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High-School Dropouts – A Black Mark on Canada's Secondary School System: C.D. Howe Institute

Toronto, October 22 – Canadian high-school dropout rates are, in many cases, too high, and are costly to society. The problem is particularly acute among Aboriginals and francophone Quebecers, according to a C.D. Howe Institute study released today. In *Dropouts: The Achilles' Heel of Canada's High-School System*, author John Richards examines the problem's scope on a province-by-province basis and makes policy recommendations to address it.

The high dropout rate among francophone Quebec students, particularly boys, has recently received considerable attention in that province, notes Richards. However, the high-school dropout-rate problem is not restricted to Quebec, he says. Based on the 2006 census, four provinces – Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Alberta – have higher dropout rates among those aged 20 to 24 than do Quebec francophones.

The ratio between the province with the highest dropout rate, Manitoba, and the lowest, British Columbia, is two to one. The major factor underlying the large number of students failing to complete high school in the Prairies is the concentration of Aboriginals and their low completion rate, he says.

Richards, who is the Roger Phillips Scholar in Social Policy at the C.D. Howe Institute, examines different approaches to addressing the education challenges facing francophone Quebecers and Aboriginals, both those living on- and off-reserve. He emphasizes the value of collecting reliable data on student core-skill performance at various stages in the K-12 cycle and concludes with a range of potential interventions. These include campaigns to shift cultural attitudes toward education, investment in early childhood and early primary school programming, discretionary agreements with entrepreneurial school districts, and major institutional reform of on-reserve school administration.

For the study, go to www.cdhowe.org

For more information call:

John Richards,
Professor, Public Policy Program,
Simon Fraser University,
Social Policy Scholar,
C.D. Howe Institute,
416-865-1904
email: cdhowe@cdhowe.org

Dropouts: The Achilles' Heel of Canada's High-School System, C.D. Howe Institute Commentary No. 298, by John Richards (October 2009). 25 pp; \$12.00 (prepaid, plus postage & handling and GST – please contact the Institute for details). ISBN-13: 978-0-88806-788-3; ISBN-10: 0-88806-788-7.

Copies are available from: Renouf Publishing Company Limited, 5369 Canotek Road, Ottawa, Ontario K1J 9J3; or directly from the C.D. Howe Institute, 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M5E 1J8. The full text of this publication is also available from the Institute's website at www.cdhowe.org.