

Canadian youth have much to learn about safe sex, says study

BY JOHN KENNEDY

BURNABY, BC (CUP) — A recently released global survey of sexual practices in 14 countries has found that Canadian youth don't know nearly as much about safe sex as they should.

The study, which surveyed 16 to 21-year-olds, reveals that Canadian and American youth have the lowest average age for losing their virginity, at 15-years-old.

As well, according to the study, 26 percent of Canadian youth did not use a condom for their first sexual experience, and of those who didn't use a contraceptive, 47 percent said they didn't because one wasn't available.

"With young Canadians becoming increasingly sexually active at an earlier age and not using contraception, despite knowing the risks involved, there is an increasing necessity for parents and schools to strengthen

sex education and promote safer sex," said Sonya Agnew, director of marketing for Durex condoms, the study's sponsor.

"We want to highlight the issues that face today's youth, such as the heightened risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, and to encourage young people to use protection such as condoms."

The survey also had some revealing facts on the damaging consequences of unsafe sex.

In Canada, 62 percent of the

youth surveyed knew someone who had had an abortion. Moreover, 76 percent knew someone who had had an unintended pregnancy, 34 percent knew someone with a sexually transmitted disease and 10 percent knew someone with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

This is the fourth annual Durex survey, and for the first time the views of both non-sexually and sexually active

individuals were taken into account.

On a global scale, the survey found that young people cite friends as their main source of information related to sex.

Some other finding of the study: young adults who had sex for their first time at 13 or under have sex an average of 153 times per year, while those who had sex for their first time at 16 have sex an average of 86 times per year.

Student loan profits crossing the border

BY KAREN WEISBECK

EDMONTON (CUP) — In an age of educational cutbacks, an American company may be pocketing some of the profits made off your government-sponsored student loan.

USA Group, an Indiana-based lending firm, has joined forces with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce to form EDULINX, a lending company that administers government-sponsored student loans.

The American company owns 49 percent of the new organization.

The focus of the company, which opened its doors May 1, 1999, is to make obtaining a loan easier for Canadian students.

Customers now have improved access to information through the Internet, an integrated voice-response telephone system, expanded hours of customer service and a greater consistency of problem resolution.

Wally Hill, director of Corporate Communications and Brand Management at EDULINX, says the new system was aided by USA Group's 40 years of experi-

ence in the student loan industry. "To advance our capability we must be part of a global economy," said Hill, responding to concerns about foreign ownership.

Hill also said that many of Canada's largest corporations have significant foreign investment, yet still contribute to the Canadian economy by providing jobs, development and community contribution.

"We are also confident that Canadian students, other stakeholders and the Canadian economy will be the net beneficiaries of EDULINX," added Hill.

But while Canadian students could benefit from the new company, there is little doubt the Americans will profit from the venture as well.

Through its other business partnerships, USA Group is currently servicing \$14 billion in student loans and runs one of the largest student loan secondary markets in the United States.

The company employs 2,900 people in 17 states and the District of Columbia.

Brant Hinkey, vice-president (internal) for Grant MacEwan Community College's

Students Association, says the problem with the easier student loan system is that more students will use EDULINX resulting in more money leaving the country.

Some students give weight to Hinkey's concern.

Jeff Momney, a GMCC student, says that for now he's more concerned about getting through two years of school than worrying about where his loans come from.

"In a couple of years when I'm paying interest and I know it's going to the U.S. it's going to bother me," said Momney. "But right now I've got bigger concerns."

Not every student, however, is indifferent to the source of their student loan.

Riley Gibney, a student at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, says Canadian's should be worried about capital leaving the country.

"I know it's hard to get student loans right now, but I think it's our responsibility as Canadians to make sure that the money is being invested back into Canada," said Gibney. "I want to make sure there are jobs waiting for me when I'm done school."

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