

A Message From:
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Harper Fails Canada's Students

Education is one of the greatest investments our government can make in the well being of Canada. Because there was no mention of post-secondary education in the Speech from the Throne and because of the paltry mention of education in Budget 2006, I am left to believe that the Conservative government does not believe in the tried and true tenet -- "the greater the investment the greater the return". I was disappointed in the minor allowances budgeted for promoting greater access to post-secondary education and in truly committing to making a viable investment in Canada's future.

The Conservative government has inherited a budget surplus of 13 billion dollars yet little is being committed to Canada's students. The previous Liberal government had booked \$550 million over five years for grants for post-secondary education to an additional 55,000 students over four years of study; \$2.2 billion over five years to improve the student financial assistance system; \$210 million over five years for graduate scholarships; and \$1 billion in 2005-2006 for the provinces to invest in post-secondary infrastructure. With the exception of the \$1 billion investment for provinces, all of this has been

cancelled.



The Conservatives offer tax credits and not improved access. Budget 2006 commits \$125 million per year for the cost of textbooks, offering roughly \$80 per student per year. Included in these tax credits is an elimination of taxation on scholarships. While this is a step in the right direction, it is alarming that this budget cancelled funding worth \$3.11 billion over five years. All of those funds were going directly to improve access to post-secondary education. This funding has since been replaced with \$175 million in tax incentives which not only do little considering those students who struggle most for access pay little tax in the first place.

This budget offers three tax incentives for apprentices totalling about \$380 million per year. This pales in comparison to \$3.5 billion over five years for the workplace strategy with the provinces as announced by the previous Liberal

government in the 2005 November Economic Update. The strategy was cancelled in the budget and is now included in the fiscal imbalance discussions.

Budget 2006 also sees the cancellation of more than \$2.1 billion over five years to increase support for research programs and granting councils as well as \$200 million over 5 years for up to 3,500 research and development internships, as well as 100 scholarships each year for graduate students in the sciences seeking a Masters in Business administration.

Prosperity does not lie in the cancellation of these programs. We have been talking about brain drain for a long time in this country. Canada is now experiencing a brain gain because of the previous Liberal government's investment in innovation and research.

Education, prosperity, innovation, research, student support, partnerships with provinces—they are all gone. Prime Minister Harper's government's attitudes towards post-secondary education and investing in our country's future will lead Canada into another brain drain.

Maria Minna