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CEDEC Remarks on Youth Employment to the HUMA Parliamentary Committee

*On October 2, 2025, CEDEC
President & CEO John Buck*

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*PRESIDENT & CEO JOHN BUCK
addressed the House of Commons
Standing Committee on Human
Resources, Skills and Social
Development and the Status of
Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) on
the opportunity to strengthen youth
employment at a moment of major
economic and labour market change,
characterized by global migration,
aging populations, and rapid
technological change.*

Chair, Honourable Members of the
Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to contribute to
this critical study on youth employment. I
am John Buck, President and CEO of the
Community Economic Development and
Employability Corporation (CEDEC). Our
mandate is to strengthen the economic
vitality of the Official Language Minority
Community in Quebec (OLMCQ).

While my focus today is on the OLMCQ, I
think the challenges we face—and the
solutions we are advancing—**have clear
relevance for youth across Canada.**

THE LANDSCAPE

English-speaking youth in Québec
represent **256,835 individuals aged 15 to
29**. They make up **20.5% of the English-
speaking population**, compared with
16.3% for Francophones. English-
speaking youth are younger, more diverse
—**43% identify as visible minorities**
compared with **17% of Francophone
youth**.

**Statistics Point to Serious Youth
Employment Challenges**

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- **Employment rate:** 56.1% for English-speaking youth, nearly six points lower than Francophones.
- **Unemployment rate:** 14.4% compared to 9.0% for Francophones.
- **Educational attainment:** Nearly half (49.6%) have only a high school education or less. English-speaking youth consistently lag their Francophone peers in vocational and technical training.

These figures point to a concerning trend in school-to-work transitions. Many youth leave education without market-ready skills, take longer to secure meaningful work, or are underemployed in part-time or unstable jobs. The 2024 Deloitte *Failure to Launch* report, commissioned by the **King's Trust Canada**, reminds us of the wage, tax revenue, and long-term productivity losses this situation represents.

THE CHALLENGES

The challenges are significant

- **Skills mismatches** between what schools provide and what employers need.
- **Weaker job networks** for English-speaking youth to connect with the labour market.
- **Regional disparities**, where in places like Gaspésie or Nord-du-Québec, unemployment for English-speaking youth is far above the provincial average.

TAKING COLLABORATIVE ACTION

At CEDEC, we are taking coordinated action on three fronts.

1. Applied Research

CEDEC has launched a comparative international study of best practices in linking education and training to labour market demand. We are examining models in Canada, the U.S., the U.K., France, Germany, and Scandinavia.

We will release preliminary findings this November and share them with the Government of Canada—and I would be pleased to provide them to this Committee. The findings will inform the OLMCQ Workforce Development Strategy; however, lessons learned will extend beyond Quebec, as issues such as underemployment, skills mismatches, and challenging school-to-work transitions are common across provinces.

2. The OLMCQ Collaborative Economic Development ECOSystem

Secondly, we are developing the **Collaborative Economic Development ECOSystem**. This community-based mechanism brings together public, private, and civil society actors **dedicated to strengthening workforce development and labour market participation**. Key objectives include:

- Better connecting job seekers, training institutions, and employers.
- Enhancing collaboration and collective accountability to produce job placements, lower unemployment, and higher incomes.
- Improving labour market intelligence so youth, educators, and employers make better decisions

3. Practical Implementation – the EASCDI

Finally, CEDEC is about to roll out the **Employment Assistance Services Capacity Development Initiative (EASCDI)**.

The EASCDI links a coordinated continuum of Employment Assistance Service providers across the province. It embeds **timely labour market information, an AI-based Provincial Talent Placement Platform, and a robust performance measurement framework** that ties all of our work to producing tangible outcomes.

For youth, this means **better access to career pathways, stronger employer connections, and services that help them not only find a job but also build sustainable careers in Québec.**

CONCLUSION

In closing, I wish to underline three points:

1. Labour market outcomes for English-speaking youth lag significantly behind their Francophone peers.
2. Inaction means lost income, productivity, and weaker social cohesion.
3. CEDEC is applying innovative, evidence-based solutions through research, ecosystem development, and the deployment of the EASCDI.

By linking workforce development directly to labour market participation, we can ensure that English-speaking youth get good jobs, build future-oriented careers

good jobs, build future-oriented careers,
and fully contribute to our shared
economy.

Thank you.



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