs help give students hands-on learning experience in a job and help develop essential workplace skills and habits. They also allow students to gain school credits.

<sup>4</sup> These programs help employers cover a portion of the salary for an employee for a short period of time such as 12-16 weeks. Examples include Career Focus, Skills Link and Summer Work Experience.

## Job Search Activities Used by Youth

Survey respondents were asked to identify the different kinds of activities they use when searching for a job (Table 8). The most common activity reported was using a home computer to search for information on the Internet (71%) followed by reviewing job boards/job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet (53%).

Half of the survey respondents reported that they volunteer as a way to gain work experience.

Picking up information from employment service agencies, attending job fairs, and participating in job search skills development workshops are other common job search activities that were used by 23% to 27% of the respondents.

Employment service agencies were also accessed by 20% of the respondents to use computers and conduct searches on the Internet and to access assistance from an employment counsellor. Respondents also used employment service agencies to access printing/copying services (14%), use a phone (7%), and to participate in group support programs with other youth (8%).

**Table 8: Most Common Job Search Activities Used by Youth**

Job Search Activity <sup>a</sup>	#	%
Used a computer from my home to search for information on the Internet	158	70.9
Looked at job boards and job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet	117	52.5
Volunteered to gain work experience	111	49.8
Participated in skills development workshops (e.g. resume writing)	59	26.5
Attended a job fair	58	26.0
Picked up information from a service agency such as information on job trends, tips on resume and cover letter writing, tips on preparing for an interview, etc.	52	23.3
Used a computer at a service agency to search for information on the Internet	42	18.8
Received assistance from an employment counsellor (one on one assistance)	42	18.8
Used printing/copying services at a service agency	31	13.9
Participated in a group support program with other youth	17	7.6
Used a phone at a service agency	15	6.7

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate more than one activity.

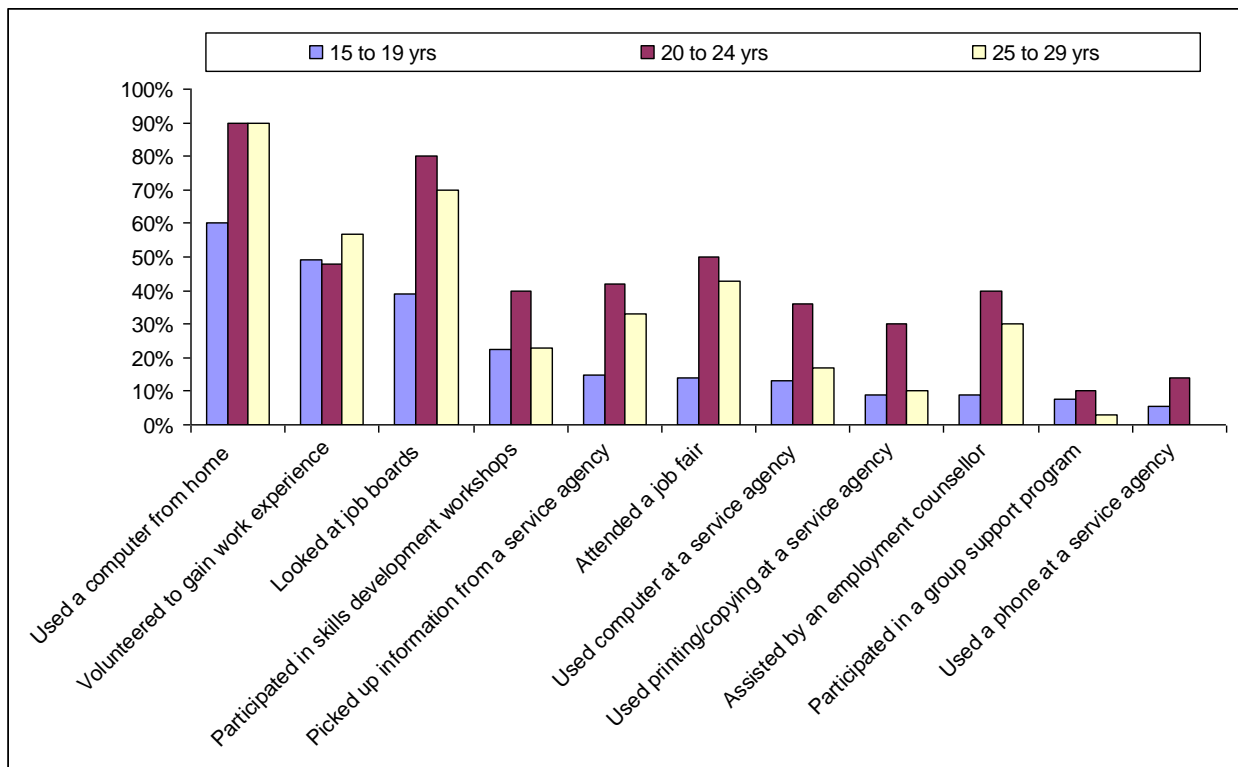
A comparative analysis by age group shows that the most common job search activities used by the 20 to 24 age group and the 25 to 29 age group include using a home computer to search for information on the Internet (90%) and reviewing job boards/job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet (70-80%).

Between 40% and 50% of the survey respondents in the 20 to 29 year age range have attended job fairs and between 50% and 60% have volunteered to gain work experience.

Approximately 40% of the respondents in the 20 to 24 age group have been assisted by an employment counsellor and participated in a job search skills development workshop.

The most common job search activities used by the respondents in the 15 to 19 age group are similar to the older age groups: using a home computer to search for information on the Internet (60%), reviewing job boards/job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet (39%), and volunteering to gain work experience (49%). In general, it appears that a much smaller proportion of respondents in the 15 to 19 age group are actively searching for work using these techniques (Figure 5).

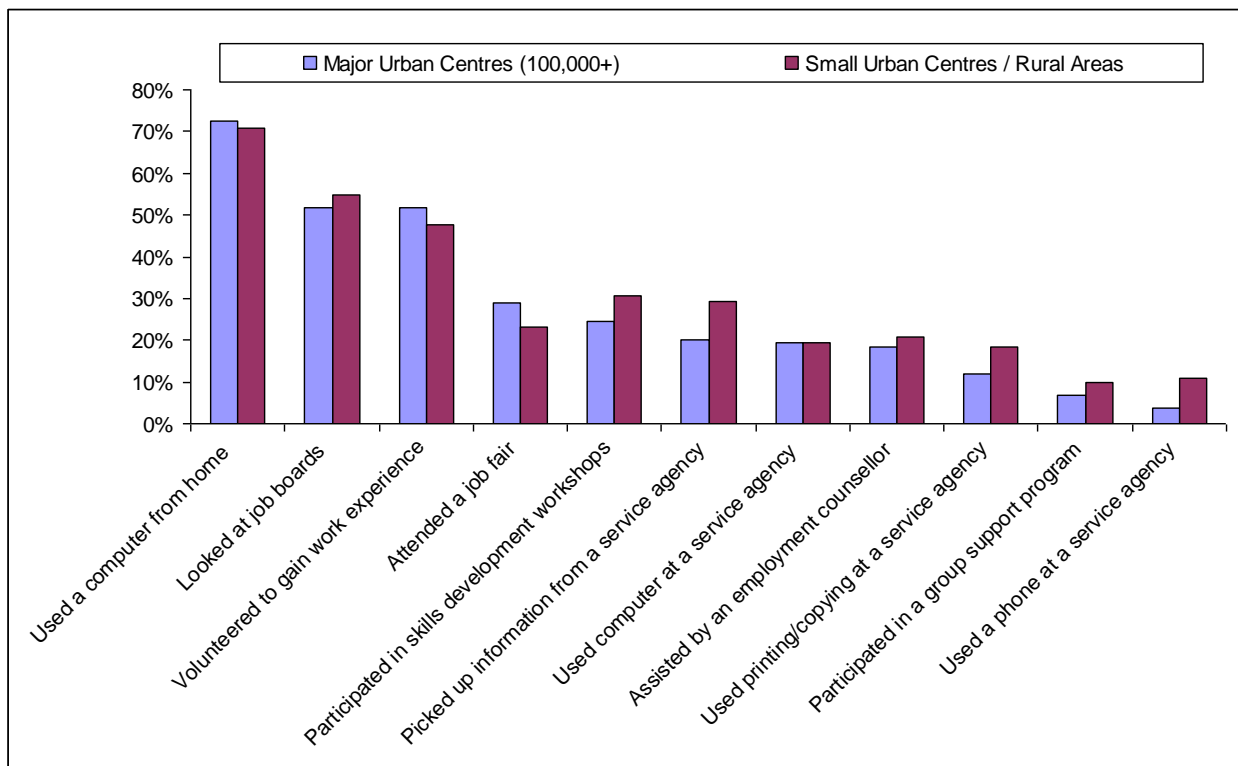
**Figure 5: Most Common Job Search Activities by Age Group**



A comparative analysis by place of residence shows only small differences in the types of job search activities commonly used by residents in major urban centres and small urban centres / rural areas. The three leading activities used by the survey respondents in the major urban centres and small urban centres include using a home computer to search for information on the Internet (70%), reviewing job boards/job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet (55%), and volunteering to gain work experience (50%).

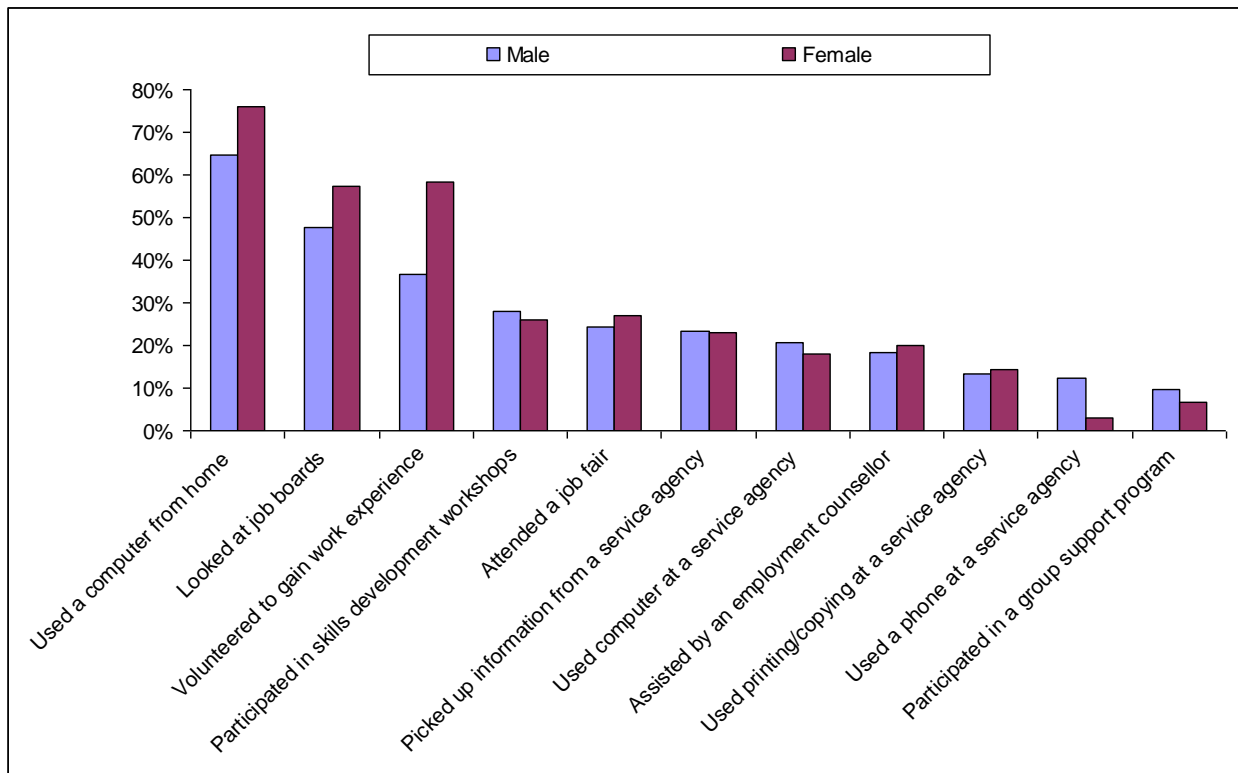
A slightly higher percentage of the survey respondents in small urban centres / rural areas have participated in job search skills development workshops, picked up information from employment service agencies, and used printing/copying and phone services at an employment service agency (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Most Common Job Search Activities by Place of Residence**



A comparative analysis by gender shows that the leading job search activities commonly used by males and females are similar although it appears that a higher proportion of females are actively searching for work using these techniques (Figure 7). The three leading activities used by males and females include using a home computer to search for information on the Internet (65% males, 76% females), reviewing job boards/job listings at service agencies and/or on the Internet (48%, 57%), and volunteering to gain work experience (37%, 58%).

