

This group is vastly under-represented at the post-secondary level right now. These grants will encourage greater participation. It is only fair that Canadians with disabilities avail themselves of higher education and training opportunities that will help improve their lives and lead to greater self-sufficiency. As a society justice demands this in terms of human dignity. This alone would be reason enough to introduce the measure.

In addition, however, helping those with disabilities study and achieve their full potential enriches our society and results in economic dividends. It is truly the finest expression of democracy such as it should be once we have achieved the goals to include these people with disabilities. Some needy individuals including single parents and those receiving social assistance are not able to pursue full time studies because of family responsibilities or insufficient resources.

While they could consider part time studies, they are unable to meet the repayment obligation of part time loan programs. Once again the special opportunity grants we are introducing will help these very needy Canadians participate in the learning system on a part time basis. It is to the credit of those people that they are willing to pursue part time studies. The government wants to support their efforts through non-repayable assistance.

The amount of these grants will be relatively small, a maximum of \$1,200 a year which means a difference of survival for many individuals within the system and an opportunity to a future otherwise not available to them. This can make a difference in their lives. Nevertheless this small investment can make all the difference for instance to a single mom. These grants will cover her tuition and books with a little left over for bus fare and babysitting. As vital as these grants are in terms of actual assistance they may be even more important psychologically. These grants send a very practical message to thousands and thousands of Canadians who are going through rough times, saying: "You have potential. Canada needs your contribution".

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Special opportunity grants will also be available to women enrolled in certain doctoral studies. These grants of up to \$3,000 per year will be directed to women who tend to have a higher debt load than men when undertaking programs in areas such as the applied and physical sciences, engineering and mathematics. Traditionally these fields have been the domain of men both in school and in the workplace.

The under-representation of women in graduate studies particularly at the Ph.D. level, is widely acknowledged. For example, less than one in ten doctoral degrees in engineering and applied sciences are currently awarded to women. Such low levels in turn adversely affect the number of women who are

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able to secure teaching positions at colleges and universities and to advance to the level of professor.

I am really proud to say that at a recent graduation at the University of Calgary I had the opportunity to meet a young woman who had just graduated with a group of other native students with an engineering degree. This is a real success for one out of the eighteen aboriginal youths who intended to go into a non-traditional area. It is something to be celebrated and something that is possible if these people are assisted and encouraged.

The conclusion of a recent report issued by the National Advisory Board on Science and Technology was that the Ph.D. is becoming a condition of employment for college and university teachers. The lower level entry qualification of some women represent a significant barrier to their advancement through the ranks of the professorate. Today at universities throughout Canada it is estimated that men outnumber women by almost four to one as full time faculty members.

The board's report also indicated that female students are increasingly pursuing opportunities in fields which traditionally have been male dominated. This is most encouraging and will ensure that Canadian women have increased access to employment opportunities in a variety of fields.

While Canadian women are proud of what they have achieved in recent years, we must build on these successes to ensure an even brighter future for all of our daughters, including the daughters of those in the House who have tried to label this modest program of grants reverse discrimination.

[Translation]

Women do not ask for special treatment from universities. With enough financial assistance, they will succeed in any discipline. All needy students, men as well as women, who meet the eligibility criteria will be entitled to financial support under the Canada Student Loans Program. Special opportunity grants for women are a way of encouraging women to go on with their studies beyond the master's level in non-traditional fields.

If we want to be competitive in world markets, it is imperative that we take advantage of the potential of all our people. We have to count on the abilities and skills of women as well as men, in particular in fields like science and engineering, which are going to play an increasingly important role in every country's economic strength and stability.

[English]

In considering these three types of special opportunity grants, let us go beyond the statistics and look at the effect these initiatives will have on real Canadians. Let us look at David from Winnipeg who is visually impaired. He has always aspired to attain a degree in journalism but may be prevented from doing