



Millennium scholarship dies with federal budget

By Philip Alves
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It didn't last 1,000 years, not by a long shot.

It'll barely make it to ten, in fact.

After less than a decade in existence, the [Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation](#) is a casualty of last week's federal budget.

The short-lived program's termination is a sore spot for Vaughan Liberal MP Maurizio Bevilacqua, who says he's been a longtime booster of youth-targeted initiatives, including the doomed foundation.

"Essentially (the ruling Conservatives) are hurting students, and they're hurting essentially the future of our country by getting rid of the program, which has served so many people well," Bevilacqua said by phone from Ottawa Tuesday. "It was a very serious program with great outcomes."

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Since the scholarship foundation's introduction in 1999, more than 6,000 bursaries and awards worth more than \$18 million were handed out to students from the ridings of Vaughan and Thornhill.

"When you consider the benefits of the Millennium Scholarship program and the wisdom of the scholarship program, it is clear to me that it was a politically motivated maneuver on behalf of the Tories," Bevilacqua said. "That's not a very wise plan on a going-forward basis."

Vaughan Conservative candidate Richard Lorello and his Thornhill counterpart Peter Kent characterize the termination of the scholarship program differently. They point to the creation of the Canada Student Grant Program — timed to coincide with the scholarship's demise — as a better approach to help students in financial need.

"The new education plan is superior to the Millennium Scholarship plan because it will benefit more lower-income students and those pursuing post-graduate studies," Kent said this week in an email.

The new student grant program, set to take effect in the fall of 2009, is expected to reach 245,000 students in its first year.

"The new education policy is going to allow up to 100,000 more students to take advantage of grants through the new program, as opposed to the Millennium Scholarship fund," Lorello said Wednesday. "There's help there for students, low-income students, who obviously need to get education.

"They're going to have access to that fund. More students are going to get access to that fund."

The termination of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation appears to be a *fait accompli* because, according to Thornhill MP Susan Kadis, it is unlikely the Liberal opposition will trigger an election on the budget.

Still, Bevilacqua said he won't let it go without a fight.

"We'll be asking questions and we'll be pressuring them to keep it, but the

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likelihood of them doing that is pretty slim," he said.

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M6B 1P8
Tel: 416 785-4300
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