

# ***The Alberta Youth Employment Strategy***

***Progress Report  
June 2000/01***

**Alberta**  
HUMAN RESOURCES  
AND EMPLOYMENT

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LEARNING

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## ***Executive Summary***

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*The Alberta Youth Employment Strategy (AYES)* focuses on helping Alberta youth aged 15 to 24 years to be full participants in the Alberta economy and society. Launched in June 1999, the *AYES* is a partnership between Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Alberta Learning.

Four goals to help youth make successful transitions from school to further learning and work were identified in the *AYES*. These goals are:

- to create opportunities for all youth to develop the skills and knowledge needed for work
- to increase work opportunities for youth
- to help youth respond to the changing nature of work
- to help youth to address barriers that may prevent them from learning or working.

Actions have been undertaken on a number of programs for youth that support the four goals of the *AYES*. This report outlines the progress made towards achieving these goals from June 2000 to June 2001. The goals are measured against the following six expected outcomes.

### **Outcome #1: An increase in the percentage of youth who obtain skills and knowledge beyond high school.**

*Results:* Statistics confirm that progress was made toward achieving this key outcome. The number of Albertans aged 25 to 34 completing post-secondary studies has increased by 5 per cent since 1995/96. And, more youth are achieving this goal within a shorter timeframe: the percentage of students who completed high school within four years of entering grade 9 increased from 61 per cent in 1996/97 to 66 per cent in 1999/2000.

### **Outcome #2: An increase in levels of satisfaction among employers, parents, learners and the public, that education and training have prepared youth for work and further learning.**

*Results:* Satisfaction levels have remained constant. A 2000/01 survey indicated 94 per cent of high school students and 88 per cent of their parents are satisfied with the overall quality of education, reflecting similar levels over the past five years. Other measures indicate that 80 per cent of post-secondary graduates are satisfied with their education, while 95 per cent of apprentices are satisfied with their technical training, and 92 per cent are satisfied with their work experience. As for employers, a 1999/2000 survey indicated general satisfaction that the learning system is responding to their needs by supplying graduates with appropriate skills.

**Outcome #3: An increase in the work opportunities available to youth.**

*Results:* More youth are taking advantage of increased work experience opportunities available to them. Education and training programs increasingly include work experience to enhance learning and ease the transition from learning to work. The number of enrolments for work experience programs increased by 17 per cent between 1996/97 and 1999/2000, and the number of students enrolled in the Registered Apprenticeship Program increased by 344 per cent in the same period.

**Outcome #4: A decrease in the percentage of youth who are unemployed.**

*Results:* Alberta's youth unemployment rate is among the lowest in Canada. Alberta's annual average youth unemployment rate (June to May, unadjusted), decreased from 11.7 per cent in 1999/2000 to 9.7 per cent in 2000/01, the largest annual percentage point decrease in the past decade.

**Outcome #5: An increase in youth awareness and use of labour market learning opportunities and career planning information.**

*Results:* Progress is being made in providing youth with the services they need to help them make informed decisions about work and further learning. Youth Connections sites recorded 54,000 visits in 2000/01, a significant increase over the 28,000 visits in 1999/2000. The number of Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website [www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca) user sessions also increased by almost 140 per cent in the fiscal year 2000/01.

**Outcome #6: An increase in the skills, knowledge and labour market success of “at risk” youth (“at risk” of not completing high school or of being unemployed or underemployed).**

*Results:* More alternative programs to traditional schooling are being considered. The number of outreach programs has increased from 29 in 1998/99 to 39 in 1999/2000, with enrolment increasing by 46 per cent to 5,070 students. In 2000, in its first year of operation, 308 students enrolled in the Amiskwaciy Academy high school program that has a focus on Aboriginal culture.

Because there is such a wide range of circumstances that may put a youth “at risk”, individualized responses are needed to help youth overcome barriers and make effective career transitions. Governments, youth, learning providers, employers and community members must work together to ensure a holistic approach to addressing the learning and employment needs of “at risk” youth.

***What can we conclude?*** The *Alberta Youth Employment Strategy* is making progress towards achieving its goals. Support services and programs are in place across the education system, from kindergarten to post-secondary studies. Efforts will continue to support youth in their transition from school to work and to further learning, both through improvements in existing initiatives and creation of new actions where required.