**Figure 7: Most Common Job Search Activities by Gender**



## Difficulty Finding Work and Job Search Challenges

Almost 70% of the survey respondents have experienced difficulty when trying to find work.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 59% of the 15 to 19 year age group have experienced difficulty in their job search compared to 86% of the 20 to 24 age group and 87% of the 25 to 29 age group (Table 9).

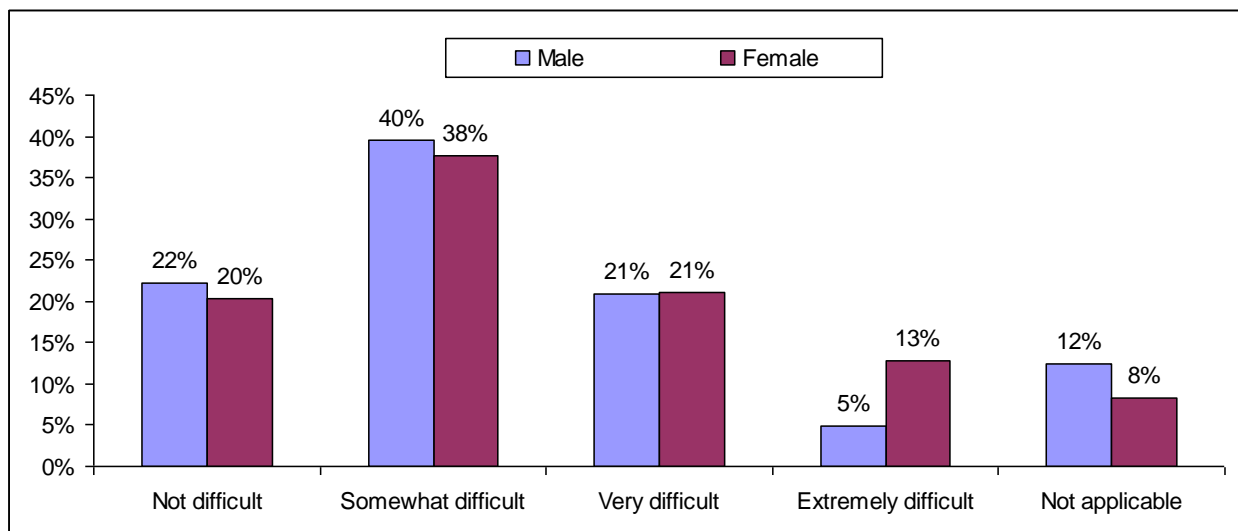
A larger proportion of the two older age groups are experiencing more extreme challenges in finding work compared to the 15 to 19 age group. Over 25% of the 25 to 29 age group and 18% of the 20 to 24 age group reported having extreme difficulty finding work while only about 4% of the 15 to 19 age group reported having extreme difficulty.

**Table 9: Level of Difficulty Finding Work by Age Group**

Level of Difficulty Finding Work	15 to 19 yrs		20 to 24 yrs		25 to 29 yrs		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Not difficult	36	25.4	7	14.3	3	10.0	46	20.8
Somewhat difficult	51	35.9	20	40.8	12	40.0	83	37.6
Very difficult	28	19.7	13	26.5	6	20.0	47	21.3
Extremely difficult	5	3.5	9	18.4	8	26.7	22	10.0
Not applicable	22	15.5	0	0.0	1	3.3	23	10.4
Total	142	100	49	100	30	100	221	100

Overall, a slightly higher proportion of female survey respondents experienced difficulty when trying to find work compared to males (71% vs. 65%). As shown in Figure 8, a higher proportion of females experienced extreme difficulty trying to find work compared to males (13% vs. 5%).

**Figure 8: Level of Difficulty Finding Work by Gender**

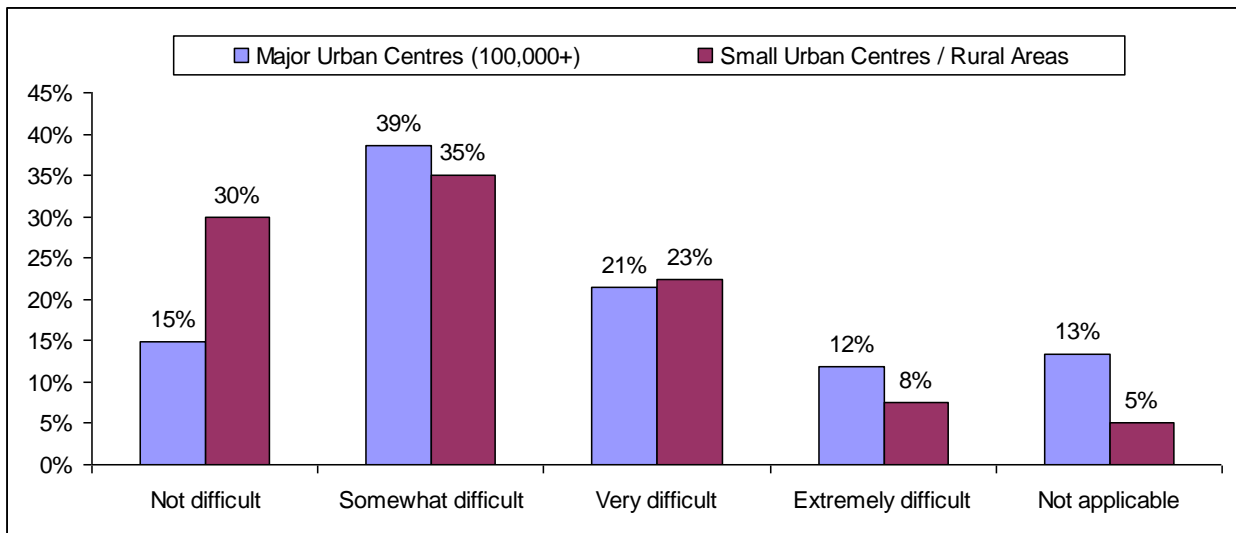


<sup>5</sup> Reflects the combined responses for three levels of difficulty: somewhat, very and extremely.

Overall, a slightly higher proportion of the survey respondents in major urban centres experienced difficulty when trying to find work compared to respondents in small urban centres / rural areas (72% vs. 65%). As shown in Figure 9, a higher proportion of respondents in major urban centres experienced extreme difficulty finding work compared to respondents in small urban centres / rural areas (12% vs. 8%).

Approximately 30% of the respondents in small urban centres / rural areas reported no difficulty finding work compared to only 15% of the respondents in major urban centres.

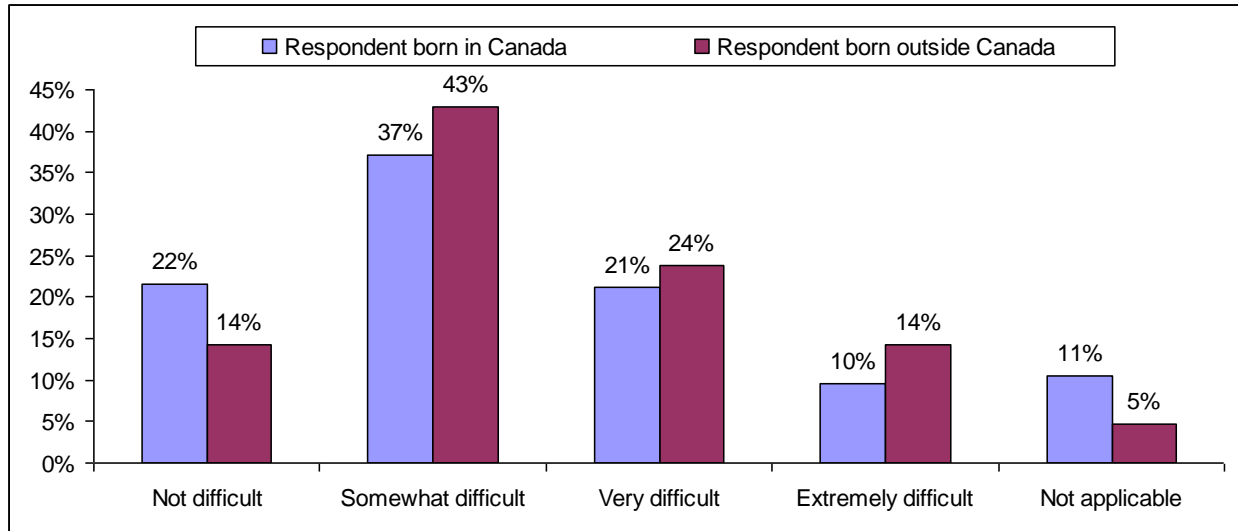
**Figure 9: Level of Difficulty Finding Work by Place of Residence**



Overall, a higher proportion of survey respondents born outside Canada experienced difficulty when trying to find work compared to respondents born in Canada (81% vs. 68%).<sup>6</sup> As shown in Figure 10, a higher proportion of respondents born outside Canada experienced extreme difficulty finding work compared to respondents born in Canada (14% vs. 10%).

Approximately 22% of the respondents who were born in Canada reported no difficulty finding work compared to only 14% of the respondents who were born outside Canada.

**Figure 10: Level of Difficulty Finding Work by Place of Birth**



<sup>6</sup> These findings need to be used with caution as the survey has a small number of respondents born outside Canada (n=21).

Survey respondents were asked to identify the challenges they experience in finding a job (Table 10). The most common challenge reported was lack of work experience (58%) followed by lack of knowledge of available job search services (32%), lack of proper education (31%), and lack of access to transportation (29%).

A substantial proportion of respondents acknowledged that they do not understand the expectations of employers (21%).

Respondents also indicated that they need better job search skills (18%), that they feel uncomfortable accessing and/or using job search services (8%), and they need better computer skills to search for job information on the Internet (5%).

A substantial proportion of respondents also reported that they have personal and family commitments that interfere with their ability to look for a job (17%).

Two respondents indicated that they have a physical disability which interferes with their ability to search for work.

**Table 10: Top Challenges in Searching for a Job**

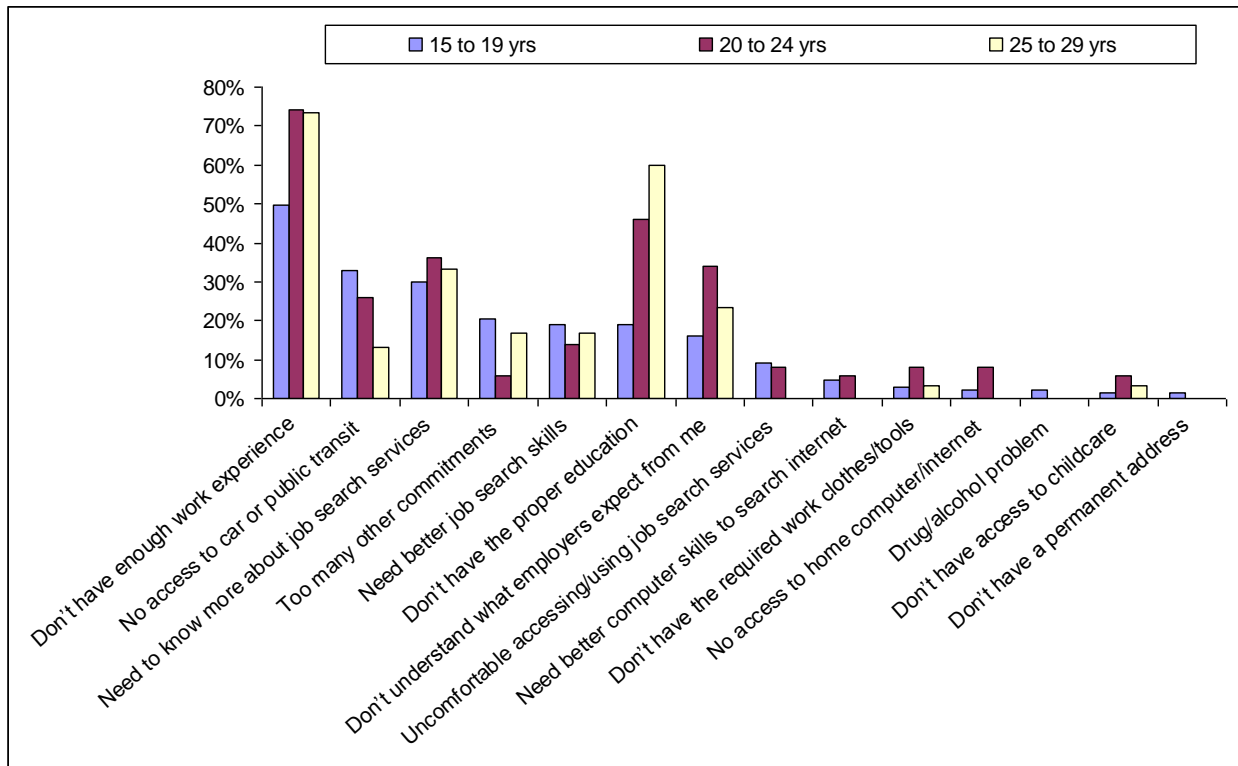
Job Search Challenges <sup>a</sup>	#	%
I don't have enough work experience for some jobs	130	58.3
I need to know more about available job search services	71	31.8
I don't have the proper education for some jobs	68	30.5
I don't have access to a car or public transportation (bus, taxi)	64	28.7
I don't understand what employers expect from me	47	21.1
I need better job search skills	39	17.5
I don't have enough time to look for work because of other commitments	37	16.6
I feel uncomfortable accessing and/or using job search services	17	7.6
I need better computer skills to search for job information on the Internet	10	4.5
I don't have the required work clothes/tools	9	4.0
I don't have access to a home computer to look for job information on the Internet	7	3.1
I don't have access to childcare	6	2.7
I have a drug/alcohol problem	3	1.3
I don't have a permanent address	2	0.9
Disability	2	0.9

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate up to three problems/challenges.

