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BUILDING UNITY IN TRANSFORMATION: CANADA'S PREMIER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE GOES VIRTUAL

ONTARIO – The road to recovery will not be the same trail blazed to Canada's former economic success. This economic crisis on top the health crisis brought on by COVID has put those who face the most barriers to employment, even further away from the labour market. This means in order to have a full recovery to economic prosperity Canada must focus resources on helping those who need additional support to prevent the gap between the have's and the have-nots from increasing further.

We are also living through a change in the nature of work: the jobs of yesterday are no longer the economic drivers of tomorrow. The turn to work-from-home during this pandemic has also accelerated disruption brought on by tech advancements, and so our systems must change to meet that demand. Canada's Employment Service sector is poised to support all Canadians through this culminative crisis, provided the sector is effectively supported by progressive policy and funding.

Futures – the annual workforce development conference for employment service providers and youth – is aptly themed ***Building Unity in Transformation*** this year as industry experts convene to share their knowledge from the ground, fine-tune best practices, and improve service-delivery across the country, for the benefit of all youth. Though Futures moves virtual this year, the collaborative learnings we share during this conference are even more important as we pave the road to recovery for all Canadians.

This year's conference features two days of professional development programming for employment service providers to learn from the latest research, innovative program delivery, as well as training on anti-racist, anti-oppression and value-based leadership. With physical distancing keeping youth from many of the typical career exploration opportunities, First Work has designated a full day of youth-led, youth-focused programming to empower young people to see themselves through this health, economic, social justice and climate crisis.

As we look to COVID recovery in the next few years, there are many unknowns ahead of us. Together, this sector can push forward equitable recovery for all Canadians.



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.

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