



Youth In Charge Project: Leading Change Through Community Economic Development

Summary Report:

Labour market and community economic development opportunities in three British Columbia communities (Surrey, Burnaby, New Westminster)



The Canadian **CED** Network

Le Réseau canadien de **DÉC**

Strengthening Canada's Communities

Des communautés plus fortes au Canada

Summary

The following report is a summary of interviews and information gathered regarding the current labour market issues and Community Economic Development opportunities in the three Lower Mainland communities of Surrey, New Westminister and Burnaby. This report is based on information from the following sources:

- Key informant interviews with:
 - Employers
 - Youth
 - Employment Assistance Services -Youth Workers
- Existing research
- Mapping of current community resources
- Community Economic Development Agencies

This information was gathered as part of the “*Youth in Charge: Leading Change through CED*” project. This project, sponsored by Service Canada’s “Youth Awareness” program, engages youth in Community Economic Development (CED) to create economic and employment opportunities for young people in BC communities. The goal of *Youth in Charge* is to create community action plans with a variety of stakeholders which enable young people to create community economic opportunities in their local areas. The target population focuses specifically on young people with barriers to employment, and the information outlined in this report is based on the perceived needs of this target group.

Youth in Charge: Leading Change through CED is coordinated by the Canadian Community Economic Development Network, in collaboration with local partner organizations and youth leaders. The lead partner organization for the communities of Surrey, Burnaby and New Westminister, is Pacific Community Resource Society (PCRS).

Key Findings

- All three communities have similar issues of high unemployment for youth, with many young people having difficulty maintaining employment.
- New Westminster, Surrey, and Burnaby show a range in the level of social issues they experience, however youth residing in these communities have identified similar issues across all 3 communities. Participants identified that these social issues are clearly linked to many young people's ability to obtain and sustain employment.
- New Westminster has the highest levels of social issues and highest unemployment rate in the three communities.
- While there is a strong interest amongst youth in the values of Community Economic Development, a limited awareness of Community Economic Development models was identified. There is a perceived need to increase awareness and education about these opportunities
- Although overall youth unemployment rates are declining in the province of British Columbia, youth at risk are experiencing higher unemployment rates. The need for alternative strategies to address this target group's specific barriers to employment was identified.

Community Highlights

Community highlights from the three communities include economic opportunities and demographic information. This information provides general background on the community situation related to the labour market.

Communities:

- **SURREY**
- **BURNABY**
- **NEW WESTMINSTER**

SURREY

Surrey is made up of 6 communities, Whalley, Guildford, Newton, Fleetwood, Cloverdale and South Surrey. Based on statistics from the 2001 census Surrey is Canada's third largest metropolitan centre, trailing behind Montreal and Toronto. Surrey is a diverse community and attracts many immigrant families and individuals to the area.

Additionally, TRANSLINK, the public transportation system in Greater Vancouver, has continued to increase service to Surrey communities, through the sky train and increased bus services. This accessibility creates opportunity for workers to travel into to Surrey and out of Surrey for the daily commute to work.