A comparative analysis by age group shows that the most common job search challenges experienced by the 20 to 24 age group and the 25 to 29 age group include lack of work experience (70%), lack of proper/appropriate education (45%-60%), inadequate job search skills (30%-35%), and not understanding the expectations of employers (25%-35%) (Figure 11).

The most common job search challenges experienced by the 15 to 19 age group include lack of work experience (50%), lack of access to transportation (33%), lack of knowledge of available job search services (30%), and personal and family commitments that interfere with their ability to look for a job (20%).

**Figure 11: Top Challenges in Searching for a Job by Age Group**



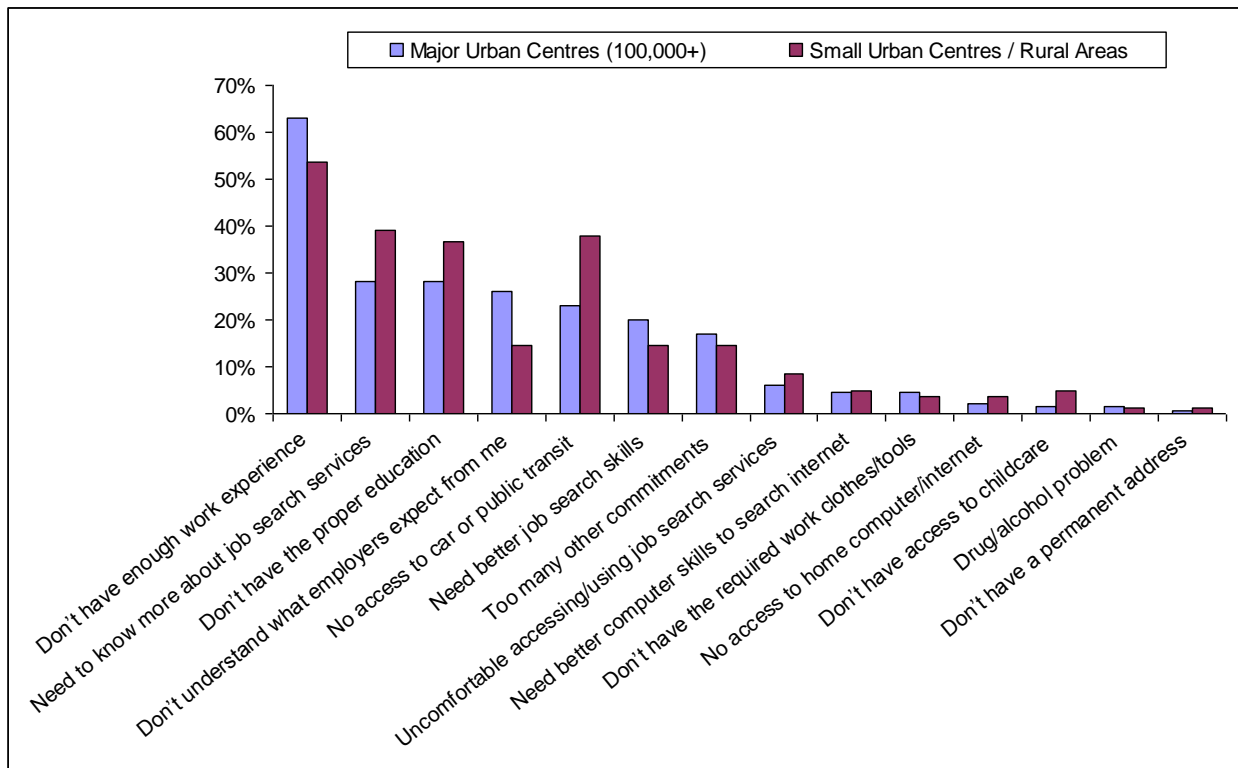
A comparative analysis by place of residence shows that the leading job search challenges commonly experienced by respondents in major urban centres and small urban centres / rural areas are similar although the proportion of respondents experiencing these challenges varies (Figure 12).

Lack of work experience is the most common job search challenge experienced by the survey respondents in major urban centres (63%) and small urban centres / rural areas (54%) followed by lack of knowledge of available job search services (28% and 39%), and lack of proper/appropriate education (28% and 37%).

Lack of access to transportation is a common challenge although to a greater extent for respondents in small urban centres / rural areas (38%) compared to respondents in major urban areas (23%).

Not understanding the expectations of employers was identified as a challenge by a higher proportion of respondents in major urban centres (26%) compared to respondents in small urban centres / rural areas (15%).

**Figure 12: Top Challenges in Searching for a Job by Place of Residence**



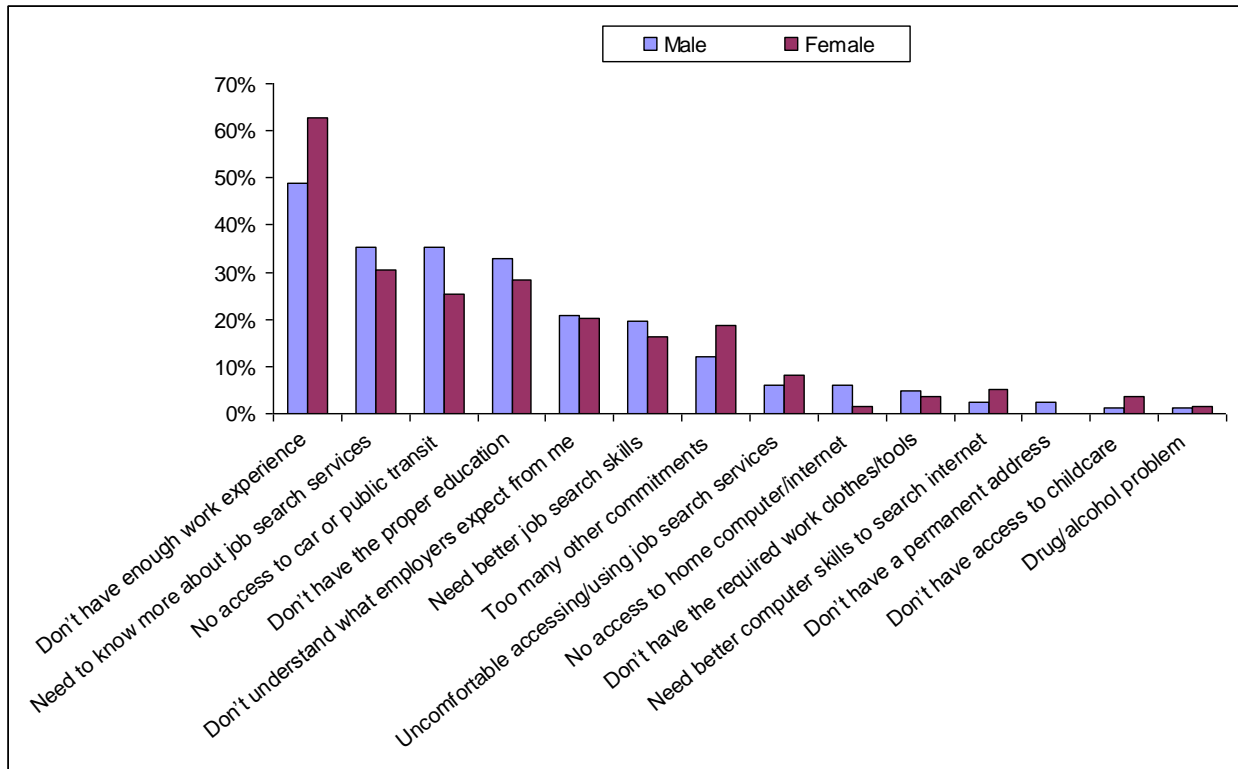
A comparative analysis by gender shows that the leading job search challenges commonly experienced by males and females are similar although the proportion of respondents experiencing these challenges varies (Figure 13).

Lack of work experience is the most common job search challenge experienced by males (49%) and females (63%) followed by lack of knowledge of available job search services (35% and 31%), and lack of proper/appropriate education (33% and 28%).

Lack of access to transportation is a common challenge although to a greater extent for males (35%) compared to females (25%).

An equal proportion of males and females experience challenges in understanding the expectations of employers (20%).

**Figure 13: Top Challenges in Searching for a Job by Gender**



## Job Retention Challenges

Survey respondents were asked to identify the challenges they experience in keeping a job (Table 11). The most common challenge reported was inconvenient work hours (28%) followed by inadequate pay (27%), lack of full time jobs (22%), and lack of transportation (16%).

A substantial proportion of respondents also indicated that the job training they received was inadequate (11%) and that they did not feel they were being treated fairly by their supervisor and/or coworkers (10%).

Some respondents also reported that personal and family commitments interfered with their ability to maintain a job (11%) and that they do not understand the expectations of employers (8%).

**Table 11: Top Challenges in Keeping a Job**

Job Retention Challenges <sup>a</sup>	#	%
The work hours are not convenient for me	62	27.8
The job does not pay enough	61	27.4
I can only find temporary or part time work	50	22.4
I don't have access to a car or public transportation (bus, taxi)	35	15.7
The job training I received was not sufficient	25	11.2
I have too many personal and/or family commitments	25	11.2
I don't feel I'm being treated fairly by my supervisors and/or coworkers	23	10.3
I don't understand what employers expect from me	17	7.6
I don't get along with my supervisor(s)	9	4.0
I don't get along with my coworkers	5	2.2
I don't have the required work clothes/tools	4	1.8
I don't have a permanent address	3	1.3
I don't have access to childcare	2	0.9
I have a drug/alcohol problem	0	0.0

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were allowed to indicate up to three problems/challenges.

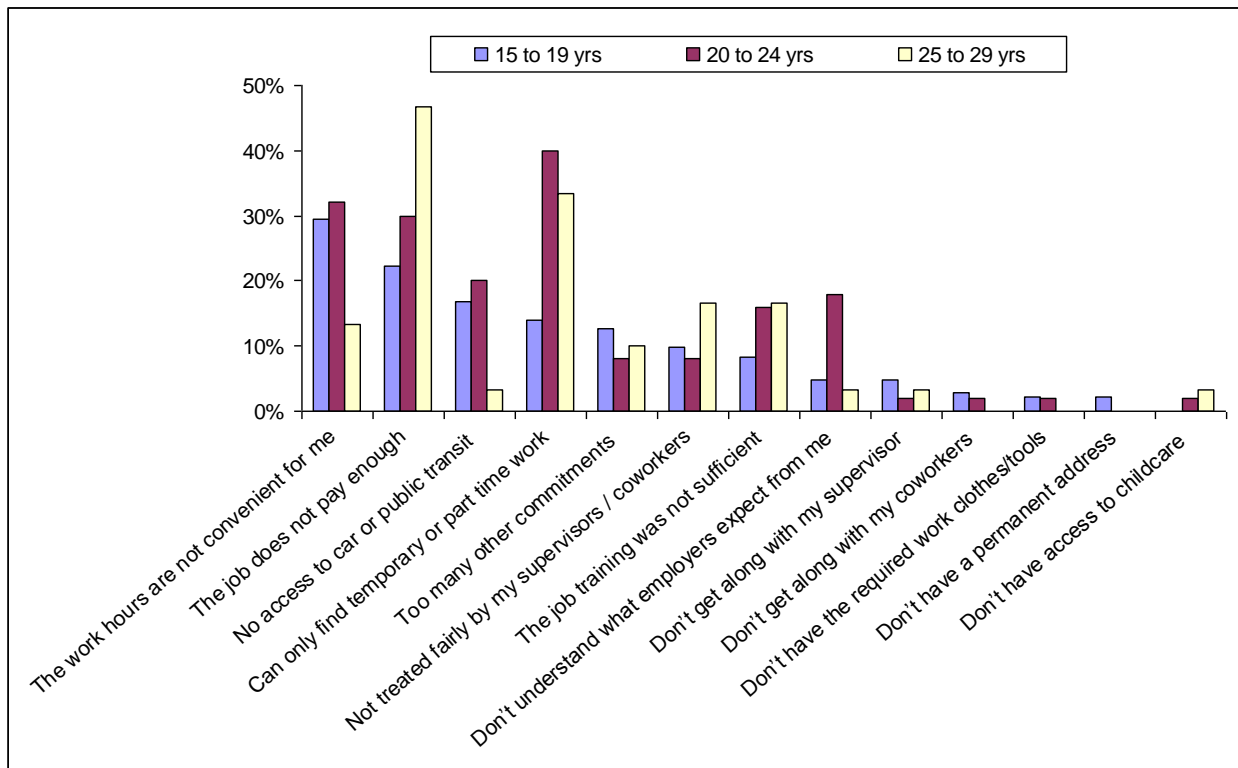
The most common challenges in maintaining a job vary across the three age groups (Figure 14).

