

Adjournment Debate

program underpins the scholarships award process and the criteria for renewal of the scholarships. The program, through its encouragement to outstanding students to pursue studies in these fields, will contribute in an important way to Canada's future industrial competitiveness. With excellent people, our industry will be able to produce excellent products and foster excellence in processes. Standards of excellence in industry are necessary to ensure that Canadians continue to have the standards of living we currently enjoy.

The first class standing renewal requirement for the program is not easy to meet, especially in first year when students are making major life-style adjustments. When it became apparent last year that significant numbers of our 1988-89 Canada scholars were not going to make this requirement, we conducted a thorough review of the renewal criterion and consulted with a number of universities. A decision was made at that time to maintain the standards that has been established for the program in recognition that, unless excellence was the basis for holding the scholarship throughout a scholar's tenure, the program's focus on excellence would be compromised.

The renewal requirements are stringent. Nonetheless, 55 per cent of the 2,500 1988-89 Canada scholars met the grade and were awarded the scholarship for a second year. Although I would like to see better renewal results, they are gratifying given the general performance of first year undergraduates in natural sciences and engineering. Of the students who enter university with first class standing in these disciplines, only 25 per cent on average can be expected to maintain first class standing in their first year.

To counteract the loss of scholars in the 1988-89 program resulting from non-renewal, 900 additional first year scholarships were awarded in 1989-90. We currently have close to 4,800 top science and engineering students in the program, studying at over 80 universities and colleges across Canada. These young people are tremendous role models for their generation. I am pleased that the government of Canada can support them in that role and excited about their prospects to make a difference in the science and technology scene in Canada.

I would like to see higher rates of renewal for Canada scholars in the future.

My officials will be undertaking further analysis when data for 1989-90 scholars become available to attempt to isolate the factors which contribute most to renewal and to come up with measures which will encourage higher retention rates.

It is evident from the 1988-89 data that the most significant factor affecting retention of the scholarship is gender. Whereas 64 per cent of males renewed their scholarships last year, only 46 per cent of females renewed.

This differential is clearly unacceptable. Studies are being undertaken this year to increase our understanding of these results. In the meantime, a pilot project to establish mentor clubs in an attempt to improve the prospects for renewal has been initiated.

The Science Minister has asked me to give the hon. member who raised the question regarding standards for the Canada Scholarships Program the assurance that he will be on guard to maintain standards of excellence in the program.

[English]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Mary Clancy (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise again a question I asked of the Prime Minister over a year ago. It is a question that I have asked subsequently of various and sundry other ministers, including the Minister of National Health and Welfare, the Minister of Justice, and the Minister of Finance.

The question is this. Given the problems facing Canadian parents and children, given the problems facing Canadian women in the workforce, given the fact that there are one million latch-key children in this country, why has the government cancelled the National Child Care Program?

The answer, not that I ever received one particularly, seems to be—if one can surmise and read between the lines—that in this country money is more important than children and child care, and that reducing the deficit, which is certainly an important thing to do and which has not been done to date by this government but it is an important theory, is more important than the care of children.

We all believe in fiscal responsibility, but we also know that we have to have certain priorities.