Business Sector Growth in Surrey

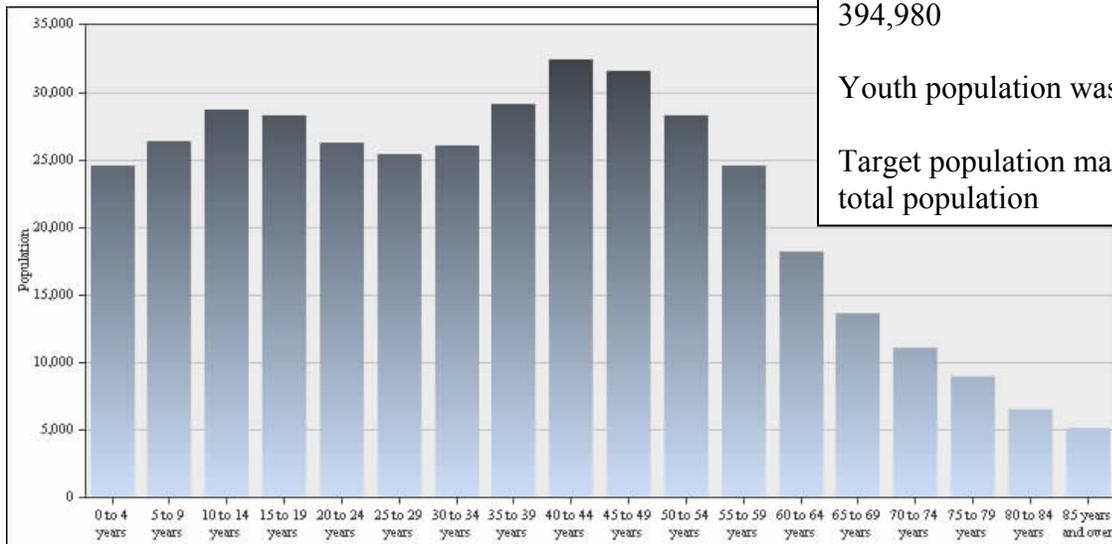
Sector	2006	2007	% of Total	Change %
Contractors or Building Services	2,729	3,095	18.90	13.41
Manufacturers	1,113	1,137	6.94	2.16
Transportation	803	860	5.25	7.10
Wholesale Merchants	971	1,032	6.30	6.28
Retail	2,121	1,969	12.03	-7.17
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	797	801	4.89	0.50
Services	7,153	7,480	45.68	4.57
TOTAL	15,687	16,374	100%	4.38

Source: Economic Development Office

As shown in the chart, all sectors of business except for retail (-7.17%) have continued to grow in Surrey in the past year. **The total average business growth in Surrey is 4.38%.**

The Surrey community has identified the 2010 Olympics as an economic growth opportunity.

Age characteristics for both sexes



Population in Surrey in 2006 was 394,980

Youth population was 79,890

Target population makes up 20.2% of total population

Statistics Canada. 2007. *Surrey, British Columbia* (table). *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007.

BURNABY

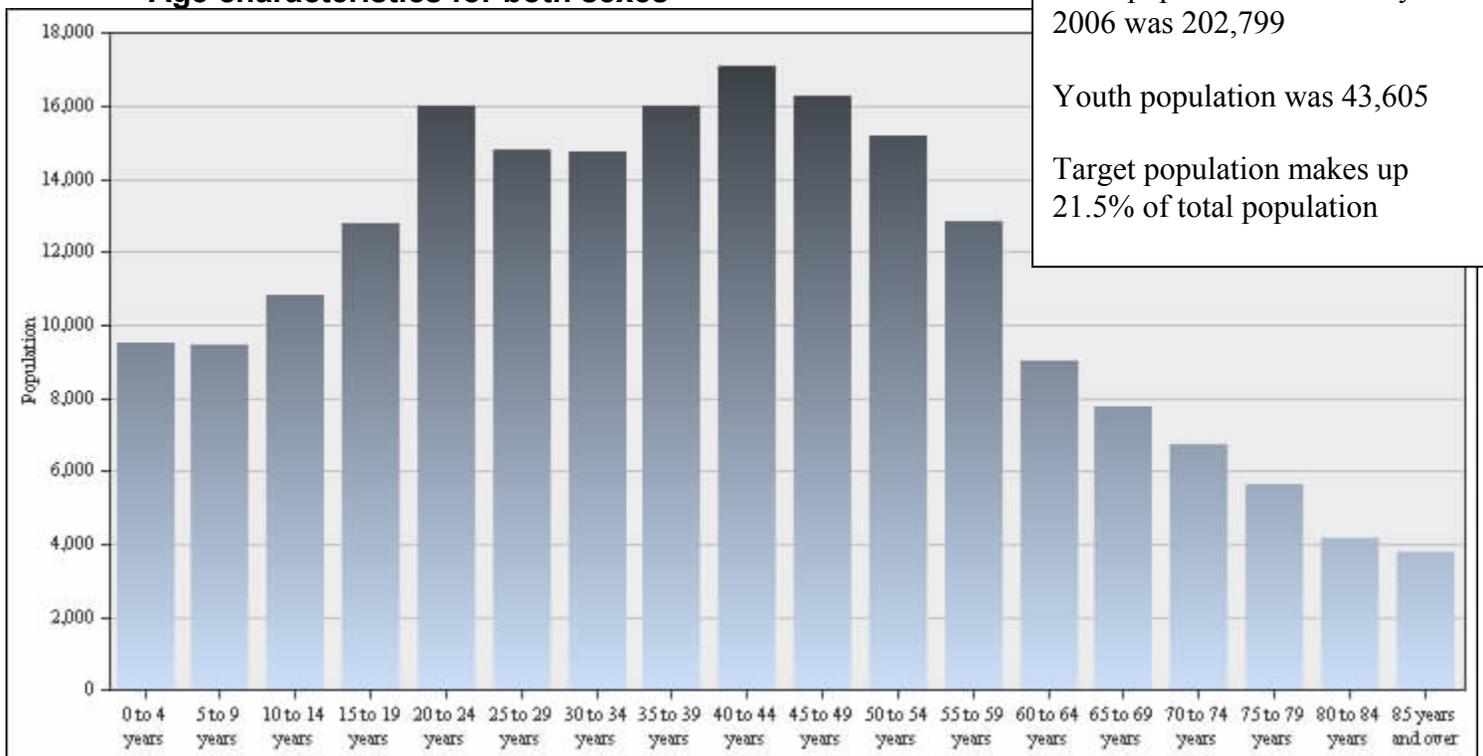
Burnaby's economic situation looks positive as they move closer to the Olympics in 2010. With close proximity to Vancouver, Burnaby is at a higher advantage to gain from trades and exports, and tourism than Surrey and New Westminster. Burnaby's economic situation was reported in the 2006 Economic Development Strategy for 2020.