The most common challenges experienced by the 15 to 19 age group include inconvenient work hours (29%), inadequate pay (22%), lack of access to transportation (17%), lack of full time jobs (14%), and personal and family commitments (13%).

The most common challenges experienced by the 20 to 24 age group include lack of full time jobs (40%), inconvenient work hours (32%), inadequate pay (30%), lack of access to transportation (20%), not understanding the expectations of employers (18%), and inadequate on the job training (16%).

The most common challenges experienced by the 25 to 29 age group include inadequate pay (47%), lack of full time jobs (33%), inadequate on the job training (17%), unfair treatment by the supervisor and/or coworkers (17%), and inconvenient work hours (13%). Access to transportation appears to be a lesser challenge for this age group (3%).

**Figure 14: Top Challenges in Keeping a Job by Age Group**

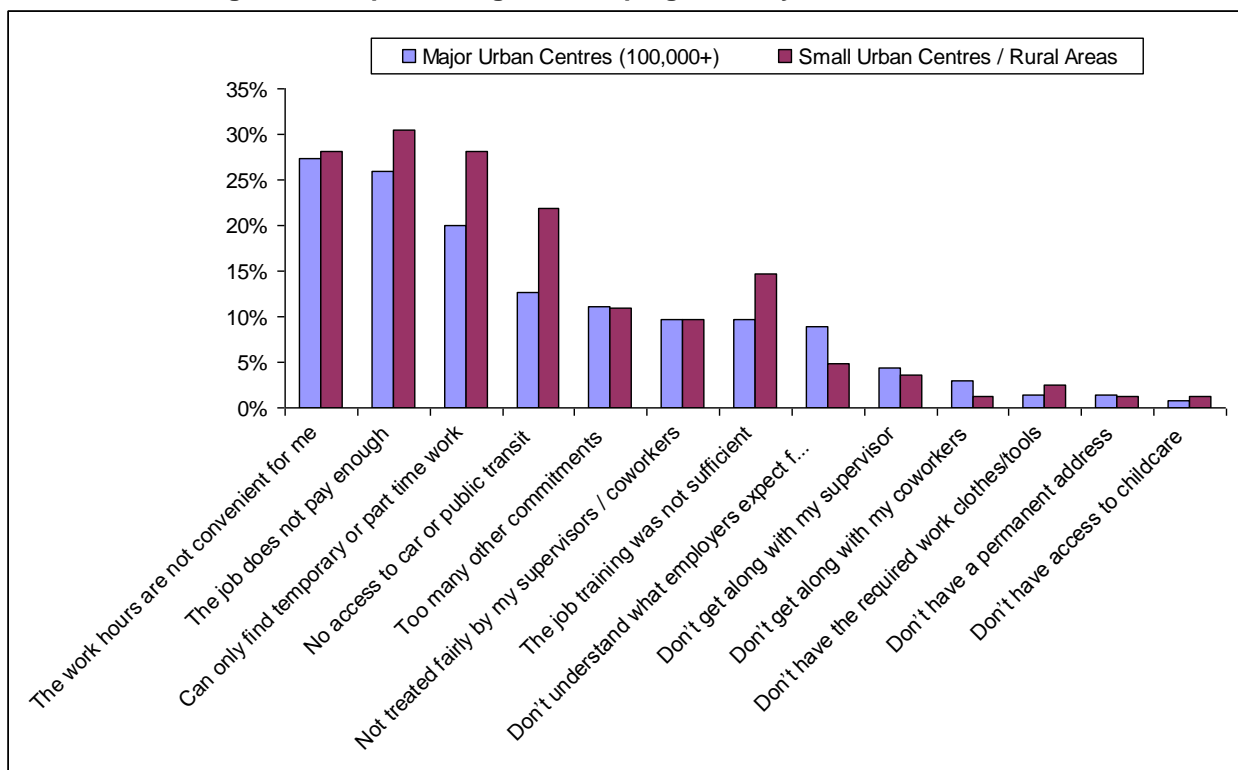


The most common challenges in maintaining a job vary between major urban centres and small urban centres / rural areas (Figure 15).

The most common challenges experienced by survey respondents in major urban centres include inconvenient work hours (27%), inadequate pay (26%), lack of full time jobs (20%), and lack of access to transportation (13%).

The most common challenges experienced by survey respondents in small urban centres / rural areas include inadequate pay (30%), inconvenient work hours (28%), lack of full time jobs (28%), lack of access to transportation (22%), and inadequate on the job training (15%).

**Figure 15: Top Challenges in Keeping a Job by Place of Residence**

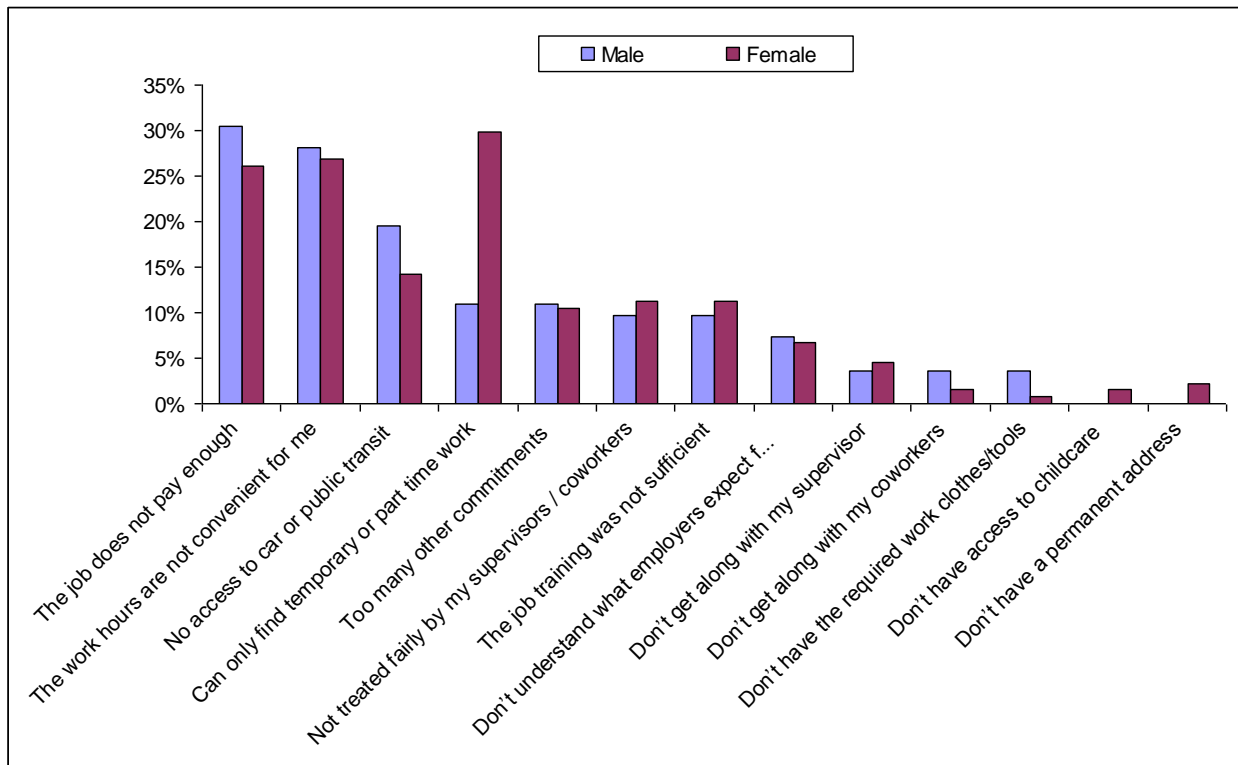


The most common challenges in maintaining a job vary between males and females (Figure 16).

The most common challenges experienced by males include inadequate pay (30%), inconvenient work hours (28%), and lack of access to transportation (20%).

The most common challenges experienced by females include lack of full time jobs (30%), inconvenient work hours (27%), inadequate pay (26%), and lack of access to transportation (14%).

**Figure 16: Top Challenges in Keeping a Job by Gender**



The next section of the report presents the findings from the youth focus groups and youth key informant interviews.

## 3.2 Youth Focus Groups and Youth Key Informant Interviews

### Focus Group 1

A total of eight youth attended the March 9 focus group at Cambridge Career Connections (CCC). The group consisted of seven females and one male and the ages ranged from 17 to 23 years with an average age of 20. All of the participants were from Waterloo Region.

The participants identified a wide variety of job search activities that they use including:

- Going door to door and handing out resumes to businesses and directly inquiring if businesses are hiring
- Using services and supports at employment service agencies, specifically:
  - Using computers to prepare and print resumes
  - Using the Internet to search for job opportunities (see below)
  - Accessing employment counsellors
  - Reviewing job listings (e.g. Now Hiring list at CCC)
  - Participating in job preparedness programs (e.g. Access Program at CCC – five days a week for five weeks)
- Using the Internet to search for job opportunities (from home, employment service agency, library). This includes searching specific business/employer websites, conducting general searches using search engines and key words (e.g. Google/Yahoo, “jobs in Cambridge”), and using job search engines such as Monster.ca, Wowjobs.ca, Cambridge jobs.ca, Kijiji.ca, Craigslist.ca, and Simplyhired.ca.
- Following up on business referrals from family members
- Attending job fairs
- Searching job flyers posted on bulletin boards (e.g. at the laundromat)
- Reviewing job listings in local newspapers (e.g. KW Record)

Employment counsellors in employment service agencies such as Cambridge Career Connections are recognized by youth as playing a critical role in helping them prepare for entry into the workforce.

Although some of the participants found the door to door job search approach to be effective it was noted that it can be very time intensive going from business to business. It is also very frustrating for youth when businesses inform them that they will contact them but never do.

Job searching on the Internet is viewed as very convenient but not all youth have access to computers and the Internet from their home. This makes employment service agencies like Cambridge Career Connections crucial. As noted by one participant “the job search would be impossible without the supports at Career Connections.” However, accessing employment service agencies can still be problematic for some youth who may be located an hour or more away and have very limited transportation options. It

was noted that even within the City of Cambridge it can sometimes take over an hour to get to Cambridge Career Connections using public transit.

Some of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with job fairs as the events are often overcrowded and they question how employers can seriously follow-up with all of the inquiries they receive.

Several participants expressed their dissatisfaction with the online job applications that some employers are now using. It was noted that the online applications are lengthy and difficult to complete and sometimes feature time limit math questions. This form of engagement with employers is viewed by youth as being too impersonal and does not provide the applicant the opportunity to demonstrate other skills including interpersonal skills. Furthermore, it restricts the applicant from asking the employer questions.

In general, this group of participants has not incorporated the use of social media as part of their job search strategy.<sup>7</sup> The participants are largely promoting themselves to employers by distributing their resumes by fax or email and/or visiting businesses door to door and inquiring about job opportunities and dropping off their resume.