## ***I. Introduction: A Framework for Action***

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Alberta youth are an integral part of the *Alberta Advantage*. The best advantage Albertans have is their drive and their opportunities to learn new skills, to test new ideas, and to apply new knowledge. Young Albertans must embrace, and be prepared for, a future of continuous learning.

The *Alberta Youth Employment Strategy (AYES)* represents the response of the Government of Alberta to prepare youth for the future. The Strategy is intended to assist Alberta's youth to take advantage of the province's many economic and educational opportunities.

The *AYES* aims to focus the work of government, youth, learning providers, employers, and communities in realizing the following vision for youth employment in Alberta:

*Albertans share a vision in which our youth are able to contribute to and take full advantage of the social and economic opportunities of the 21st Century. Albertans want their youth to face the future confident that they can pursue their personal and career goals and build a high quality of life for themselves and their families. Alberta's ongoing prosperity and quality of life depend on the development of our young people and their ability to share their skills, knowledge, energy and enthusiasm. (Introduction, The Alberta Youth Employment Strategy, June 1999.)*

Alberta Learning (AL) and Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) are working together with partners across the province to achieve the four goals of the *Alberta Youth Employment Strategy*:

- to create opportunities for all youth to develop the skills and knowledge needed for work
- to increase work opportunities for youth
- to help youth respond to the changing nature of work
- to help youth to address barriers that may prevent them from learning or working.

Implementation of the *AYES* began with recognizing and building upon existing programs and support services that were aligned with its goals and expected outcomes. This progress report, covering the period June 2000 to June 2001, outlines progress toward achieving the six outcomes identified for the *AYES*.

## ***II. Outcomes: Progress and Potential***

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A key component of the *Alberta Youth Employment Strategy* is its commitment to measuring progress. How are Alberta's youth doing in the labour market? Are education and training leading to positive employment outcomes? Can improvements be observed since the *Strategy* was announced in June 1999?

To answer these questions and to measure progress in achieving the AYES goals, the following six outcomes were stated:

1. An increase in the percentage of youth who obtain skills and knowledge beyond high school.
2. Increased levels of satisfaction among employers, parents, learners, and the public, that education and training have prepared youth for work and further learning.
3. An increase in work opportunities available to youth.
4. A decrease in the percentage of youth who are unemployed.
5. An increase in youth awareness and use of labour market learning opportunities and career planning information.
6. An increase in the skills, knowledge and labour market success of "at risk" youth ("at risk" of not completing high school or of being unemployed or underemployed).

Highlights from initiatives under the umbrella of *AYES* follow. They are identified in relation to the outcome they most directly support. The lead ministry for each initiative is identified as Alberta Learning [AL] or Alberta Human Resources and Employment [AHRE]. Statistics provided are the most recent available, drawn from both ministries, the Labour Force Survey, and other Statistics Canada sources.

### **OUTCOME #1: An increase in the percentage of youth who obtain skills and knowledge beyond high school.**

#### ***Measures of Progress***

*More Albertans are completing post-secondary programs.* The percentage of high school students who enroll in post-secondary programs immediately after high school is gradually increasing, from 28 per cent in 1996/97 to 30 per cent in 1998/99. Also, the percentage of Albertans aged 25 to 34 who have completed a post-secondary program has increased, from 51.2 per cent in 1995/96 to 56 per cent in 2000/01, slightly below the national average of 58.3 per cent.

*The high school graduation rate has gradually increased.* The percentage of Albertan high school students who completed high school within four years of entering grade 9 increased from 61 per cent in 1996/97 to 66 per cent in 1999/2000.

*Apprentices achieve high pass rates.* In 1999/2000, 92 per cent of apprentices passed their final industry exams. As well, 77 per cent of recipients of a journeyman certificate also acquired their (inter-provincial) Red Seal Certification in the same year, up from 70 per cent in 1996/97.

## ***Program Highlights***

- **Skills Canada Alberta [AL/AHRE].** Organized competitions promote careers in trades and technology. Approximately 750 Alberta youth, between 15 and 22 years of age, competed in over 30 trades and technology competition events at the 2001 Skills Canada Alberta provincial competition, up from 560 competitors in 2000. Skill areas included architectural computer aided design (CAD), plumbing, and worksite safety.
- **Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) [AL].** RAP allows full-time high school students to earn credits and be a registered apprentice at the same time. There was a 344 per cent increase in enrolment from 1996/97 to 1999/2000. A RAP Scholarship Fund began in fall 2000, with industry contributing close to \$300,000 in a fund raising effort led by the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board.
- **Alberta Heritage Scholarships [AL].** In 2000/01, a total of 13,898 students at the high school and post-secondary levels received Alberta Heritage Scholarships encouraging the pursuit of excellence, up 42 per cent from 1997/98. The scholarship fund has increased by almost 85 per cent since 1997/98 to \$23.2 million in 2000/01.