Burnaby's economic opportunities, as listed in 2006, included:

- Economic diversity
- Strategic location on the Pacific Rim
- Good infrastructure for air, sea, rail and road transportation
- High quality natural environment and quality of amenities
- Strong financial institutions
- Highly skilled labour
- Tourism draws
- Stable system of laws and government
- Growing sectors including film/television, information technology, and communications



Burnaby, British Columbia Age characteristics for both sexes



Statistics Canada. 2007. *Burnaby, British Columbia* (table). *2006 Community Profiles*. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007.

NEW WESTMINSTER

New Westminster's location in the centre of the Greater Vancouver Regional District makes it a desirable place to live and work. New Westminster is accessible by 5 sky train stations, including major highways and rail.

Industries that are thriving in New Westminster include timber manufacturing, tourism, film and arts.

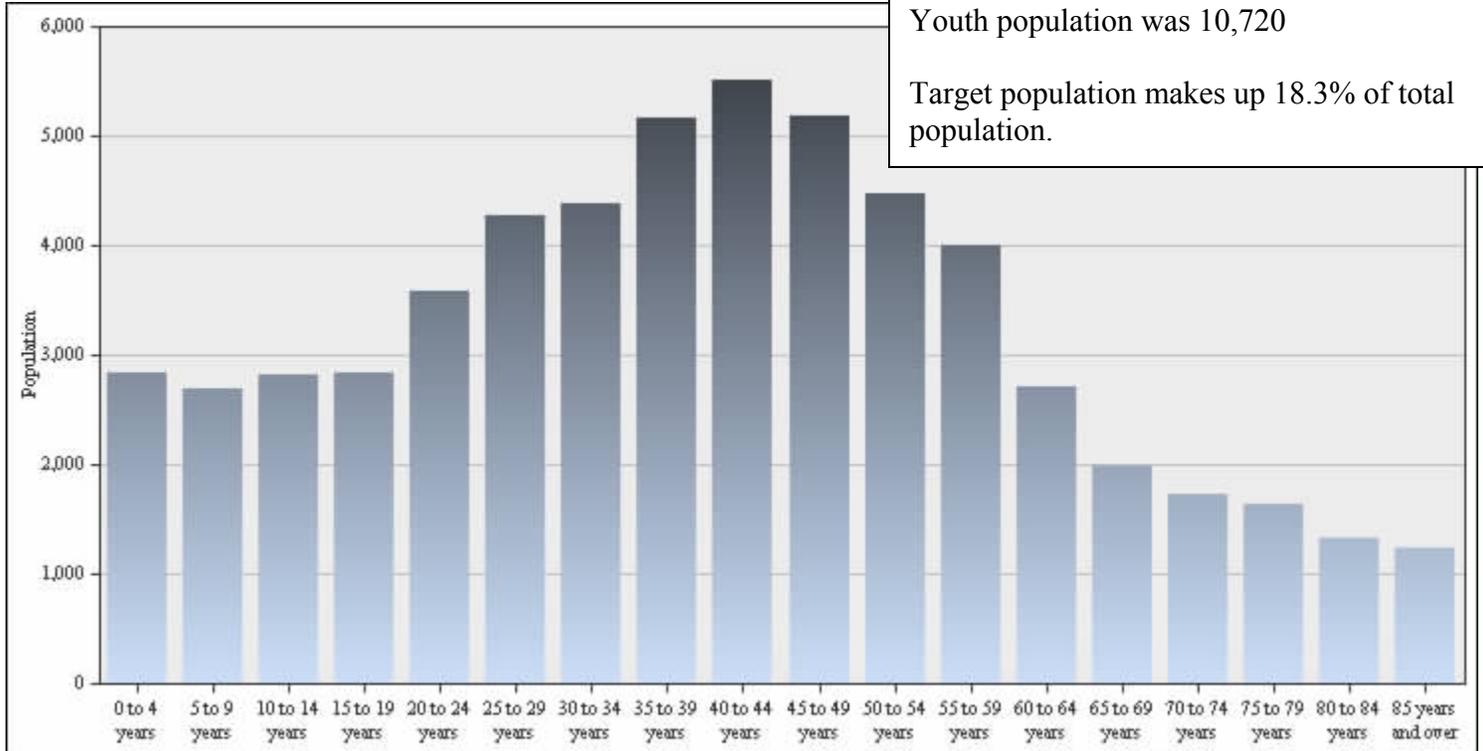
The leading occupations in New Westminster:

- sales and service
- business
- trades



Statistics Canada. 2007. *New Westminster, British Columbia. 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census.*

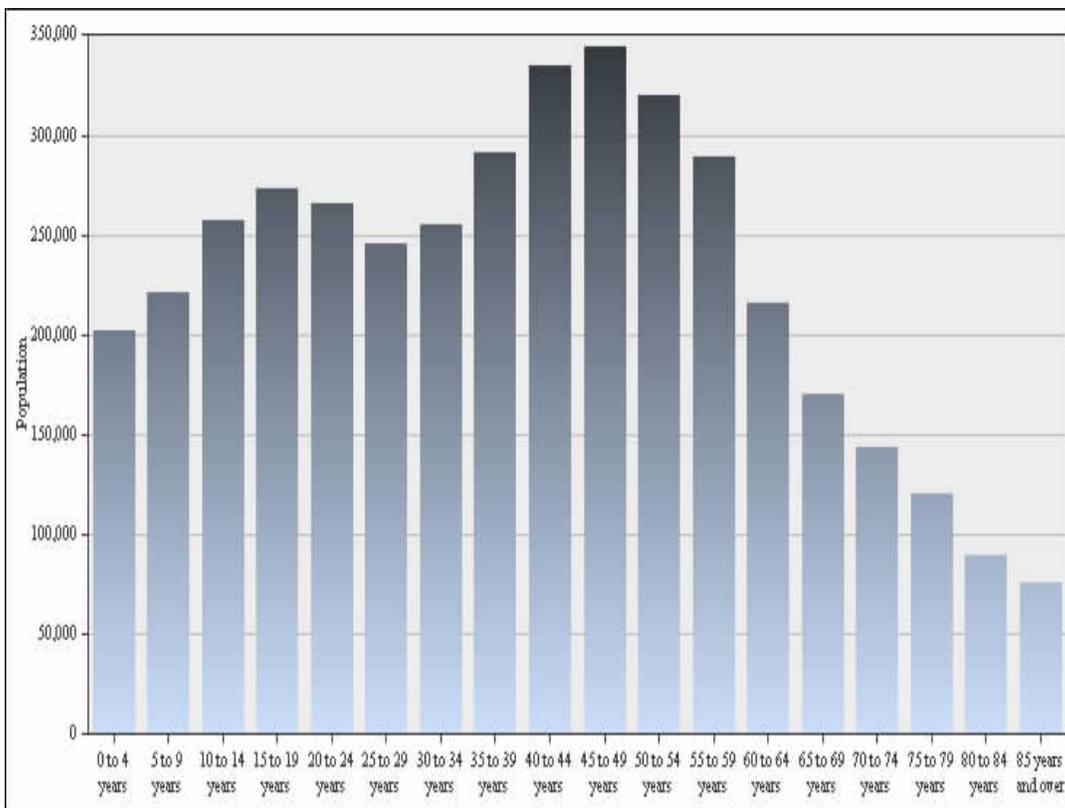
New Westminster, British Columbia Age characteristics for both sexes



