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FIRST EVER YOUTH-LED SUMMIT EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE, ENRICHING CANADA'S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

TORONTO - COVID-19 has forever changed our lives, the way we live and how we work. The reality is we may never return to what normal was: crowded movie theatres, bustling shopping malls and packed summer camps are now a figment of the past, at least for the foreseeable future. With this drastic shift, the jobs many young people used as their first work experience are disappearing, leaving resumes lacking tangible experience and youth without the confidence to enter the workforce. Canada's young people are at serious risk of incurring lasting impact on their future career paths and earnings without access to these entry-level jobs, as seen in the 2008 recession ([IZA World of Labour](#)).

The current economic reality is even worse than in 2008-09, with employment 15.3 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels for young people in August, by far the largest gap among the main demographic groups ([StatsCan](#)). The employment numbers for non-student, visible minority youth paint an even starker picture with an unemployment rate of 28.2 per cent in August, compared to 16.3 per cent to non-minority, non-student youth ([StatsCan](#)). With the convergence of the social justice crisis on top of the health crisis and ensuing economic depression, there is a very real concern that today's young people, especially those already facing barriers to employment, will be affected by this crisis for years to come.

Young people need avenues of opportunity to soften the impacts of this economic crisis on their future success. That's why First Work is hosting the first ever youth-led Aspire Youth Summit this year at Futures - Canada's Premier Conference for Workforce Development & Youth. This year's virtual conference will feature an entire day involving real employers, skill development, mentorship opportunities, seminars, and training sessions. First Work is hosting this summit free of charge for young people between 15-29 to lessen the barriers to participation and provide some of the opportunity missed due to the pandemic. The summit is designed to empower youth and their resiliency to see them through this health, economic, social justice and climate crisis we are living through.

About First Work:

First Work is the membership-based association group for Ontario's youth employment service providers, convening the sector to collaborate on research and advocacy for the benefit of all youth.

About Futures:

Futures is the national workforce development conference for employment service providers and youth hosted by the team at First Work.

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