



**For Immediate Release**

**Youth Work Experience Alleviates Pressure of Skills Shortages**

**TORONTO, ON, April 21, 2004** – The Canadian labour market is finding many challenges including shortages of skilled labour, a situation that threatens their productivity and global competitiveness. In an attempt to address the threat of the looming skill shortages, The Provincial Partnership Council (PPC) is leading a province-wide campaign, *Passport to Prosperity*, the goal of which is to encourage employers to provide youths with work experience.

The PPC in partnership with The Toronto Board of Trade, Human Resources Professionals of Ontario (HRPAO) and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce hosted an employer forum at The Toronto Board of Trade. Educators, employers and community leaders came together to discuss the issue of youth work experience and its impact on the future economic success of Ontario and how school-work programs can help business increase their competitive edge.

“As changing demographics place an increased strain on the supply of skilled resources, school-work programs can help build the talent pool,” points out Gerlinde Herrmann, President-Elect, HRPAO, “and it is a great way to pre-test potential employers.”

The Honourable David Peterson, former Premier of Ontario, spoke to the relevance of youth work experience in today’s education and business communities. “There are real economic reasons for doing this,” states Peterson. “We collectively and individually need to help each other in order to be competitive. We’re in this together.”

The Toronto Board of Trade recently issued the final report from their Skills Task Force and their primary recommendation was providing youths work experience. Phil Evans, Vice-Chair, The Toronto Board of Trade, pointed out the need for these programs and that it will be the businesses that suffer in terms of the lack of skilled employees to draw on if these programs do not succeed. Participants were reminded that students are the future of our economy. “Students simply cannot benefit from school-work programs if the employers don’t come forward. We need you. The students need you,” pleads Evans. “We need to address the needs of tomorrow’s workforce today.”

The PPC is an employer-based volunteer council of business leaders that lead the province-wide campaign, *Passport to Prosperity*. The objective of the campaign is to find more employers willing to offer school-work experience to high school students.

Additional information about *Passport to Prosperity* can be found at [www.olpg.on.ca](http://www.olpg.on.ca).

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The Provincial Partnership Council works closely with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and its partners are the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, and The Toronto Board of Trade, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Learning Partnership Group and The Learning Partnership.