Statistics Canada. 2007. *New Westminster, British Columbia (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007.

Current Labour Market Situation

According to Statistics Canada, close to 20% of people residing in British Columbia are over 60 years old and BC's birth rate is the fourth lowest in Canada. Youth make up 20% of BC's population (890,044 youth in 2007 aged 15-30 years), according to Statistics Canada. With the increasing age of workers, there are more and more people exiting the work force in order to retire. Based on this, there is a greater need to increase younger workers' capacity to fill the vacant positions of baby boomers retiring. This report shows that increasing numbers of young people are having difficulty securing work and lacking transferable skills. These statistics demonstrate that for BC's economy to be sustainable, youth need to be engaged in the labour market.

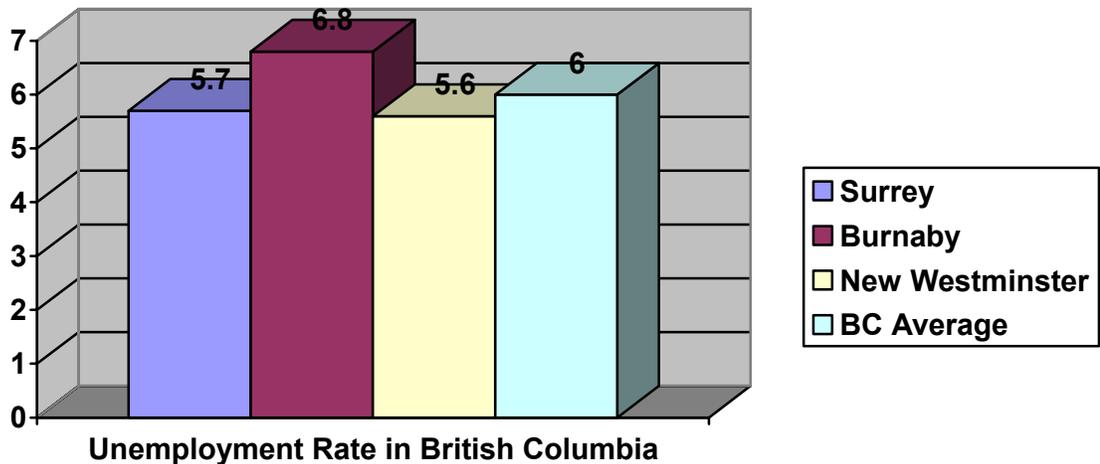


Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population.

The youth unemployment rate and the unemployment rate for those aged 25+ years both increased between October and November. Over that time, the youth unemployment rate increased from 8.2% to 9.3%, and the rate for those 25+ years slightly increased from 3.9% to 4.0%. Over the last year, the youth unemployment rate has increased 2.6 percentage points.

Ministry of Advanced Education, Labour Force Statistics: November 2006.

