

November 29, 2002

 Options 2003**PASSPORT**
to Prosperity

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YOUTH CAREER AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS LAUNCHED IN RENFREW COUNTY

PEMBROKE - Young people in Renfrew County who are in the midst of making career decisions are getting some help. Three innovative initiatives that support school-to-work transitions for youth have been launched by several community partners. The programs include Passport to Prosperity, Options 2003 and a new web site designed by Algonquin College's Job Connect program.

Passport to Prosperity is a provincially-funded promotional campaign that encourages employers to support school-to-work transitions. The program recruits employers who are willing to support employment preparation programs for Renfrew County high school students. It is being administered by Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley and the Lennox, Addington, Frontenac, Leeds and Grenville Training Board. Some of the activities could include speaking to career classes, participating in career and job fairs, mentoring, or providing co-operative education placements and opportunities through the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.

Options 2003 is planned for next spring and is a skilled trades fair intended to raise awareness of opportunities in various professional trades. The event will be staged at the Petawawa Civic Centre April 4th and 5th in conjunction with the Renfrew County Regional Science Fair and will feature interactive displays and a friendly competition among local high school students who will demonstrate skills they have obtained in trades classes. The winners will represent Renfrew County at a provincial skilled trades competition for high school students.

The third initiative is the new Job Connect web site which supports both high school students and youth who are out of school and looking for career and job opportunities. The site, www.algonquincollege.com/jobconnect has several features that can help youth in their search for career information or employment opportunities. These include a job posting board for positions available within Renfrew County as well as a notice board that keeps youth abreast of important events in the region, including job fairs and career information sessions.

There is also advice on everything from how to write a cover letter to preparing for a job interview. This includes on-line videos that demonstrate the do's and don't's of being interviewed. Youth can even e-mail their resume to the Job Connect Resource Centre and have it critiqued. This on-line employment

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preparation resource will help knock down the barriers facing many young people who do not have transportation to access in-person employment counselling.

Jamie Bramburger, Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley Manager of Community and Student Affairs says: "Algonquin College is very pleased to be part of these three dynamic initiatives. These projects have brought together many community partners who have developed a plan that supports young people in their pursuit of career and employment opportunities."

Derek Tolhurst is also involved with young people in his capacity as co-ordinator of Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Programs with the Renfrew County District School Board. He concurs with Bramburger, adding: "All of us recognize the importance of better preparing our young people to make the transition from high school to work, apprenticeship training, college or university. No matter what their pathway, we have an obligation to provide youth with practical learning experiences so they will be better prepared to be successful in a highly competitive workforce."

School to work transitions are critical in developing a strong workforce for the future of Renfrew County. Providing youth with career exploration opportunities and work placement experiences in high school has proven to be an effective teaching tool and a critical link towards ensuring strong economic development in the future.

"Today's youth are tomorrow's future", adds Bramburger, "and employers can play a crucial role in providing them with opportunities to explore careers and opportunities to enhance their workplace skills while still in school. We are confident employers will embrace these projects and support the benefits of giving our local youth a head start in preparing for life in the workforce."

For more information, please contact:

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