

FUNDERS FOR YOUTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THE TRUTH ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES

Calgary, AB – Apr. 9, 2008 – The gleaming office towers in Calgary’s downtown core seemingly indicates a city with high educational attainment. Yet research reveals a different story.

- A staggering 25 per cent of Alberta students are not completing high school within five years of entering Grade 10.
- Only 70 per cent of Calgary students complete high school within three years of completing grade nine.
- Calgary has one of the lowest proportions of youth aged 20 to 24 in post secondary education.
- Alberta has one of the highest drop-out rates in Canada.
- High school completion rates among Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 is only 57 per cent.

“Education helps youth learn critical thinking and problem solving and prepares them for the real world,” explains Lorie Friesen, Strategy Lead for Children and Youth with United Way of Calgary and Area. “There is undeniable link between high school completion and successful transition into healthy, happy and productive adulthood. As a community, we need to talk, find solutions and take action to help our youth complete high school.”

A Calgary-based group of philanthropic organizations is taking action. *Funders for Youth** was founded in the spring of 2006, after community groups wanted help solving serious issues facing youth in Calgary. The impetus to the partnership was the recognition that no one organization or sector could solve issues facing youth alone. They agreed the first topic to tackle was improving High School Completion rates in Calgary. In order to engage a diverse, cross-section of stakeholders, they developed Kafé12 – a world café-style discussion is being held today, **9:00 am – 1:00 pm, at the Red & White Club, McMahon Stadium**. It’s a beginning to finding solutions and creating actionable ideas. Beyond the event, the conversation will continue online at **kafe12.org**, and the Funders for Youth will steward the next steps.

High school completion is not just a school-based issue, but a concern for the entire Calgary community. Poor high school completion rates impact other issues including homelessness, poverty, crime, violence, workforce strain and the economy.

“In a knowledge-based economy, literacy and numeric skills are vital for success,” says Barbara Burggraf, Executive Director of EducationMatters. “We have a social and economic duty to act immediately and decisively to ensure Calgary students stay on course and finish high school. The Funders want Kafé12 to be about starting an important conversation,” says Burggraf.

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**Funders For Youth* include: Anonymous Donors • Burns Memorial Fund • Calgary Stampede Foundation • Calgary and Area Child and Family Services Authority • City of Calgary FCSS • EducationMatters • Norlien Foundation • The Calgary Foundation • United Way of Calgary and Area.