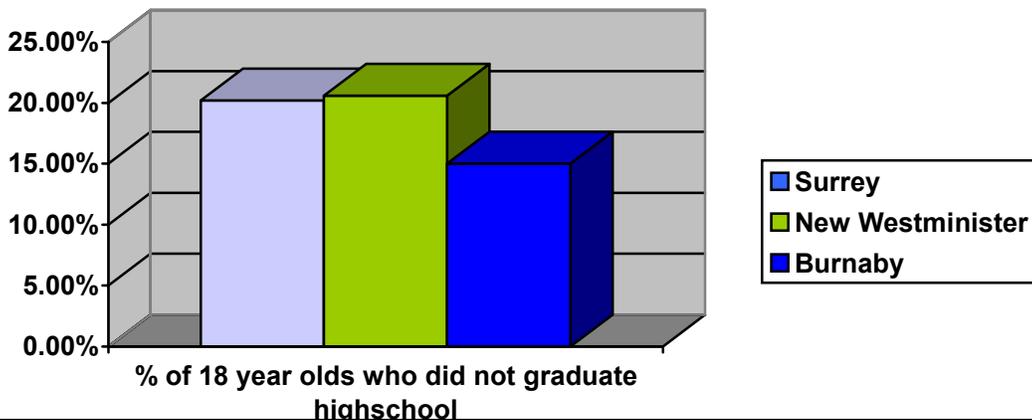
At the time of writing this report, the overall unemployment rate in BC was 6.1% (Statistics Canada), with a youth unemployment rate of 9.3% (Ministry of Advanced Education, Labour Force Statistics: November 2006).



While the overall unemployment situation in BC has improved significantly in recent years, several key informants identified a disconnect for many youth being able to access jobs, particularly amongst “at-risk” youth or young people who face multiple barriers to employment.

There is significant diversity amongst the youth population in the 3 target communities (Burnaby, Surrey and New Westminster), however, many common barriers were identified to this target population of young people being able to secure and maintain employment. These barriers include a range of social issues commonly experienced by “at-risk” youth such as:

- High levels of high school drop-out and incomplete secondary education
- Instability in home life and lack of family support
- Homelessness, including the risk of being homeless and inconsistent housing
- High levels of addictions and substance abuse (either currently or previously)
- Mental health issues
- Lack of transportation
- Pressures of single parenting
- Criminal Involvement/ Legal issues
- Lack of essential skills required for the job search process
- Transience



These, and other social issues, often create additional barriers which limit employment options, as well as young people's ability to sustain employment. For example, participants in the youth focus groups and key informant interviews identified the following attitudes and behaviours as additional employment barriers which result from larger social issues:

- Low self confidence
- Low level of transferable skills
- Lack of motivation
- Lack of punctuality/ reliability

Youth and Labour Market Issues

A number of specific labour market issues were identified that are commonly experienced by young people in the three target communities. While overall unemployment rates are shown to be improving, the quality of employment available to young people varies greatly. This was felt to be particularly true for youth at risk. Following are some of the key issues identified in the youth focus groups and interviews:

High school graduation is a requirement for over 90% of jobs available in BC. This limits many people to jobs that pay low wages and aren't engaging.

- Due to their limited experience, many young people are limited to low-paying, entry level jobs
- Many jobs available to young people are either temporary or short-term contracts, often with limited or no benefits, or opportunities for advancement
- Many young people lack the training, education or support which would enable them to access better-paying, longer term positions
- Though they may be able to initially secure employment, due to the multiple barriers often experienced by youth at risk, many young people experience difficulty in maintaining employment
- In order to access the labour market, many youth who experience multiple barriers to employment require additional pre-employment and employment support
- Many youth are unaware of employment services and other services available to them, or do not access services if they are not specifically geared for young people

The unemployment rate in the three target communities is not significantly higher than that of the provincial average. However, unemployment for various age groups up to age 29 often experience three times or higher of unemployment rates than even the general average.

These figures are somewhat affected by the fact that a significant number of youth are engaged in secondary or post-secondary education. If they do not begin to participate in the workforce, at least by the end of high school, however, lacking experience and confidence in securing employment becomes a significant barrier. There is also the additional factor of youth who have left secondary education incomplete to seek employment with very limited opportunity due age and a lack of experience.

