

For immediate release

Pilot project seeks to help high school students overcome barriers and discover post-secondary future

October 31, 2007 – Acting on research that shows approximately 38 per cent of Canadian youth do not undertake post-secondary studies, the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation has implemented Future to Discover, an innovative pilot project to broaden access to post-secondary education, as outlined in an independent study released today by the Foundation and the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC).

The project, involving 5,400 high school students in New Brunswick and Manitoba, is actively testing interventions to address the fact that career indecision, lack of interest in higher education and financial concerns are most often cited as the barriers that prevent youth from proceeding to a post-secondary program after high school. The project's interventions address students' and parents' lack of information about the opportunities for post-secondary studies, financial aid options, and the economic and social advantages that a higher education may offer. In New Brunswick, a financial incentive is also offered to students whose family income falls below the provincial median.

"Providing students with the information and support they need to overcome the barriers to post-secondary education will be one key to the continued growth of Canada's knowledge-based economy," said Norman Riddell, the Foundation's executive director and chief executive officer. "The Foundation is pleased to see that its partnerships with the Governments of Manitoba and New Brunswick have allowed for the smooth delivery of Future to Discover and believes that the project will help students make good decisions about their career goals and the types of education required to achieve them. Moreover, it hopes that its research will help policy-makers determine whether or not they have the right tools in place to help students who are most in need of support to access post-secondary studies."

As shown in the *Future to Discover Early Implementation Report*, released today, the project's interventions match a student's skills and interests with various post-secondary and future career possibilities. Future reports will track participants' outcomes against those of a comparison group to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and whether or not they improve rates of high-school graduation and post-secondary enrolment.

"Policy-makers and taxpayers need to be confident that public funds are used to generate genuine social and economic benefits" said Reuben Ford, SRDC's Director of Research responsible for the project. "By setting up and rigorously evaluating these pilot projects, the Foundation and provinces have created a firm basis for future decision-making on what works to help disadvantaged students better access post-secondary education."

The *Future to Discover Early Implementation Report* is available on the Foundation's website at www.millenniumscholarships.ca/en/research/index.asp and on SRDC's website at www.srdc.org/.

The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation is a private, independent organization created by an act of Parliament in 1998. It encourages Canadian students to strive for excellence and pursue their post-secondary studies. Each year, the Foundation distributes some \$340 million in the form of bursaries and scholarships throughout Canada. Since its inception, it has awarded 800,000 bursaries, with a total value of \$2.3 billion, to Canadian post-secondary students. The Foundation hired SRDC — a Canadian non-profit organization that scientifically assesses social policies and programs to determine their effectiveness — to undertake the evaluation of Future to Discover.

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