When asked to identify the types of skills / attributes that employers are looking for, the participants identified the following qualities:

- Work experience of any kind
- Training certificates (e.g. Safe Food Handling, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, First Aid and CPR)
- Ability to work quickly
- No criminal record
- Good interpersonal skills
- Reliability (e.g. being punctual and showing up for scheduled hours)
- Flexibility (e.g. being available for irregular hours and on short notice)
- Formal education – minimum high school diploma or in college or college diploma

The participants identified a number of improvements to help link youth with service providers and employers and increase employment rates among youth:

- Expand the location of employment service agencies to improve access
- Introduce a job search course in high schools to help youth learn practical skills – not just a career course
- Co-op programs in high schools need to help youth address transportation challenges to enable more youth to take advantage of coop opportunities
- Help employers to better understand the various commitments that youth have (e.g. balancing family, school, work) and develop work schedules that are sensitive to these commitments
- Encourage employers to place less emphasis on work experience as a hiring condition and more emphasis on other qualities

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<sup>7</sup> This refers to the use of electronic forms of communication and networking such as blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc.

- Encourage employers to deliver adequate orientation and training
- Provide assistance to help youth cover the cost of training certificates (e.g. Safe Food Handling, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, First Aid and CPR)

## Focus Group 2

A total of six youth attended the March 14 focus group at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance, Guelph. The group consisted of two females and four males and the ages ranged from 18 to 26 years with an average age of 21. All of the participants were from Wellington County.

The participants identified a wide variety of job search activities that they use including:

- Going door to door and handing out resumes to businesses and directly inquiring if businesses are hiring
- Using services and supports at employment service agencies, specifically:
  - Using computers to prepare and print resumes
  - Using the Internet to search for job opportunities (see below)
  - Accessing employment counsellors
  - Accessing resource material (e.g. career, occupation requirements)
  - Participating in job preparedness programs (e.g. Ways2Work Program at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance – six week training program and six week work placement)
- Using the Internet to search for job opportunities (from home, employment service agency, library). This includes searching specific business/employer websites, conducting general searches using search engines and key words (e.g. Google/Yahoo, “jobs in Guelph Wellington”), and using job search engines such as Monster.ca, Wowjobs.ca, and Kijiji.ca. Some youth have also posted their resume on these sites.
- Participating in school coop programs
- Networking with family and friends who hear about jobs
- Reviewing job listings in local newspapers (e.g. Wellington Advertiser)

Employment counsellors in employment service agencies such as 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance are recognized by youth as playing a critical role in helping them prepare for their entry into the workforce.

The participants are all involved in the Ways2Work program which involves a 6 week job preparedness program and a 6 week work placement where participants attend 30 hours per week and are paid. The participants learned about the program through a variety of sources including friends, previous participants, employment counsellors, and probation officer. The program covers costs for a variety of training certificates including Safe Food Handling, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, First Aid and CPR and several of the participants noted that they would attend the program even if they were not paid because the savings associated with the training certificates. However, for some youth it is crucial to be paid during the program otherwise it would be a struggle for them to participate. It was noted that the program coordinators provide a letter of reference which is very important when the youth begin their job search.

Some participants also noted that the Ways2Work program has helped in developing their people skills and has helped to bring structure/routine into their life.

Job searching on the Internet is viewed as very convenient but not all youth have access to computers and the Internet from their home. Access to the computers at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance and at libraries is crucially important in these cases.

Employment service agencies are convenient when located in the community where you live but access is challenging for youth living in surrounding areas.

Some of the participants expressed their dissatisfaction with job temp agencies as the work is inconsistent and does not lead to full time jobs. There are also concerns about the large commission that these types of agencies charge.

In general, this group of participants has not incorporated the use of social media as part of their job search strategy. The participants are largely promoting themselves to employers by distributing their resumes by fax or email and/or visiting businesses door to door and inquiring about job opportunities and dropping off their resume.

When asked to identify the types of skills / attributes that employers are looking for, the participants identified the following qualities:

- Work experience of any kind
- Training certificates (e.g. Safe Food Handling, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System, First Aid and CPR)
- Honesty
- Ability to work quickly
- Reliability (e.g. being punctual and showing up for scheduled hours)
- Flexibility (e.g. being available for irregular hours and on short notice)
- Innovative
- Show initiative

The participants identified a number of improvements to help link youth with service providers and employers and increase employment rates among youth:

- Continue to support employment service agencies like 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance – crucial for youth who do not have access to computers and Internet
- Increase promotion of the Ways2Work program, expand access/intake to the program and offer the program in alternate locations (e.g. Elora, Fergus)
- Work with employers to provide onsite tours for youth to observe the type of work and work environment as they consider their career options
- Help employers to better understand the benefits of hiring youth
- Implement cheaper transit options for youth under 25 to better facilitate their movement around the community as they pursue job opportunities

### Focus Group 3

A total of nine youth with disabilities attended the March 24 focus group at Kids Ability Centre, Waterloo. The group consisted of seven females and two males and the ages ranged from 15 to 23 years. All of the participants were from Waterloo Region.

The participants identified a wide variety of job search activities that they use including:

- Going door to door and handing out resumes to businesses and directly inquiring if businesses are hiring
- Accessing job coaches through ODSP and March of Dimes
- Using the Internet to search for job opportunities (from home, employment service agency, library). This includes searching specific business/employer websites, conducting general searches using search engines and key words (e.g. Google/Yahoo, “jobs in Cambridge, Waterloo, Kitchener”), and using job search engines such as Monster.ca, Job Bank, and Kijiji.ca.
- Identify businesses that have specific programs that support the employment of persons with disabilities (e.g. Pizza Hut Job Plus)
- Attending job fairs
- Participating in school coop programs
- Volunteering
- Networking with family and friends who hear about jobs
- Reviewing job listings in local newspapers

Using the Internet was viewed by the participants as the most convenient way to search for jobs but it was acknowledged that not everyone may have access to the Internet from home.

School coop programs are viewed as very helpful in terms of gaining work experience and then promoting this activity when pursuing other job opportunities.

Several of the youth volunteer but reported that this activity rarely leads to paid employment.

The participants are largely promoting themselves to employers by distributing their resumes by fax or email and/or visiting businesses door to door and inquiring about job opportunities and dropping off their resume. In many cases the youth are assisted by their parents/caregivers. Only one of the youth has used Facebook as part of self promotion.

When asked to identify the types of skills / attributes that employers are looking for, the participants identified flexibility as a key requirement. However, this poses significant challenges for people with disabilities who depend on transportation that can not be arranged on short notice. As well, some youth with disabilities require additional time to prepare for the workplace.

It was also noted that some employers place an emphasis on working quickly and multitasking which may be impractical for some people with disabilities.

The participants also identified the following skills/attributes sought by employers:

- Work experience of any kind
- Good interpersonal skills
- Reliability (e.g. being punctual and showing up for scheduled hours)

The participants identified a number of improvements to help link youth with service providers and employers and increase employment rates among youth with disabilities:

- Conduct a job fair targeting youth with disabilities
- Encourage employers to provide a more detailed description of the physical activities associated with the job opportunities and their expectations related to performance
- Support organizations that assist youth with disabilities in acquiring life skills - this is a key factor for people with disabilities in becoming more independent and prepared for the workplace experience
- Encourage employers to promote job opportunities for people with all types of disabilities and not focusing on only one type of disability
- Encourage colleges and universities to relax the course load for people with disabilities who are trying to hold a part time job while attending school
- Help employers increase their awareness about the challenges for some people with disabilities to wear uniforms. For example, some body types require special fittings, elastic waistbands, special shoes, etc. and some people may need additional time to dress for work.
- Encourage employers to assess how their work activities might be changed to facilitate the entry of people with disabilities. For example, employers could look at splitting a job into its separate tasks to enable people with disabilities to focus on a specific activity. It was noted that the volunteer sector needs to examine this as well.
- Encourage employers to take the time to respond to all inquires that are made about a job opportunity
- Enhance the Mobility Plus service to enable transit on shorter notice (e.g. same day transit service)
- Host a breakfast meeting with the local Chamber of Commerce to share the findings of this report

## **Youth Key Informant Interviews**

A total of four youth with disabilities who are enrolled in programs at Conestoga College participated in key informant interviews. The group consisted of one female and three males and their ages ranged from 23 to 25 years.

The students identified a wide variety of job search activities that they use including:

- Accessing the Employment Advisor for Students with Disabilities at Conestoga College – one on one counselling

- Participating in resume workshop at college
- Searching company websites for job opportunities
- Using job search engines such as Workopolis, Monster.ca, and Job Bank – Service Canada website
- Dropping off resumes at potential employers
- Attending job fairs
- Volunteering to gain work experience
- Participating in school coop program
- Accessing ODSP employment services including counsellors
- Following up on business referrals through personal friends and social network

Conestoga College has a dedicated Employment Advisor for youth with disabilities. The students reported that the type of support and guidance provided through the Employment Advisor is largely lacking in the community. However, some of the students learned about the service through word of mouth rather than a formal channel.

All of the students noted that searching company websites is convenient and three of the students liked the convenience of using online resume submission forms. However, it was also acknowledged that this approach is impersonal and businesses do not get a chance to see the personality of applicant.

Job fairs are generally viewed as helpful to learn about job opportunities but the students identified several limitations. One limitation is that Human Resource personnel at job fairs focus on marketing the business and do not always have information on specific jobs and the related work activities and requirements – or even details on the work environment – to enable youth with disabilities to gauge if there are potential barriers in the work place. A further follow-up with the business is required to get this information which may involve setting up a profile at the company website and submitting a resume. A further limitation is that job fairs can be very crowded which makes it difficult to visit all of the information booths especially if you can only attend the fair for part of day. It was suggested that the fairs would be more convenient if offered over multiple days.

At least one of the students was hired by a firm after initially volunteering at the firm for a period of time. The period of volunteer work allowed the student and employer to gain perspective on what was required to make the position successful.

Although Internet job search engines are viewed as convenient, the students noted that this activity can be time consuming if the correct search words are not used. Another limitation reported by one student is that too many temporary staffing agencies are advertising on Monster.ca and Workopolis.

Only two of the students are using Facebook as a tool to assist their job search but only in a limited way (e.g. following job ads if/when they appear). As noted by one student, social media is not the right tool for job searching and can have a negative impact if

improperly used (e.g. placing inappropriate material on your Facebook page which employers can find/review).

When asked to identify the types of skills / attributes that employers are looking for, the students identified the following qualities:

- Confident and self motivated
- Willing to work independently and in a team environment
- Good work attitude
- Formal education – college diploma, university degree
- Reliability
- Good interpersonal skills – for working with coworkers and clients

The participants identified a number of improvements to help link youth with service providers and employers and increase employment rates among youth with disabilities:

- Help educate employers and their staff about the advantages of hiring people with disabilities
- Provide employers with more opportunities to meet with youth with disabilities (e.g. youth with disabilities job fair, breakfast meeting with Chamber of Commerce)
- Expand the number of coop program opportunities for youth with disabilities to enable employers to observe the capacity and potential of youth with disabilities in the workplace – enable employers to make a fairer assessment when considering hiring based on performance during the coop period
- Help educate employers about Ontario employment laws / human rights code (e.g. how much needs to be disclosed about a personal disability if it has no impact on job performance... how much information does the employer need to know, how much are they entitled to know)
- Improve the integration of information/services between high school and post secondary institutions – enable youth with disabilities to make the most of the information/services as they transition into the labour force
- Encourage employers to provide a more detailed description of the physical activities associated with the job opportunities and their expectations related to performance
- Support organizations that assist youth with disabilities in acquiring life skills - this is a key factor for people with disabilities in becoming more independent and prepared for the workplace experience

The next section of the report presents the findings from the key informant interviews with businesses/employers.

### **3.3 Business / Employer Key Informant Interviews**

#### **Employer Profile**

The following businesses participated in the study:

- Hybrid Turkeys Inc.
- Cambridge Memorial Hospital
- YMCA-YWCA of Guelph
- Challenger Motor Freight
- Frey Building Contractors
- Sun Life Financial
- Rosmar Welding

The seven businesses are engaged in a variety of activities in both the service (health care, recreation/fitness/childcare, financial, transportation) and goods producing sectors (agriculture, metal fabrication, construction).

All of the businesses have been operating for more than 20 years. Five of the seven businesses have more than one branch. The headquarters for the seven businesses are located in the Guelph, Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

At least two of the businesses employ more than 800 people while the balance employ between 40 and 350 people. Most of the businesses have a mix of full-time and part-time positions and at least one business also employs seasonal workers. All of the businesses employ youth under the age of 25 years.

Four of the seven businesses rely on shift work with some businesses relying on shift work more extensively than others. The proportion of the workforce engaged in shift work at the four businesses ranges from 5% to 80%.

Accessibility (e.g. public transit) is not generally viewed as a problem unless the business has facilities located outside urban centres. Some businesses have their administration office in the urban centre and their production/warehouse facilities in rural areas and this presents a challenge for some youth if they do not have access to alternative transportation (personal car, car pooling, taxi).