Another concern identified was the lack of knowledge the general population and youth have regarding youth services/youth employment services. Many have limited awareness of what's out there to serve youth. It was also identified that the large immigrant population found in some of the communities may not feel connected or comfortable enough to access immigrant services. An integration of immigrant services and mainstream services may be desirable to youth, as many wish to integrate with larger society. Through surveys undertaken as part of the research in Burnaby, for example, immigrant youth identified that, in their opinion, existing immigrant employment services are inefficient and insufficient.

Community Economic Development helps youth overcome barriers

With these issues in mind, participants identified Community Economic Development (CED) as an important approach to creating labour market opportunities for youth. Many felt that CED aligns well with the values of young people, and acknowledged that CED can allow youth to build on their passion to work where they live and invest in their community. They also recognized that a holistic CED approach can often foster a sense of belonging and meaning in work that many youth are striving for. In particular, several of the youth workers who were interviewed identified a keen interest amongst young people in social services, and the opportunity to give back to their community or to others. They also recognized the Community Social Services sector and Voluntary/Non-profit sectors as important players within the labour market, though many young people are not familiar with employment opportunities in these sectors.

Participants felt that particularly for youth who face multiple barriers to employment there is a need to provide additional supports in order to promote successful integration into the labour market. They felt that a CED approach can allow for these types of supports to be built into employment experience, and can include important aspects such as life skills development, training, pre-employment support, and complimentary support services which address some of the social issues previously named.

One challenge, according to participants, is that the concept of Community Economic Development (CED) is fairly new to many young people. From the information gathered, the majority of youth, especially younger youth between the ages of 15-23, are not familiar with this term, though they are often familiar with similar concepts.

***“Young people don’t know about CED, but when they hear about it they get excited!”
–Case manager***

Through the focus groups, it was identified that youth seem to become excited about the concept when they understand it. Some of the aspects that appealed to participants about CED as a model to address labour market issues include:

- Community Economic Development brings together people from all walks of life
- CED solutions come from the “ground up” and are often more effective because they benefit from the resources existing in the community and build on community assets.
- Through bringing together many different people with different perspectives (such as youth from different backgrounds), multiple issues are addressed.
- The solutions that come from this process can have a bigger impact on their communities because people feel invested in these issues and find ways to make their communities better.

Proposed ideas to make the concept of CED more accessible to youth included:

- Workshops to have youth engaging other youth
- CED Organizations (such as CCEDNet) spearhead initiatives
- Attaching a CED service to an existing project that youth are already engaged in
- Promoting CED volunteering as a way to gain successful employment opportunities through schools or community agencies

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Through the *Youth In Charge* project, youth and stakeholders will be working together to identify specific strategies in each of the target communities which address youth labour market issues and community economic development opportunities. Though the specific strategies will likely vary depending on community realities, some preliminary opportunities were identified by participants in the focus groups and interviews. These include:

- Promoting business ownership and development amongst youth by providing readily available and accessible workshops
- Working with local employers to increase training and skills development opportunities for young people
- Increasing pre-employment and life skills development programs for youth who experience multiple barriers to employment. Some examples include community gardens programs or social enterprise development with specific target groups such as young mothers.
- Developing integrated employment services where youth serve youth and build strong relationships with local employers/businesses who are open to training and mentoring youth.
- Creating youth mentorship opportunities with youth mentoring other youth.
- Working with youth to develop youth led project that increase essential and life skills.
- Building on the capacity of local environment to create eco-tourism opportunities.

- Engaging youth in the planning processes of municipalities and community development organizations.

Conclusion

Through looking at the current labour market situation and community economic opportunities in Surrey, Burnaby and New Westminster, there are many similarities. Addressing the barriers many young people face to employment is difficult as they are often connected to many other social issues. The *Youth In Charge* project will bring together youth and other employers in these three communities to create action plans focused on addressing human resource requirements for the three communities by working with employers and other stakeholders. It is hoped that through this process youth will become more engaged in their communities and feel more pride in becoming part of creating positive community change, while at the same time addressing youth unemployment issues. Community Economic Development offers a unique opportunity for communities to adopt a model of economic development which can address these multiple issues.