**OUTCOME #2: Increase levels of satisfaction among employers, parents, learners and the public, that education and training have prepared youth for work and further learning.**

### ***Measures of Progress***

*Most parents and students are satisfied with the overall quality of their education.* Educators continue to seek input from stakeholders to ensure graduates are well equipped for work and further learning. A 2000/01 survey indicated 94 per cent of high school students and 88 per cent of parents of high school students are satisfied with the overall quality of education, and 81 per cent of parents of high school students agree that students are learning what they need to know overall. The satisfaction levels have remained relatively steady over the last five years.

Other measures indicate 80 per cent of post-secondary graduates express satisfaction with the quality of their education, as do 95 per cent of apprentices with their technical training. With respect to further learning, 73 per cent of parents of Early Childhood Services (ECS) to Grade 12 students, 86 per cent of high school students, and 68 per cent of the public agree that learners have easy access to lifelong learning.

*Employers and apprentices involved in apprenticeship training and employment express strong satisfaction.* Apprenticeship training involves both technical training (20 per cent) and on-the-job training (80 per cent). The apprenticeship training system involves close cooperation between institutions and industry. Between 1997/98 and 1999/2000, the level of employer satisfaction with the skills of their journeymen increased from 95 per cent to 97 per cent. In a 2000/01 survey, apprenticeship graduates indicated that 95 per cent were satisfied with their technical training and 92 per cent were satisfied with their on-the-job training.

*Employers are satisfied with the number and quality of post-secondary graduates. A 1999/2000 survey indicates most employers are satisfied that the learning system is responding to their needs by supplying graduates with appropriate skills and knowledge: 84 per cent for degree program graduates, 89 per cent for diploma, and 83 per cent for certificate program graduates. The satisfaction level for the supply of degree graduates remained stable from a year earlier, while satisfaction regarding the supply of diploma graduates increased from 73 per cent in 1998/99.*

### ***Program Highlights***

- **Programs of Choice [AL].** Distance learning, home education, and on-line programs offered by a school and delivered electronically at a school site or off campus, offer increased alternatives for learners. In 2000/01, 3,693 students were enrolled in on-line programs, compared to 595 in 1996/97.

### **OUTCOME #3: An increase in the work opportunities available to youth.**

#### ***Measures of Progress***

*The number of employed Alberta youth has increased. In 2000, 274,000 youth were employed, compared with 240,100 in 1990, an increase of 33,900 (14 per cent). Last year, between 1999 and 2000, a 3 per cent increase in employed youth exceeded a 2 per cent increase for adults during the same time period.*

*Education and training programs increasingly include work experience. Work experience helps to enhance learning and ease the transition from learning to work. Recent years have seen a steady growth in the number of students enrolled in work experience programs and the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP). In 1999/2000, there were 12,608 students enrolled in work experience programs compared to 10,787 in 1996/97, a 17 per cent increase. During the same period, enrolment in the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) increased from 150 to 666 high school students participating (a 344 per cent increase).*

#### ***Program Highlights***

- **Tech Prep/Career Prep Initiatives [AL/AHRE].** This program is designed to help young people build a portfolio of skills and accomplishments that will help them in their transition to careers and further learning. The number of participants graduating with the Tech Prep Credential has almost tripled from 54 in 1999 to 151 in 2000. Recent achievements include the development of an employer worksite database in central Alberta. Over 700 employers listed on the database are willing to provide work experience opportunities, make presentations to classrooms, and sit on career portfolio presentation panels.