Five of the seven businesses reported that the size and structure of their workforce has not changed over the last two years. However, one business suggested that the structure of their workforce will change in the coming years as more workers approach retirement and want to remain in the workforce on a part-time basis thus reducing the number of full time positions. One business reported that they reduced their workforce over the last 2 years due to fiscal constraints while another business reported that their workforce grew as a result of positive market conditions and business success.

Most of the businesses feature a variety of occupations that have education / training qualifications at the high school, college or university level. Only two of the businesses have general labourer positions where a high school diploma is not required.

### **Advantages and Disadvantages Associated with Hiring Youth**

When asked to identify the key advantages associated with hiring youth the seven businesses identified the following factors:

- Youth have new ideas and recent academic knowledge – greatest advantage
- Youth have enthusiasm
- Youth are eager to learn and take direction well – they also have fewer bad work habits
- Youth are more open to part time positions – especially students
- Youth are more flexible – greater availability / will work short shifts
- Youth have higher energy level than older workers
- Youth tend to have a high comfort level working with computers/electronic media devices
- Cost savings – able to pay minimum wage

When asked to identify the key disadvantages associated with hiring youth the seven businesses identified the following factors:

- Youth lack work experience – greatest disadvantage
- Youth have limited level of commitment to the organization
- Youth lack direction and career focus
- High turnover associated with youth and loss of investment in training
- Youth are sometimes unable / unwilling to commit to demanding hours
- Youth unable / unwilling to take responsibility
- Youth expect a higher wage than employer willing/able to provide
- Difficult to understand what the expectations/motivations of youth are

### **Recruitment and Hiring Practices**

All seven businesses have their own Human Resources department to manage employee recruitment and hiring or they assign internal staff to oversee these activities as needed.

In general, the businesses are interested in hiring locally as much as possible. Businesses view local hiring practices as an important way of supporting the local community. It was also noted that local hires tend to be more reliable in terms of making it into work during poor weather conditions. It was acknowledged that for specialized positions businesses sometimes have to hire from outside the area to get the qualifications/experience they need.

The businesses use a variety of techniques to promote job positions. Several of the businesses post job positions on their own website – in some cases they use internal postings when they want to recruit/promote someone from within their organization.

At least two of the businesses have used temporary staffing agencies to hire general labourers or when they need to hire workers on short notice.

Some of the businesses are using newspapers and Internet job search engines (e.g. Workopolis, Job Bank – Service Canada) to promote administrative and managerial job positions. One business noted that newspapers have become increasingly ineffective as a way to promote job positions as job searchers are increasingly relying on electronic communications and the convenience they offer. It was also reported that job advertisements in print newspapers are also more costly relative to electronic media options. The businesses using the Internet job search engines are generally satisfied with this approach.

At least two businesses recruit for specialized positions through industry type job boards and industry/research publications.

One business is using a business-oriented social networking website (LinkedIn) to promote job opportunities.

Most of the businesses reported that they take some measures to inform youth about job opportunities. This is typically in the form of participating in school coop programs and/or the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program. Recruiting for coop positions through high schools and colleges is viewed as very effective as is posting job opportunities on job boards at college and university campuses.

Six of the businesses have participated in a school coop / work experience program either through a high school or college program. The businesses generally reported good experiences with coop placements but also the occasional bad experience.

At least two of the businesses have participated in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). In general, it was noted that the students coming through this program are more dedicated and professional.

Four of the businesses have participated in a government wage assistance / subsidy program. Concerns were raised about the amount of paperwork that has to be completed which turned some businesses off the program.

At least one business reported that they attend career and local job fairs. One business acknowledged that they have not done a good job in trying to reach out and inform youth about job opportunities.

In general, the seven businesses are not taking any special measures to inform youth with disabilities about job opportunities. At least one of the businesses reported that they currently have employees with disabilities. One of the businesses noted that physical mobility and strength are key attributes that they need in their employees which limits opportunities for people with disabilities.

Several of the businesses reported that they offer incentives to try and retain youth in their workforce. These measures include offering opportunities for youth to further their education and training, offering regular salary increases, and job promotions.

At least four of the businesses are interested in having more youth in their workforce in the next few years depending on market conditions and the available skill sets of the job applicants.

The next section of the report presents the findings from the key informant interviews with training/education agencies and organizations.

### 3.4 Training/Education Agency Key Informant Interviews

#### Educator / Trainer Profile

The following nine Education/Training agencies participated in the study:

- ARC Industries, Guelph
- Cambridge Career Connections, Cambridge
- Centre for Career and Employment Services, Georgian College, Orangeville
- Continuous Intake Coop Program - College Heights Secondary School, Guelph
- Disability Services – Employment Advisor, Conestoga College, Guelph Waterloo
- Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region, Waterloo
- Lutherwood Employment and Housing Centre, Kitchener
- 2nd Chance Employment Counselling, Guelph
- Tri County Training, Ayr

All of the organizations provide employment related services and supports for youth. A number of the agencies recently transitioned from focusing on youth services to serving all age groups as a requirement of Employment Ontario.

Three of the organizations, ARC Industries, Disability Services - Conestoga College, and the Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region provide services exclusively to people with disabilities while the other organizations provide some select services for people with disabilities.

All of the agencies provide a combination of group and on-on-one employment counselling and training.

A brief description of the types of employment services and supports provided by these organizations is presented below.

#### **ARC Industries, Guelph**

ARC Industries (Adult Rehabilitative Centre) is a program of Community Living Guelph Wellington. The program provides employment training and support to people who have an intellectual disability. The minimum age for entry at ARC is 18 years. Support staff at ARC provide one-on-one learning and training. ARC Industry participants work on a variety tasks including:

- Food preparation and meal catering
- Assembling and packaging of industrial components
- Custodial services
- Shrink wrapping
- Collating, packing and mailing services
- Woodworking

Many local businesses utilize the services of ARC Industries on a long-term and occasional basis. The program also provides recreational and leisure activities as the work demand fluctuates and is not always available.

Community Living Guelph Wellington also operates the Supported Employment Program which provides training and support for people with an intellectual disability who are searching for paid employment in the community. This program is typically for higher functioning youth/adults. Some of the services under this program include assessment of employment skills, assistance with developing resume and interview skills and contacting potential employers and securing employment, and on-site job coaching.

Community Living Guelph Wellington also operates a computer and electronics recycling centre which serves as an employment training program for adults with an intellectual disability.

### **Cambridge Career Connections**

Cambridge Career Connections (CCC) is the youth employment wing of the Cambridge office of the John Howard Society of Waterloo Wellington. CCC initially worked exclusively with youth with a special focus on youth at risk but services were expanded in recent years to include people of all ages as a requirement of all Employment Ontario funded agencies. The majority of the clients at CCC continue to be in the 18-21 year range.

CCC offers a variety of youth oriented workshops on job searching and networking skills, resume development, interview skills and other training including safety in the workplace, getting along in the workplace, employer expectations, teamwork, balancing work and personal life, and managing money.

The Employment Resource Centre at CCC features job postings, computers with high speed Internet access, access to fax machine, photocopier and laser printers, information on careers and occupations, and the local job market, information on training opportunities, information on apprenticeship programs, information on post secondary education information, and community resource information

CCC offers one-one-one assistance through Employment and Training Coordinators who can help youth identify their skills, write resumes, explore career interests and options, locate job leads and enhance their job search skills.

CCC Job Matching and Placement involves additional support in helping youth find a job including further development of skills and knowledge and opportunities for on-the-job training.

The Summer Jobs Service helps students gain work experience through summer employment. Students must be planning to return to school in the fall to be eligible.

The ACCESS program assists youth with learning and behavioural challenges which interferes with their ability to get along with their employers and coworkers. ACCESS provides training opportunities plus on-site or off-site Job Coaching to help youth work out the problems.

CCC also offers a set of in-school workshops at the request of high schools. The workshops include resume development, job search strategies and labour market trends and mock interviews.

### **Centre for Career and Employment Services, Georgian College**

The Centre for Career and Employment Services (CCES) is located at the Orangeville Campus of Georgian College. CCES also has satellite offices in Shelburne and Grand Valley. The Centre is funded by Employment Ontario and serves all ages.

Employment Services Consultants are available at CCES to provide one-on-one counselling and assist youth with developing a plan of action to achieve individual career and employment goals. Consultants can assist with focusing the job search, resume development and interview preparation, and examining education and career options. Consultants can also help youth to access apprenticeship information.

The Summer Jobs Service is also offered through CCES to assist students in accessing summer jobs. Students must be planning to return to school in the fall to be eligible.

CCES also promotes a variety of workshops and seminars including an apprenticeship information session, a Canadian Forces information session, an RCMP information session, a career planning session, a newcomer information, a personality dimensions workshop, and writing and computer labs.

Other resources available at the Centre include:

- Resources for self directed job searches
- Access to local job postings on job boards
- Free phone, fax, printing, and photocopying
- Computerized self-assessment tools for career exploration and career decision making
- Information regarding local training opportunities
- Information on current government employment service programs
- Local industry and business directories
- College, university and apprenticeship information
- Access to local and surrounding area newspapers in one place
- One stop application centre to collect applications for over 30 local employers

### **Continuous Intake Coop Program - College Heights Secondary School, Guelph**

The Continuous Intake Coop Program is a specialized course for students who have struggled in regular school environment/programs. The program takes the Cooperative

Education curriculum off-campus with a one-on-one student support model to create an individualized Cooperative Education program for each student. The difference between Continuous Intake and a regular co-op program is that a student can join the Continuous Intake program anytime throughout the school year or semester.

The course components of the program are designed to help students prepare for the work placement and make connections between experiences in the workplace, in school learning and future career paths. The program also guides students to reflect on and analyze their experiences in the workplace. One-on-one counselling and intensive supervision and tutoring are key to program effectiveness.

Students must be at 16 yrs of age but not older than 21 and do not require a minimum of credits as a precondition (the regular CHSS coop program requires 16 credits as an entry requirement). Youth attend from rural and urban areas – City of Guelph, Fergus, Rockwood, Centre Wellington, etc. The youth in the program are often at risk (e.g. living in a disruptive home, in a single parent household, at a shelter, etc.) and often need to work for a source of income which interferes with their ability to complete high school. Many of the students have a learning disability. The Continuous Intake program provides flexibility to allow youth to attend when they can during the week.

Students have to complete course work and job work (110 hours) each semester. Students can be paid for their work and they can use pre-existing part time or full time jobs to earn up to 4 co-op credits per semester.

### **Disability Services – Employment Advisor, Conestoga College, Guelph Waterloo**

The Employment Advisor position for students with disabilities at Conestoga College was started as a pilot project in 1999 out of the recognition that people with disabilities can do well in the workforce but face overwhelming challenges entering and staying in the workforce. The Advisor is available to provide one-on-one counselling, make referrals to other resources, and to advocate on behalf of students. The Advisor works with other counsellors and helps students and instructors map out individualized goals for employment.<sup>8</sup> This can include identifying relevant academic programs/courses, preparatory programs, and programs for further education/skills development.

The assistance provided through the Employment Advisor covers a range of student needs including:

- Researching and identifying appropriate career opportunities
- Preparing applications, resumes, cover letters, portfolios and references
- Coaching interview and presentation skills
- Communicating with employers (e.g. making cold calls on behalf of students) and serving as a reference
- Promoting key employability strengths and identifying potential challenges
- Understanding how and when to disclose a disability and to whom

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<sup>8</sup> Students have a student counsellor who stays with the student throughout the length of their college experience.

- Understanding employment law - individual and employer rights/responsibilities
- Advocating and negotiating for needed goods and services and workplace accommodations
- Understanding Federal and Provincial hiring incentives and financial assistance
- Understanding employment equity and diversity hiring practices
- Reviewing contract terms and conditions, accepting an offer of employment
- Managing and surviving the transition from school to work

The Advisor also works with students and the Co-operative Education and Career Services department to try and match student skills with employer needs.

Students can learn about the employment services at Conestoga as part of preparatory course when they visit college prior to starting classes.<sup>9</sup> The Advisor uses this opportunity to introduce and invite students to use the services but it is up to the students to take advantage of the opportunity. In the event that a student withdraws from a program because of poor academic record or because the disability is overly challenging and impacting academic progress, the Advisor remains available to help the student transition to other supports (e.g. disability support, employer agencies).

### **Independent Living Centre of Waterloo Region, Waterloo**

The Independent Living Centre (ILC) provides supports and services to help people with disabilities gain greater independence and to increase the community's acceptance and integration of people with disabilities. The ILC offers a number of different programs to help youth with disabilities become more independent and it links youth to other organizations in the community that provide employment related services.

The Youth in Transition program brings teens and young adults together in a supportive environment to help them prepare for becoming an independent adult. As part of these sessions participants share interests and experiences including work related interests.

