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PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION CANADA™ PROVES HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT REDUCTION PROGRAM CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY REPLICATED

TORONTO – MARCH 10, 2009 – Today, Pathways to Education Canada, a program that has been consistently reducing high school dropout rates in Regent Park since 2001, released its first-year results for five new communities that adopted the program in September 2007: Lawrence Heights and Rexdale in Toronto, Kitchener, Ottawa and Verdun in Montreal. Through the Pathways program these communities have succeeded in reducing the number of academically “at risk” youth by up to 52 per cent.

“The success that these five communities have had in their first year of the program proves that the Pathways to Education model can be effectively replicated,” said Samuel Duboc, Chairman, Pathways Canada Board of Directors. “As a result of these impressive findings and the interest they are generating, we are now preparing ourselves to expand to new communities across the country.”

Pathways to Education was founded to help reduce the dropout rate among disadvantaged youth in Regent Park. The dropout rate among Canadian youth has long been a major economic and social concern. High school dropouts earn lower wages, pay less tax, commit more crime and have higher social service costs than students who graduate or those who have achieved post-secondary education. The Pathways to Education Program offers a comprehensive, community-based and results-focused approach that sets it apart from other programs. In late 2007, the successful program was replicated in five new communities.

“I congratulate all our Pathways to Education students for their hard work,” said Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario. “By graduating from high school and moving on to post-secondary education, they’ll find greater opportunity to help build Ontario’s economy.”

The results announced today relate to the proportion of students at-risk of dropping out, the number of students with high rates of absenteeism and the number of students enrolled in the Pathways programs in Lawrence Heights, Rexdale, Kitchener, Ottawa and Verdun. The results are as follows:

	Reduction in percentage of academically at risk Grade 9 students ¹	Reduction in percentage of Grade 9 students with high rates of absenteeism (>15%) ²	Enrollment as a Per cent of Total Eligible Students ³
Toronto (Lawrence Heights)	- 52%	- 43%	91%
Toronto (Rexdale)	- 41%	- 36%	81%
Kitchener	- 23%	- 23%	87%
Ottawa	- 30%	- 58%	79%
Montreal (Verdun)	n/a ⁴	n/a	65%

¹ Grade 9 students are considered to be academically ‘at risk’ when the number of credits earned is 6 or fewer. Credits compared to the pre-Pathways rate in the same communities is a key success metric.

² A high rate of absenteeism is a major risk factor for a student becoming a dropout. Research indicates that students who are absent 15% or more of the time are at especially high risk of dropping out. Therefore, the reduction in high rates of absenteeism compared to pre-Pathways data is a key metric of success.

³ Eligible students are those who reside in the geographical catchment area established by Pathways at each site.

⁴ Equivalent data is not yet available from Quebec for comparison purposes

"Pathways to Education was a perfect partnership fit for United Way's strategic goal of working to change community conditions in Toronto's priority neighbourhoods," said Frances Lankin, President and CEO of United Way Toronto. "Together, we have been able to achieve significant outcomes for disadvantaged youth by providing them with a community-based program focused on academic and social development."

When the program began eight years ago, the dropout rate in Regent Park was 56 per cent. It is now less than 10 per cent among those youth participating in the program. So far, 462 students in Regent Park have gone through the Pathways program and completed high school. Of these graduates, 367 (80 per cent) have gone on to post-secondary education and over 90 per cent are the first in their families to do so. These young people will now have the education they need to succeed in society and lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

For Pathways graduates who have enrolled in university, the attrition rate is 1.8 per cent – well below the national average of 16 per cent. For those who chose colleges, the attrition rate is 9.3 per cent, also below the national average of 25 per cent.

In 2007, the Boston Consulting Group evaluated the Pathways program and found that:

- The direct societal Return on Investment for a dollar invested in Pathways is \$25 in current dollars
- The cumulative incremental benefit to society of a Pathways student is \$400,000. That means that a cohort of 150 Pathways students creates a \$60 million net benefit to society
- Other significant results are that the community is provided with a more skilled and educated workforce, teenage pregnancies are lowered, and the demand on health care services is reduced

Pathways to Education works at the community level by delivering academic tutoring, group and career-oriented mentoring, and related counseling. The program also offers financial support, including transit tickets or meal vouchers, as well as scholarships for graduates who pursue post-secondary education.

About Pathways for Education – www.pathwaystoeducation.ca

Pathways to Education Canada is a community-based charitable organization that is reducing poverty and its effects by lowering the dropout rate and increasing access to post-secondary education among disadvantaged youth. Pathways was developed by the Regent Park Community Health Centre which launched the initial program in 2001 and now operates in six communities, with programs in Toronto (Regent Park, Lawrence Heights, and Rexdale), as well as Kitchener, Ottawa and Montreal.

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