RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE?
CANADA’S MERIT SCHOLARSHIPS

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Press Release
Canada’s merit scholarships reward schools, not just students

Montreal, March 8, 2004 – Most of Canada’s undergraduate merit scholarships provide assistance for the first academic year only in order to attract the most academically qualified students to post-secondary institutions, a new study by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation revealed today.

Recognizing Excellence? Canada’s Merit Scholarships identifies the growth and diversification of the $200 million scholarship sector, and draws attention to the fact that little is known about the scholarship recipients themselves.

“The majority of Canadian scholarships are distributed by universities in the form of entrance awards,” said Franca Gucciardi, director of the Foundation’s Millennium Excellence Award Program and author of the study. “Because they are increasingly being granted automatically to students with the highest grades, they may be designed to manage recruitment rather than reward merit.”

The report finds that:

- Canadian schools, governments and private organizations spend almost $200 million on undergraduate merit scholarships each year, nearly 70% of which are committed to students as they enter a post-secondary institution.
- Canadian scholarships are concentrated at the university level.
- Eighty per cent of scholarship funds provided by institutions are designed to reward academics alone.
- Non-governmental and private organizations focus their funding on a student’s extracurricular activities.
- Government scholarships put greater emphasis on rewarding students who demonstrate a combination of academic achievement and financial need.

“Recognizing Excellence? is the first in Canada to assess undergraduate merit scholarships,” said Norman Riddell, the Foundation’s executive director and chief executive officer. “We hope it will encourage a discussion about whether or not the money Canadians are investing in scholarships is having the desired effect.”
The Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, a private independent organization established in 1998 by Parliament, provides students with the educational opportunities they need to prepare themselves for the future. To date, the Foundation has awarded over 420,000 millennium bursaries worth more than $1.3 billion in student financial assistance, as well as more than $24 million in the form of more than 5,000 millennium excellence awards to Canadian post-secondary students.

The report can be downloaded from the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation's Web site at [www.millenniumscholarships.ca](http://www.millenniumscholarships.ca).

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