The Teen Program is targeted for youth 15-18 and helps youth develop skills and understand resources essential to make the transition into the adult world. Weekly sessions will include educational and recreational activities, guest speakers, and group discussions.

The Young Adult Program is for people 18 years of age and over and is designed to help youth with their personal growth, social development, goal setting, and planning for the future.

ILC has developed a Sensitivity Training Program to inform the community including employers about the various barriers that exist for people with disabilities. The workshops cover such topics as language, stereotypes, duty to accommodate and universal design and can be tailored to meet the needs of each group.

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<sup>9</sup> Post-Secondary Accommodations, Supports and Strategies (PASS) Transition Program.

### **Lutherwood Employment and Housing Centre, Kitchener**

Lutherwood was originally established as a youth focused agency but services were expanded in recent years to include all adults as a requirement of all Employment Ontario funded agencies. Lutherwood operates in Cambridge, Kitchener and Guelph and provides a variety of services and programs to assist youth to prepare for, secure and maintain employment.

The Head Start program supports youth between the ages of 15 and 30 with multiple barriers to employment as they prepare for work and develop a plan to enter the workforce. Head Start is a four week employment preparation program where participants earn an income while taking part in workshops and skill-development activities.

The Compass program supports youth 16-30 years of age in finding and maintaining employment in the construction and trade industries.

Lutherwood also offers workshops on how to access apprenticeship opportunities and the Summer Job Services help students find summer jobs and employers access wage subsidies.

The ACE program (Achieving Competitive Employment) is designed to help people with learning and behavioural challenges find and maintain employment. The ACE program focuses on both employment assistance and self-employment assistance, providing services that either help clients find jobs or create their own job. Employment assistance provides help with the creation of an individualized employment plan, job searches, the creation of customized job placements, and on-the-job coaching to help individuals maintain employment. Self-employment assistance provides help with business plan development and viability assessment, access to small business start-up funding, and individualized coaching services.

The ACCESS program is designed to help individuals with learning and behavioural challenges between the ages of 15 and 30, find and maintain employment. ACCESS provides a variety of workshops that prepare individuals for full- or part-time employment (e.g. Employer Expectations, Resume Development, Interview Skills, Budgeting, Job Search Basics) and provides assistance with job searches, placement with employers and on-the-job coaching.

Lutherwood is invited by schools as part of the grade 10 curriculum to provide workshops on different subjects such as resume writing, cover letter writing, resume writing for different jobs, interview skills, job preparation skills, etc.

Lutherwood also provides housing support and shelter accommodation to youth in need which serves as a gateway for youth to learn about their employment services.

Lutherwood is currently involved in a three year research project funded by the National Crime Prevention Centre and others to support youth who are vulnerable to gang involvement. Lutherwood is providing the social work and the youth employment consultation services as part of the research project.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Chance, Guelph**

2<sup>nd</sup> Chance was initially established to provide services to youth 16-24 year of age but services were expanded in recent years to include all adults as a requirement of all Employment Ontario funded agencies. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance continues to offer several youth focused programs and activities including the Ways2Work program, the ACE (Achieving Competitive Employment) program, the Summer Job Service, and the Youth Resource Centre.

The Ways2Work program assists youth who need extra support in becoming employable. The program targets youth 15-30 years of age who are not in school or returning to school, are out of work, and not receiving E.I. benefits. The program features 6 weeks of skills development training and a 4 week work placement and the participants are paid an allowance equivalent to minimum wage while attending program.

The ACE (Achieving Competitive Employment) program is open to all persons 16 years of age or older with a disability and in school (high school, college or university). The program provides job search assistance, direct contact with employers, and job coaching/one-on-one support to adapt to a new workplace.

The Summer Jobs Service helps create summer job opportunities for students aged 15-30. Students must be planning to return to school in the fall to be eligible.

Other services and supports available at 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance include:

- Access to photocopying, faxing, telephones and high-speed internet
- Job boards with full-time, part-time and casual postings
- Resources for self directed job searches
- Employment counsellors to meet one-to-one
- Assistance writing resumes and cover letters
- Access to training opportunities and apprenticeship scholarships
- Help with career exploration and goal-setting
- Workshops on resumes, interviews, job search, computers
- Extra support and employer contacts from our Job Developers
- Job shadows, short-term paid job trials, and longer placements if you are eligible
- Referrals to other community agencies / supports

2<sup>nd</sup> Chance also operates a Youth Resource Centre at a second location in Guelph (Stone Road Mall) which offers recreation and youth engagement activities where youth can interact and socialize in a safe and comfortable setting.

2<sup>nd</sup> Chance offers employment programs that reach across Wellington County. A second office operates out of Fergus and counsellors are available to travel to small communities. 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance also provides workshops in schools as part of the grade 10 curriculum.

### **Tri County Training, Ayr**

Tri County Training is a Private Career College and offers a wide variety of training courses including AZ Licence Course, DZ Licence Course, Heavy Equipment Operator Training, Forklift Training, and Skid Control Training. Tri County Training has been providing truck training services for 33 years. Truck training is the most popular program at Tri County Training and has the most job opportunities. At least 8 trucking companies are hiring graduates from Tri County Training at the moment and 90% of graduates are long distance drivers.

All applicants are pre-screened for driver's licence verification, Ontario medical requirements, driver's abstract, criminal record search and a work history. Once these criteria are met, students begin the intensive six-week training program with certified instructors.

The courses are not targeted at any specific age range but truck companies have a preference for more mature individuals given the nature of the work. Job opportunities in trucking look promising as the average age of a truck driver is 53-54 years and the attrition rate is expected to increase due to retirement.

Very few people with disabilities are attracted to truck driving as a profession as mobility is a key work requirement (e.g. entering and exiting the truck, conducting walk around inspections of the trailer, helping with loading/unloading, tying down the load, etc.). However, Tri County Training had one person with a disability go through the program and he successfully completed the program.

Truck training is usually offered in a group learning environment and one-on-one instruction is provided if a student is falling behind the class.

### **Top Challenges in Providing Employment Services/Supports to Youth**

Educators/trainers were asked to identify the top challenges they face in providing employment services and supports to youth. Some of the challenges identified are directly related to service provision while others reflect factors that are impacting the need for services and supports (e.g. school drop out rates, changes occurring in the labour market).

The most common challenge identified relates to funding and resource shortages which are impacting the capacity of service agencies to provide programs – resulting in reduced scope of programs, reduced program frequency, and waiting lists.

Funding shortages are also impacting the ability of service agencies to provide one-on-one support and counselling which is especially important when working with youth at risk and youth with disabilities.

Other service provision challenges include the following:

- Services and resources need to respond to a wide variety of education levels – one-on-one counselling is more appropriate for some youth, especially when youth do not want to use print/hard copy self-help resources
- Some youth need emotional counselling in addition to employment counselling – some agencies have more resources than other to respond but are still limited in ability
- Youth in rural areas and youth with disabilities have greater challenges accessing the service agencies due to limited transportation options
- Although some agencies have satellite offices in rural areas, the hours of service and the availability and scope of services and supports is sometimes more limited compared to the urban location
- Building and maintaining relations with employers is very important but can be time consuming and it draws resources away from other activities
- Continuing need to change the negative or indifferent attitude that many employers have about people with disabilities and educate employers about how to integrate people with disabilities in their workforce

Factors that are impacting the need for support services include the following:

- Youth are losing access to jobs that are being taken by older workers who have lost jobs in other sectors such as manufacturing
- In the current depressed economy, employers who normally recruit workers from organizations that work with people with intellectual disabilities are holding onto their staff and reducing the amount of work/jobs they make available to these organizations
- Continuing high drop out rate from high school
- Employers are looking for mature students coming out of college programs and they can afford to be very selective with the large number of laid off factory workers that are going through retraining
- Youth with criminal records are restricted from some employment options (e.g. cross border trucking)

### **Service Environment and Emotional Support**

Several of the educators/trainers commented on the extra effort they take to make youth feel more welcome when they drop in. This is especially important in those settings where the agency is serving all age groups.

Staff flexibility was identified as a key service requirement when working with youth. Whereas adults may be accustomed to waiting for service and having to make an appointment, youth are less patient and will not wait for service. Staff need to be

proactive with youth to ensure they assist them as soon as possible while the youth are motivated.

One agency reported that they changed the layout of their office by creating an open space in the centre which is now used as a common area for socializing. Making washrooms freely accessible to youth also helps to build a sense of trust.

Some agencies are reaching youth in the high school setting by providing information and training workshops as part of the school curriculum.

Most agencies rely on their referral network to guide youth to appropriate counselling services when youth need help to cope with the emotional stress of job loss and seeking employment. Some agencies noted that their staff are trained to assess the needs of youth and/or have many years experience in working with youth at risk to determine when youth are in need of external counselling services. Some employment counsellors / advisors at agencies provide basic support in the form of listening and allowing the youth to talk about their problems/stressors. At least one agency offers a training module to help clients deal with frustration and stress. Several agencies noted that this is an area where their capacity is limited.

### **Use of Social Media**

Facebook is currently being used by several of the agencies for a variety of applications including posting job opportunities, announcing upcoming events/programs, and facilitating direct access to job counsellors. Twitter is being used to a much lesser extent and is generally viewed as an inadequate tool for promoting services. Some agencies acknowledged that they are just beginning to explore the use of Facebook, blogs and other social media but recognize that this is increasingly becoming the preferred choice for some youth as a way to access information. One agency also noted that youth are much more inclined to use text messaging rather than phoning and service providers need to adapt to this.

### **Networking with Other Service Providers and Engaging Employers**

The training/education agencies have extensive networks with a variety of different community service agencies and advocacy groups and agency representatives often sit on multiple committees. This networking activity is crucial for understanding available resources, finding current information and making referrals. However, the activity is also time consuming and many agencies believe it is underappreciated and undervalued by the government.

All of the agencies engage with employers to some extent. Some of the more common activities include the following:

- Offering a free job posting service at the agency (e.g. self administered on-line job bank)
- Providing consultation in recruiting, training and hiring young people

- Providing assistance to access job fairs
- Providing resources and information for accommodating employees with disabilities
- Providing information on apprenticeships, education/training and certification programs
- Identifying training support subsidies
- Establishing and maintaining relationships with employers and collecting feedback on economic conditions and their needs and expectations
- Using job developers to provide job monitoring, job trials, and on the job training and supervision
- Facilitating the Employment Ontario Summer Jobs Service Program
- Offering office space for meetings and conducting job interviews
- Providing assistance to collect resumes
- Providing labour market support and job searching support for employees with pending layoff

The agencies identified a number of challenges associated with employers:

- Establishing and maintaining relationships with employers can be time consuming and can draw resources away from other programming priorities
- The recent recession impacted the availability of jobs at businesses that normally accept youth at risk and youth with disabilities
- Many employers lack adequate human resource skills
- Few employers are proactive in requesting resources and information for accommodating employees with disabilities – some exceptions as observed by the agencies in this study include financial institutions, large manufacturing firms and police boards

## **4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations**

The Youth Employment Study was initiated by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin with funding support from Service Canada.

The objectives of the study were to obtain a better understanding of how best to facilitate linking youth (15-29 years) with service providers and employers with the objective of increasing employment rates among youth. The study was also intended to provide direction on the new types of services and resources that are required and how existing services and resources can be enhanced to better meet the needs of youth including youth with disabilities in exploring and pursuing employment opportunities.

A variety of data collection methods were used in the study including an online youth survey, focus groups and interviews with youth, and key informant interviews with employers and education/training agencies.

### ***Findings***

Youth are using a wide variety of activities in combination when searching for work. Some of the more common job search activities include searching on the Internet from home, searching job boards and accessing information from employment service agencies, and participating in job search skills development workshops at employment agencies. Job fairs are also popular but more so for the 20 to 29 age group.

Accessing computers and one-on-one counselling at employment service agencies was viewed as crucially important by youth.

A significant number of youth continue to face challenges trying to find work. The results of the online survey revealed that 70% of youth have experienced difficulty trying to find work with over 30% reporting the experience as very or extremely difficult. Older youth (i.e. 20-29 years) are experiencing a higher degree of difficulty finding work which could be linked to higher employment expectations and challenges related to finding work that matches their formal education and training. The survey also revealed that more females are experiencing difficulty finding work and the degree of difficulty is greater compared to males. The survey also detected that youth born outside Canada are experiencing a higher degree of difficulty finding work compared to Canadian youth although the sample number for this group was low. Additional research would be helpful to validate these findings.

