

# Unemployment: The Cruellest Symptom

In Canada, employment is the primary source of personal income and determines, to a considerable extent, economic well-being. But employment is important for reasons extending well beyond straightforward economics. Throughout history, people have identified themselves with their employment; family names often reflected the role played by the individual in the economy. In addition, occupations constitute vital components of our individual sense of identity, self-esteem and pride. To be without employment can lead to a loss of social identity and self-worth.

Unemployment is thus both a cruel social symptom of regional disparities and their most profound economic cause. In Table A-6 we set out, in three separate steps, the relative disparities between provinces in terms of employment. Once again, these tables both reveal and conceal the relatively high levels of employment within certain areas of each province and the unacceptably high levels of unemployment in other areas.