- **CAREERS...the Next Generation [AHRE/AL].** This private/public partnership works with communities, educators and employers to link workplace and classroom learning. CAREERS...the Next Generation is now active in 72 Alberta communities, including working closely with Aboriginal groups in Northern Alberta. In 1999/2000, 185 of the 408 students who had participated in summer internships with employers continued to register in RAP.
- **Career and Technology Studies (CTS) [AL].** To date, the Learning Technologies Branch has 64 print CTS courses available. More than 60 additional CTS courses are being developed, some of which are in electronic format.
- **The Summer Temporary Employment Program (STEP) [AHRE].** Every year, STEP assists non-profit employers in providing summer employment and/or work experience for approximately 5,000 Albertans who are mostly youth.
- **The Employer of Youth Awards Program [AHRE].** In partnership with the Conference Board of Canada and the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, national and provincial recognition is given to award-winning employers who do an exemplary job of hiring and training youth.
- **Green Certificate Program [AL].** This program is a partnership between Alberta Learning (AL) and Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD), in response to industry and producer recommendations for early training in agricultural studies. Students can earn up to 16 high school credits and a Green Certificate. Administered by AAFRD, AL and local schools, students learn on the job, under the direction of experienced farm personnel. High school enrolment in the program has increased 10 per cent in each of the last three years, with approximately 600 students in academic year 2000/01.

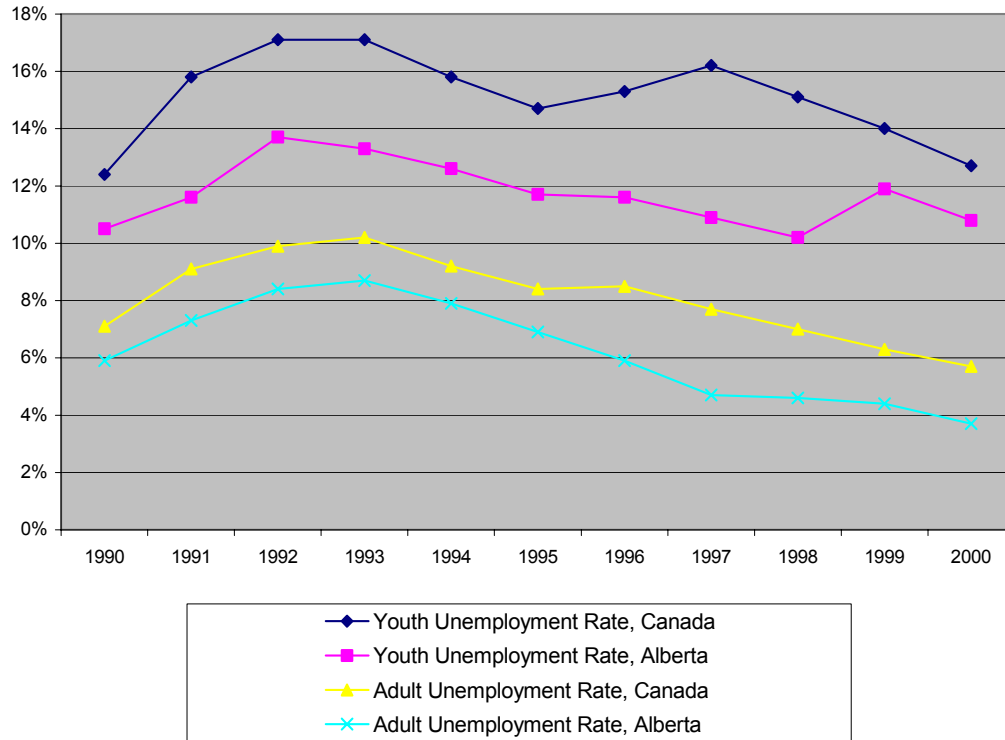
#### **OUTCOME #4: A decrease in the percentage of youth who are unemployed.**

##### ***Measures of Progress***

*Alberta's youth unemployment rate has decreased.* Recent statistics confirm that Alberta's annual average youth unemployment rate (June to May, unadjusted), decreased from 11.7 per cent in 1999/2000 to 9.7 per cent in 2000/01, the largest annual percentage point decrease in the past decade.

*Alberta's youth unemployment rate is one of the lowest in Canada.* In 1999 and 2000, Alberta's youth unemployment rate was the third lowest in Canada, just slightly behind Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Alberta's average annual youth unemployment rate of 11.7 per cent over the period from 1990 to 2000 also compares favourably to the national average annual rate of 15.1 per cent.

