

Getting Started in Saskatchewan - Familiar challenges return as the youth unemployment rate rises

The current economic recession has affected most Canadians in some way or another. Here in Saskatchewan we count ourselves lucky; until very recently our economy continued to boom despite negative growth in most economies in the world. However, Saskatchewan is not immune to the economic illness that surrounds us and symptoms are beginning to show.

Youth in Saskatchewan face a tougher job market in 2010 than they have in recent years. In fact, the youth population seems to be bearing the brunt of our economic slow-down as far as employment is concerned. From December 2008 to October 2009 the unemployment rate among men and women aged 15 to 24 has risen 2.8% in Saskatchewan.(1) In the general population the unemployment rate rose only 1.1% in the same time period in the province.(2) The youth unemployment rate of 10.6% in October 2009 represents 10,300 unemployed youth in the province, 2100 more than one month earlier in September.(3)

The youth unemployment rate in Saskatchewan is reflective of a greater trend across Canada. Nationally, the youth unemployment rate rose 3.4% from October 2008 to October 2009, compared to an increase of only 2.3% in the general population in the same time period.(4) The total youth unemployment rate of 15.6% in Canada in October 2009 represents 437,800 unemployed youth nationwide, up 77,800 from the year before.(5)

Unfortunately this trend is not new. In fact, it's been affecting youth since the recession began. From 2007 to 2008 the percentage point increase in the youth unemployment rate was four times the percentage point increase in the overall unemployment rate.(6) Vital Signs, a research report on economic conditions and

quality of life in Canada, published by Community Foundations of Canada reports that "among students looking for summer jobs, 19.2 % were unemployed this summer and for those who found work, the average number of work hours, at 23.4 hours per week, was the lowest in more than 30 years."(7)

The Globe and Mail also addressed student unemployment this summer reporting that Canadian students were facing the coldest job market in more than a decade.(8) They reported the unemployment rate for students between the ages of 17 and 19 hit 18% in June, the highest it's been since 1998. Meanwhile, students are faced with fewer opportunities for bursaries and scholarships as schools face their own budgetary concerns and investment losses in their endowment funds.(9)

Saskatchewan is still faring better than other provinces. Our youth unemployment rate is still nearly 5% lower than the Canadian rate and well below our neighbours to both the east and west. In Alberta, the youth unemployment rate is now 13.3% and in Manitoba it is 11.2%. However, considering the rising costs of food, housing, transportation and education Saskatchewan's youth now face challenges we thought had been left behind. We may be a "have" province but the opportunities for youth to stay and build a future in Saskatchewan are getting slimmer.

Endnotes

1 Statistics Canada. “Labour force characteristics (seasonally adjusted) –Saskatchewan” Labour Force Information – October 11to 17, 2009. Catalogue no. 71-001-x

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

4 Statistics Canada. “Labour force characteristics” Online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/subjects-sujets/labour-travail/lfs-epa/t091106a1-eng.htm>

5 Ibid

6 Vital Signs 2009. Available online: <http://www.vitalsignscanada.ca/index-e.html>

7 Ibid

8 Elizabeth Curry, “Summer of Student Discontent” Globe and Mail , July 13, 2009.

9 Ibid