

SUPPORT FOR THE MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP FOUNDATION

By Maria Minna M.P.

The Millennium Scholarship Foundation provides much-needed funding to students so that they may pursue post-secondary education. Its objectives include improving access to post-secondary education for all Canadians, especially those facing economic or social barriers, and encouraging high levels of student achievement and engagement in Canadian society. It is the largest single source of grants to Canadian students.

An impressive \$10 million dollars in grants have benefited students in our riding since the program's inception. That's a lot of money helping local students!

Created by the Liberal government in 1998, the foundation's mandate is due to wrap-up in 2010. I am very disappointed that the Conservative government has no replacement program in place to supplement these funds, nor any foreseeable plans to replenish the original \$2.5 billion endowment.

The NDP also fails to see the value of this vital program. Canadian Alliance of Student Association Chair Zach Churchill writes, "The shortsightedness that the NDP continues to display when discussing the Foundation is increasingly frustrating. The NDP have continued to push for the termination of the Foundation and for the government to dump its funds into the bloated Canada Student Loan Program."

Studies show that grants to lower-income students are much more effective in expanding access to education than putting money into loan programs or tax credits. Clearly, the loss of the Millennium Scholarship Foundation will deliver a huge blow to the educational prospects of students in our riding.

My Liberal colleagues and I consider an investment in Canadian students to be an investment in Canada's future. Instead of focusing on policies which look only to short-term partisan gain, a Liberal government would invest in education and innovation – long-term contributions to the betterment of our economy. Failure to invest in people, our most important resource, is failure to invest in a richer, greener, fairer Canada.

As your elected representative, I will continue to work to enhance student opportunities in our riding and to show my support for the continuation of this essential scholarship program.