**Youth Unemployment Rate, Alberta - Canada, 1990-2000**



### ***Program Highlights***

Many of the programs highlighted under other *Strategy* initiatives also support this outcome. These initiatives include:

- Registered Apprenticeship Program (see Outcome 1)
- CAREERS...The Next Generation (see Outcome 3)
- Employer of Youth Awards (see Outcome 3)
- Summer Temporary Employment Program (see Outcome 3)
- Youth Connections (see Outcome 5)
- Skills Development Program (see Outcome 6)

## **OUTCOME #5: An increase in youth awareness and use of labour market learning opportunities and career planning information.**

### ***Measures of Progress***

*Ongoing success, expansion and increased diversity of programs offering career and labour market information to help youth make informed decisions about work and further learning.* Some examples of the progress made toward achieving this outcome are the expansion in the number of Youth Connections sites from 27 to 37, and the over 944,000 user sessions documented for the Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) website in fiscal year 2000/01 (an increase of almost 140 per cent over 1999/2000).

### ***Program Highlights***

- **Youth Connections [AHRE].** Youth Connections sites assist Alberta's youth making the transition from school to work or further learning. By providing career planning services and labour market information, youth are able to make more informed decisions about a career choice and set their career plans into action. Youth Connections sites expanded to 37 communities across Alberta in June 2001, up from 27 in September 2000. They recorded 54,000 visits in fiscal year 2000/01, a significant increase over the 28,000 visits in 1999/2000.
- **Curriculum development and teacher support [AL].** Review and revision of the ECS to Grade 12 curriculum ensures graduates are prepared for entry into the workplace or post-secondary studies. Embedding information and technology outcomes into the curriculum and the development of a common Aboriginal language and culture curriculum framework are two examples of work in this direction.
- **Labour Market Partnerships [AHRE].** Several partnerships between industry and government have been formed. For example, a partnership between AHRE, AL and the Alberta Construction Association has worked to raise awareness of career opportunities and skills shortages within the construction industry. The interactive CD-ROM, *Trade Up! Careers in Construction*, was created, and more than 4,250 copies were distributed to junior and senior high schools.
- **Alberta Learning Information Service (ALIS) Website [AHRE/AL].** The ALIS website [www.alis.gov.ab.ca](http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca), Alberta's leading online resource for career, learning and employment information, has expanded considerably since 1999, with an increase of almost 140 per cent in user sessions in the 2000/01 fiscal year.
- **Career and Workplace Resources [AHRE].** The ministry continues to respond to the information needs of youth by developing, publishing, and distributing relevant career and labour market information products. A number of AHRE publications have been authorized as support learning resources for use in Career Directions courses in grades 10 to 12. *Occupational Profiles* and *It's About Time* publications were up-dated. Also, the new *Career Gear* organizer was developed to help young people research and compile individual career and employment information.

- **Career Development Centres and Canada Alberta Service Centres [AHRE].** A February 2001 survey indicated increased activity by these centres in providing career-related workshops to students, youth, and parents, as well as professional development seminars for teachers.

**OUTCOME #6: Increase the skills, knowledge and labour market success of “at risk” youth (“at risk” of not completing high school or of being unemployed or underemployed).**

### ***Measures of Progress***

Many *AYES* initiatives address the needs of youth, including Aboriginal youth and youth with disabilities, who are at risk of not completing high school and being unemployed or underemployed. Although the statistics available concerning Aboriginal youth (1996) pre-date the *AYES*, they support the need for action, since only 32 per cent graduated from high school and 3 per cent graduated with a post-secondary degree.

### ***Program Highlights***

- **Career Craze Conference [AHRE/AL].** This conference, held in June 2001, hosted 120 youth from across Alberta, with 30 per cent of the participants coming from Aboriginal-serving organizations. Conference participants are receiving ongoing support to accomplish the action plan goals they developed at the conference. A survey of participants indicated that 83 per cent agreed the conference will help them overcome barriers to their career planning success and 90 per cent felt that the conference provided career planning information in a positive and relevant way.
- **Outreach Programs [AL].** The number of outreach programs providing basic education for students who are unable to attend or benefit from a traditional school setting, increased from 29 in 1998/99 to 39 in 1999/2000, with a 46 per cent increase in enrolment to 5,070 students in 1999/2000.
- **Focus on Aboriginal students [AL].** Amiskwaciy Academy, operated by the Edmonton Public School District, opened in fall 2000, with 308 students enrolled in its first year of operation. The Academy offers grade 10, 11 and 12 students an academic program while encouraging them to explore and embrace the richness of Aboriginal culture. Another example is St. Clare: Ben Calf Robe elementary/junior high school of Edmonton Catholic Schools, where 223 students are enrolled in the academic year 2001/02. Here students follow the Alberta Learning Programs of Study in an Aboriginal cultural and spiritual environment.
- **Skills Development Program [AHRE].** Almost 9,000 youth were funded through the Skills Development Program for basic foundation skills training in the fiscal year 2000/01. Of these, 74 per cent were successful in finding employment. An upcoming strategic review of the program will guide ongoing improvements.

