



## Institute of Public Administration of Canada Edmonton Regional Group

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### *Backgrounder*

May 6, 2009

#### *IPAC Edmonton Regional Group New Public Servant Award of Excellence*

### **Inaugural award recipient Jennifer Keller**

Jennifer Keller, Director of Student Engagement at Alberta Education, is the first recipient of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) Edmonton Regional Group's New Public Servant Award of Excellence.

The award recognizes the achievements of public servants with less than five years of public service experience. Jennifer was selected as the first-ever recipient of the award for her dedication to work and learning, commitment to service excellence, initiative to improve the public service, and volunteer efforts. She was chosen for the award after a nomination and letters of support were received from her colleagues, including Keray Henke, Deputy Minister of Alberta Education.

Jennifer's recent work has involved developing a process to connect with students across the province and gather input from them about what they think is working and could be improved in the education system. In nine short months, she led a team that organized and held facilitated sessions in thirty schools, and launched an interactive website, under the banner "Speak Out."

The website associated with the initiative was launched five months ago and gives students an opportunity to post comments to the government as well as share ideas and comments with each other. Jennifer and her team regularly post blogs to generate discussion and keep students involved with the site. Private firms have been so impressed that they have offered to sponsor and donate contest prizes for the initiative.

Jennifer went to great lengths to make sure the voices of students were captured accurately and that there was cultural, social, and geographic diversity in the youth asked to provide their feedback. She and her team ran sessions in urban and rural areas, in aboriginal and francophone communities, with students identifying themselves as gay or lesbian, and with young people in youth detention centres. Her energy and positive attitude engaged adults and youth and helped ensure the success of the initiative. Other governments are now considering the approach for possible implementation in their jurisdictions.

Jennifer will be presented with her award during a dinner and award ceremony being hosted by the IPAC Edmonton Regional Group on May 12 at the Westin Hotel in Edmonton.

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