Youth are experiencing a variety of challenges trying to find work. The more common challenges include lack of work experience, lack of appropriate job search skills, lack of proper education, and lack of transportation. Lack of transportation appears to be bigger issue for youth in smaller communities and rural areas while lack of work experience appears to be a bigger issue for females. Youth are also limited by various personal and family commitments and many youth acknowledge that they do not understand the expectations of employers.

Youth are also experiencing a variety of challenges keeping a job. The more common challenges include lack of convenient hours, inadequate pay, lack of full time work, and lack of transportation. Youth in the 15 to 19 and 20 to 25 age groups appear to experience more challenges with access to transportation issues and jobs that lack convenient hours. The interest in part time jobs could be a reflection of the other interests/obligations of this group (e.g. school).

Older youth appear to have more challenges with the lack of full time jobs and the inadequate amount of pay. The concern over full time jobs and amount of pay could be linked to several factors including students dealing with school debt and expectations about job entry level positions.

The issue of not understanding the expectations of employers was also raised as a challenge for maintaining a job but more so with youth in the 20 to 25 age group. This issue appears to be related to another concern raised by youth about the lack of adequate training provided on the job which also appears to be related to concerns about the poor relations youth have with their supervisors and coworkers.

Lack of adequate pay and full time jobs as well as lack of access to transportation are bigger issues for youth in smaller communities and rural areas. Lack of full time jobs appears to be a much bigger issue for females.

A key area of interest to youth is having employers gain a better understanding of the benefits of hiring youth and understanding of their expectations and what their motivations are.

A key service challenge identified by employment service agencies relates to funding and resource shortages which are impacting the capacity of service agencies to provide programs – resulting in reduced scope of programs, reduced program frequency, and waiting lists.

Funding shortages are also impacting the ability of service agencies to provide one-on-one support and counselling which is especially important when working with youth at risk and youth with disabilities.

Service agencies also identified the ongoing need to educate employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and how to integrate people with disabilities in their workforce. A general lack of human resource skills among many employers was also identified as an issue by employment service agencies.

## ***Recommendations***

The following recommendations respond to the more common issues and challenges identified by the different stakeholder groups that participated in this study.

- Facilitate greater accessibility to programs by relaxing/removing some of the program entry requirements. For example, remove the Grade 12 diploma entry requirements for programs or at least remove the requirement for youth with disabilities.
- Facilitate greater accessibility to the service agency by exploring and supporting different transportation options for youth (e.g. providing bus tokens or gas vouchers, coordinating car pooling, etc.).
- Facilitate greater accessibility to services by partnering with other existing service agencies in small communities and offer select employment service programming through their facility.
- Support one-on-one counselling activities in employment service agencies including counselling to help youth deal with life skills development and emotional issues.
- Help to educate employers and youth about each others needs and expectations.
- Work with employers to educate them about the importance of providing adequate job orientation and training for youth as a way of fostering good relations and ensuring that employer/employee workplace expectations are communicated and understood.
- Work with employers to encourage the use of more user-friendly job posting and recruitment practices (e.g. if collecting job applications through the Internet do not make it feel like a test and allow the applicant to expand on questions if they want to provide context, be sure to conduct follow-up calls or return calls if you make the offer).
- Work with employers to educate them about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities and how to integrate people with disabilities in their workforce. Also provide employers with support in developing/enhancing their human resource skills in relation to interacting with youth.
- Encourage job fair coordinators to host the events in spacious settings to facilitate better access and mobility for the attendants. Encourage business representatives at job fairs to have detailed information available on the work duties and activities associated with the positions they are hiring for.

**Appendices – Research Instruments**

## **Appendix A**

### **Focus Group Guide for Youth**

#### **1. Introduction**

- Introduce the purpose of the youth employment research project and how the results will be used.
- Ask each participant to introduce themselves.
- Introduce the agenda for the focus group session.
- Address issue of confidentiality...
  - Remind the group that participation in the session is voluntary.
  - Advise the group that the information collected from the focus group will be summarized and that names and other information that could potentially reveal the identify of a participant will not be reported on.
  - Advise the participants that the discussion will be recorded by a note taker to ensure that we accurately capture the information.
- Emphasize that all views and opinions are welcome and that there are no wrong answers – we are looking for frank and honest opinions.
- Respond to questions from participants.

#### **2. Discussion Topics**

- A. What types of job search services and supports are you using?
- B. Which services / supports are the easiest to use?
- C. How do you market yourself to employers?
- D. Based on your job search experience, what skills / attributes do employers want?
- E. What service/support improvements are needed to better assist youth with their job search?

#### **3. Wrap-up by Facilitators**

- Respond to any final questions from participants.
- Thank the participants for their time and input.

## Appendix B Internet Survey for Youth

1. The following list identifies a variety of different job search activities.

Please check the activities that you used when searching for a job

You can check more than one activity.

- Picked up information from a service agency such as information on job trends, tips on resume and cover letter writing, tips on preparing for an interview, etc.
- Used a computer at a service agency to search for information on the internet
- Used a computer from my home to search for information on the internet
- Used a phone at a service agency
- Used printing/copying services at a service agency
- Received assistance from an employment counsellor (one on one assistance)
- Participated in skills development workshops (for example, resume writing, preparing for an interview)
- Participated in a group support program with other youth
- Looked at job boards and job listings at service agencies and/or on the internet
- Volunteered to gain work experience
- Attended a job fair
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you ever participated in a school coop / work experience program?

These programs help give students hands-on learning experience in a job and help develop essential workplace skills and habits. They also allow students to gain school credits.

Yes

No

3. Have you ever participated in a government wage assistance / subsidy program?

These programs help employers cover a portion of the salary for an employee for a short period such as 12-16 weeks. Examples of programs include Career Focus, Skills Link and Summer Work Experience.

Yes

No

Not sure

4. Have you ever worked at a temporary staffing agency?

These agencies help job hunters find short term jobs and gain work experience.

Yes

No

5. When you think about all the different activities you use to look for a job, is there one type of activity that is particularly helpful?

Yes

No

If yes, do you want to share your feelings about this activity?

Please use the other side of this paper if you need more space.

6. In general, how difficult has it been for you to find work?

Not  
difficult

Somewhat  
difficult

Very  
difficult

Extremely  
difficult

Not  
applicable

7. What are the top 3 problems you face in finding a job?

8. What are the top 3 problems you face in keeping a job?  
(If not applicable, go to the next question)

The last few questions will help us to better understand the group of youth who are participating in the discussion group.

9. Which of the following categories best describes your recent work experience?

- I am currently employed
- I am currently unemployed but I was employed at least once in the last 6 months
- I am currently unemployed but I was employed at least once in the last 12 months
- I am currently unemployed but I was employed at least once in the last 24 months
- I am currently unemployed and I have stopped looking for work
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What year were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How would you identify your gender?

- | Male                     | Female                   | Transgender              | Transsexual              | Other                    | Don't know               |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

12. Were you born in Canada?

- | Yes                      | No                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

13. Was one or both of your parents born in Canada?

- | Yes                      | No                       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

14. What is the highest level of school that you completed?

- Completed some high school
- Graduated from high school
- Completed some college or similar type courses
- Graduated from college or similar type program
- Completed some university courses
- Graduated from university
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Which one of the following areas do you live in?

- Waterloo Region including Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge
- Wellington County including Guelph
- Dufferin County including Orangeville
- Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

16. What is the postal code where you live? \_\_\_\_\_

17. What is the name of the city, town or community you live in? \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire for Employers

1. To begin with, could you briefly describe the type of products and/or services produced/offered by your business?
2. Could you describe the education/training qualifications associated with the various positions at your business? Do all or most of your positions have minimum formal education requirements and if so what levels (e.g. high school diploma, college diploma, university degree)?
3. Could you describe the top 3 advantages associated with hiring youth?
4. Could you describe the top 3 problems associated with hiring youth?
5. Is public transit easily accessible at your business location? How much of a factor do you think this is in terms of your capacity to hire youth?
6. How does your business manage the recruitment and hiring of employees? For example, do you have dedicated human resource personnel who look after this or do you hire others to assist you with this process?
7. To what extent is it a priority for your business to try and hire locally (e.g. hiring within the Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin area)?
8. Can you describe the processes/techniques that your firm uses to promote job opportunities and recruit employees and how the processes/techniques vary depending on the type of position (e.g. full-time, part-time, seasonal, office administration, general labourer, etc.)?
9. If you advertise or recruit through other organizations, please elaborate on the types of organizations and what approaches they use (e.g. Service Canada job boards/listings, Workopolis, temporary staffing agency, etc.).
  - In general how well do these organizations meet your needs/expectations (e.g. how well do candidates match your job position requirements)?
  - How well do you think these organizations reach and serve youth? What would you like to see changed in terms of the way these organizations reach and serve youth?
10. Overall, which techniques do you find to be the most effective/successful in helping you recruit for positions? Overall, which techniques do you find to be the least effective?
11. Does your business take any special measures to inform youth (e.g. 15-24 yrs) about the job opportunities at your business? Please elaborate.
12. Does your business take any special measures to inform youth with disabilities about the job opportunities at your business? Please elaborate.

13. Has your business ever participated in a school coop / work experience program? These programs are typically designed to give students hands-on learning experience in the workplace and help develop the essential workplace skills and habits. These programs allow the students to apply co-op credits towards their compulsory high school graduation requirements.

- If not, why?
- If so, what challenges/successes have you experienced with the coop program?

14. Has your business ever participated in the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP)? This program allows students to explore and work in apprenticeship occupations starting in Grade 11 or Grade 12. The program provides students with an opportunity to become registered apprentices and work towards becoming certified journeypersons in a skilled trade while completing their secondary school diplomas.

- If not, why?
- If so, what challenges/successes have you experienced with the coop program?

15. Has your business ever participated in a government wage assistance / subsidy program? These programs are typically designed to help employers cover a portion of the salary for an employee for a short duration (e.g. 16 weeks). Examples of programs include Career Focus, Skills Link and Summer Work Experience.

- If not, why?
- If so, what challenges/successes have you experienced with the program?

16. What types of factors and considerations limit or discourage you from hiring more youth?

17. To what extent are youth bringing the necessary work skills with them when they start on the job and to what extent do you have to train them on the job?

18. Does your business take any special measures to try and retain youth once they start with your business. Please elaborate.

19. Do you plan to increase your hiring of youth in the future? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_  
Please explain.

**Background information**

The following questions will help us to develop a general profile of the businesses that we're speaking with. Please feel free to skip any of these questions if you want to.

20. What year was your business established?

21. How many full time, part time and seasonal employees do you have (including yourself)?
- Could you estimate how many of these employees are under the age of 25?
  - Can you project your hiring trend for youth in the next 1-2 years?

	Total	Total under 25 yrs of age	Hiring trend in next 1-2 yrs		
			More	Less	Same
Full-time (30 hours or more per week)	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time (less than 30 hours per week)	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seasonal	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. Does your business rely on shift work? If so, how many of your employees participate in shift work?

23. Has the size and structure of your workforce changed in the last 2 years (e.g. number of full-time, part-time, seasonal employees)?
- If so please elaborate on what has changed and the factors contributing to the change.

24. Do you have more than one business location (branch)?
- If so, how many and where are your other branches located? (name of communities)
  - Where is the headquarters for your business located?

## Appendix D

### Questionnaire for Education/Training Agencies

1. Could you briefly describe the different types of employment services and supports your organization provides, how the services/supports are delivered, and who they are targeted at (e.g. youth, youth with disabilities, youth at risk)?
2. From your perspective please name the top three challenges you face in providing employment services/supports to youth.
3. Are there any special steps your organization takes to ensure that youth feel welcomed / less intimidated when they visit your office? (This is particularly relevant in cases where the agency is not serving youth exclusively.)
4. To what extent does your organization provide one-on-one employment counselling with youth?
  - What type of information / guidance is provided as part of this service?
  - To what extent is the service personalized? For example, does the same staff member stay with the client?
5. Does your organization take any special measures to assist youth with disabilities and youth at risk with their job search needs? Please elaborate.
6. To what extent have the type of employment services/supports being provided by your organization changed in recent years? What factors were behind the change? If government funding cuts are one of the factors, please elaborate on how funding criteria have changed and how this has impacted the services you provide.
7. Does your organization provide any supports to help youth deal with the stress and emotional toll of job loss and seeking employment? If so, please list the support strategies in order of importance.
8. To what extent does your organization network with other organizations that provide employment services and supports to ensure that the information you share with youth is accurate, comprehensive and accurate?
  - What employment organizations do you interact or partner with?
9. What steps does your organization take to ensure it understands the priorities of employers and the priorities of youth to better facilitate a match between the employer and job-seeker?
  - Does your organization interact or partner with business organizations and/or youth groups?
10. Are further changes needed in service delivery to help improve youth awareness of job opportunities and their job preparedness? Please elaborate.