### ***III. Conclusions: The Work Continues***

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This report highlights the common vision, effort and outcomes of the *Alberta Youth Employment Strategy*.

Has progress been made towards achieving expected outcomes? *Yes*. A portfolio of support services and programs has resulted, including ECS to Grade 12, apprenticeship and industry training, and other post-secondary studies. By building upon existing programs and identifying new actions, progress has been made toward achieving the six outcomes.

Is the work finished? *This is a work in progress*. The *AYES* partners will continue to review economic and learning trends, consult with stakeholders, identify improvements to existing initiatives, and identify possible new actions.

## ***IV. Appendix 1: Impacts on Youth Employment***

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### **1. The changing labour market**

*Labour markets are changing.* The world of work is more complex than it used to be. Jobs are changing faster, people are switching jobs more often, and new occupations are emerging more quickly. More non-standard work is available (contract, self-employment, part-time); jobs require more education and training; and ongoing education and training is increasingly necessary in the world of work. Added to this is the imminent retirement of the "baby boomers" and projected labour shortages in Alberta.

### **2. The Alberta economy is positive for job seekers**

*A rapidly growing economy.* Alberta has had the fastest growing economy in Canada for the past five years, with the annual real rate of growth averaging 5.1 per cent. In 2000, the estimated growth rate was 6.1 per cent.

*Low Unemployment.* Alberta's unemployment rate has declined steadily since 1995 when it was 7.8 per cent. Throughout the 1990s, Alberta's unemployment rate was among the three lowest in Canada. In the past year, Alberta's 5 per cent unemployment rate was second only to Manitoba's.

*New jobs.* Approximately 219,000 new jobs were created in Alberta between 1995 and 2000. Job creation is expected to continue with employment estimates of between 40,000 and 45,000 new jobs in 2001. A favourable performance indicator for 2000/01 includes an increase of approximately 12 per cent in the help wanted index.

*A growing labour force.* Since 1990, Alberta's labour force has increased by 22 per cent, with particularly strong growth in 1997 to 1999. Alberta's 10-year growth in the size of the labour force is almost double the national average of 12 per cent. In 2000, Alberta's labour force increased by 1.4 per cent, just under the national increase of 1.8 per cent.

### **3. Alberta's youth labour force is expanding**

*Youth representation in the labour force in Alberta is gradually increasing.* By 2000, the youth portion increased to 18.3 per cent of Alberta's labour force, exceeding the national average of 16.4 per cent.

*Alberta's youth labour force has grown considerably more than Canada's since 1990.* Since 1990, Alberta's youth labour force has increased by 14 per cent, compared to a decrease of 4 per cent in Canada's youth labour force.

#### **4. Challenge areas**

*Aboriginal students face greater difficulties in education, with higher high school non-completion rates and lower post-secondary attendance.* Statistics indicate that, even with a robust economy, some work is still needed to ensure that all Albertans benefit. Although educational attainment of the Aboriginal population improved between 1986 and 1996, it remains well below that of the non-Aboriginal population. In 1996, the unemployment rate of Aboriginal youth (15 to 24 years of age) was almost double that of other youth. Unemployment rates for Aboriginal people are often double that of the population as a whole.

*Youth still make up a relatively large portion of the unemployed in Alberta.* Despite a strong economy, youth unemployment rates have not fallen as consistently or to the same degree as adult unemployment rates. Youth unemployment rates for both Alberta and Canada have been more than twice the adult rate since 1997. In 2000 in Alberta, the youth unemployment rate was almost three times the adult rate (10.7 per cent compared to 3.7 per cent), a high for the decade.

The portion of the unemployed in Alberta that are youth has risen steadily since 1993, increasing from 25 per cent in 1993 to 39 per cent in 2000. This means that although youth make up only 18 per cent of the labour force, they constitute 39 per cent of all unemployed Albertans, exceeding the national average of 30 per cent. The reasons for this are not clear.