STEM is the future when it comes to careers, but what do Canadian teens really think about it?

LONDON, ON (November 4, 2014) – Science is fun according to almost three quarters of Canadian youth – a number that has more than doubled, from 34 to 72 per cent, in just three years. What's more is that youth have a huge appreciation for science with 72 per cent believing science offers many different career options and 74 per cent recognizing its importance to adult life. So with interest in and appreciation for science increasing, are youth actually planning to pursue it? *Spotlight on Science Learning: Shaping Tomorrow's Workforce,* a new research report released today by Let's Talk Science, and made possible by Amgen Canada, looks at just this.

When it comes to thinking about their futures, interests are extremely important with 86 per cent of youth saying that their interests drive decisions about education and career aspirations. What's more telling is that youth are motivated by their values and want jobs that use higher order skills like making a useful contribution to society (84 per cent), making decisions (75 per cent) and solving problems (70 per cent) – the exact skills that science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) learning fosters.

"While we're encouraged to see today's youth more interested in science, attitudes toward taking science courses have remained relatively flat," says Bonnie Schmidt, Ph.D., president and founder, Let's Talk Science. "Understanding what influences and motivates youth as they look to their futures is critical to how we – educators, parents, youth, industry, non-profit organizations and government – work together to inspire and motivate them to remain engaged in STEM learning."

Interest is high, but there's a gap to bridge

It turns out kids are struggling to recognize how STEM supports the types of roles and careers they value, and can be a foundation to fulfill their ambitions.

- Despite an understanding that Canada needs more people with STEM backgrounds, only 56 per cent of youth indicate any interest at all in pursuing science at the post-secondary level. However, even that level of interest doesn't appear to translation into completion rates as fewer than half of Canadian students actually complete grade 12 science courses.
- And while 64 per cent say that science offers an interesting work environment, only 12 per cent express a lot of interest in working in science-based jobs.

"Beyond traditional career paths that require a STEM background, jobs in every field call for people with analytical, critical thinking and problem solving skills. These are the exact qualities that STEM learning nurtures," says Karen Burke, Ph.D., director, regulatory affairs, Amgen Canada. "We need to bridge the gap and show students how science learning can benefit them and help them get to any career they value."

Bridging the gap and translating attitudes into behaviours requires collective action. *Spotlight on Science Learning 2014* identifies several challenges that we need to address to better engage youth in STEM, including:

- Explaining the range of jobs that fit the values students already place on a career.
- Raising awareness of all opportunities, and the path required to get there, at the time when students are making major educational and career decisions.
- Clarifying what actually goes on in STEM jobs, and helping students see that STEM-related careers offer stimulating work environments.
- Correcting misperceptions about what a STEM career requires. For example, 60% of students believe they need a university degree. That's true in many cases, but students need greater awareness about the many STEM-related careers that call for a college certificate or diploma, and about the skilled trades (which can be STEM-heavy).

Let's Talk Science and Amgen Canada's shared commitment to raising awareness of the importance of science education extends this year with the new *Spotlight on Science Learning* research report. It follows up on the findings of the 2013 *Spotlight on Science Learning* report that identified the financial, opportunity and societal costs to Canada when youth disengage from STEM.

For more information and to access the full report, please visit
http://www.letstalkscience.ca/spotlight

About Let's Talk Science

Let's Talk Science is an award-winning, national, charitable organization focused on education and outreach. Let's Talk Science creates and delivers unique, accessible learning programs and services that engage children, youth and educators in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The organization strives to prepare all youth for their future careers and roles as citizens in a world that is increasingly shaped by science and technology.

For more information about Let's Talk Science, please visit www.letstalkscience.ca.

About Amgen Canada

As a leader in innovation, Amgen Canada understands the value of science. With main operations located in Mississauga, Ont.'s vibrant biomedical cluster, and its research facility in Burnaby, B.C., Amgen Canada has been an important contributor to advancements in science and innovation in Canada since 1991. The company contributes to the development of new therapies or new uses for existing medicines in partnership with many of Canada's leading health-care, academic, research, government and patient organizations. To learn more about Amgen Canada, visit www.amgen.ca.

Survey Methodology

From May 20th to May 26th, 2014, an online survey was conducted among 818 randomly selected Canadian teens age 13 to 17 years old, will be entering grades 7 to 12 in the fall, and

whose parents are Angus Reid Forum panelists. Respondents were representative of Canadian teen demographics. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

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