

Students enter uncertain labour market

Vancouver (CUP) - Mary Ann Roberts, a law student taking a year off from school, stares at the job listings with resignation.

Like many Canadian students, Roberts faces a bleak job market this summer with official unemployment for 18 to 25 year olds hovering at about 20 per cent. The official rates don't include discouraged job seekers or registered students who soon will exchange books for a job search.

Armed with good grades and fluency in French, Roberts says she can only find secretarial jobs, and even the competition for those is stiff.

"I find I'm qualified for

women's ghetto jobs," she says. "I hope something in dishwashing will come up."

Canada Employment personnel at the University of British Columbia say young people are "cautiously optimistic" about finding work but an unemployed rights activist denies there is much of that feeling around.

The job market for young people is anything but on the upswing, says activist Kim Zander.

"There's a real feeling of helplessness out there. Young people are quitting school because they don't have the money, and then they can't find a job.

"The optimism is false," Zander said.

Despite the scanty prospects, CEC staff insist they are optimistic.

"Last summer, students were nervous. Now the comment I hear is, 'Oh, there's more jobs than I expected,'" says Steve Archibald, a clerk at the Centre.

The level of frustration among students seeking jobs is on the decrease, he claimed. "There seems to be more optimism in the air."

Centre manager Micheal Kardynal echoed Archibald's sentiments, saying more jobs for young people are appearing because employers suspect the

economy is improving.

"There's still a fair amount of indecision, but business and industry feel it's just around the corner."

The Liberal government recently allocated an extra \$150 million to the \$1 billion Youth Opportunity Fund to help young people find jobs. Zander maintains the jobs created will not provide people with training needed for longer lasting work in business and industry.

The government claimed to put new emphasis on solving problems for youth in its December throne speech, when

the establishment of a new Ministry of Youth was announced.

Federation Chair Graham Dowdell welcomed the strategy, but said the government still lacks an overall strategy for putting young Canadians to work.

But the Feb. 15 budget had little to offer young people, and Dowdell says Youth Minister Celine Hervieux-Payette has not been accessible for discussions on youth unemployment.

Payette says her ministry plans to focus on "less privileged youth" and not post-secondary students.

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