

University of Ottawa – Recognition Ceremony  
Ottawa

**REMARKS FOR Mr. Ronald Bilodeau**

November 23, 2007

Good afternoon everyone. Before I begin my remarks I would like to thank Dr. Major for graciously hosting this reception in recognition of our Millennium excellence award laureates. And to thank Mr. Bercier, the faculty members and representatives of the university's administration who are also here at this special reception in honour of some quite remarkable University of Ottawa students.

We are here to recognize and to celebrate the achievements of our Millennium laureates here at the University of Ottawa, including those who have now joined the ranks of this University's laureate alumni.

I would like to speak to you briefly about three aspects of this relationship today and say just a few words about the opportunities it presents to you:

1. The first is the relationship to the laureate community here at the University of Ottawa.

The Millennium laureates honoured here today are part of a growing group. In 2006, 133 University of Ottawa students received excellence awards, some as they prepared to enter their first year of post-secondary education (our entrance awards) and others, students already pursuing their programs (our in-course awards). The University of Ottawa millennium laureate community continues to grow each year.

On a cumulative basis, since the inception of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, University of Ottawa students have to date received a total of 14,445 bursaries and scholarships, including excellence awards, at a total value of over \$ 43 million.

So we encourage you to seek each other out, to take advantage of opportunities to collaborate both on campus and in your community activities, as I know many of you are already doing. From the profiles that I have read about some of you that are here today, there is much to share. I

look forward to having the opportunity to hear more individually from you today about some of those involvements.

2. The second aspect of this relationship that I would like to speak to briefly is the link that this award provides you to the greater community of laureates across Canada.

Through the dedication of our national network of volunteers – over 750 strong now, we have now recognized more than 7,500 students with scholarships celebrating excellence in the form of leadership, innovation, and community involvement. I am constantly amazed at the range and diversity of the involvements of our laureates, at their energy and compassion.

As the president of one of our university partner institutions said in an interview in discussing the importance of the

excellence award program: “It is very difficult to quantify. But in terms of the people to whom I have been exposed in this program, they are more outward looking, they are more conscious of citizenship; they are more likely to be engaged not only with their communities here but with regional and national communities. I think these are very positive benefits. Not always measurable in precise terms, but I think important in all kinds of intangible ways...These students are the future. If they can be encouraged to keep in touch, then I think that the potential results are very positive. It is more likely that we will see them go on to collaborate in various academic, community and indeed national initiatives”.

Through the ancillary programs of the Millennium Excellence Award Program, the Foundation has worked with its laureates to develop a variety of means to help connect laureates with each other— national and, more recently, regional conferences, an online community and local

chapters. These chapters, at many Universities across Canada, have begun to deepen and extend laureate connections at the local level.

The Foundation also launched, with a group of current alumni, an alumni network in the hopes that we may assist laureates in staying connected into the future, well beyond the Foundation's mandate.

We encourage you to take advantage of the full range of opportunities made available, particularly to those with renewable scholarships.

3. The third and final aspect of this relationship that I would encourage you to explore as a part of the millennium family is the relationship with the broader Foundation itself.

As you are probably aware, the Foundation also delivers millennium bursaries – these are need-based grants designed to increase access to post-secondary studies and, we are also delivering millennium access bursaries in partnership with provincial and territorial governments

targeted to students from low-income families. We now deliver over 120,000 need-based grants across Canada on an annual basis.

Nationally, we have delivered over \$2 billion dollars in bursaries and scholarships to Canadian students – more than 670,000 bursaries and scholarships.

We are also conducting extensive research into issues of post-secondary access and student aid and running a number of pilot projects at the high school and university levels to evaluate the impact of better career and student aid information, additional academic supports and mentoring, and financial incentives in influencing the decision to pursue post-secondary studies and persist in them once that decision is taken, especially for those who face barriers to proceeding.

I encourage you to learn more about the Foundation and its activities, and to assist us in making this work and these programs better known. The issues we address concern all of you as students and all of us as Canadians.

With those words, I wish to thank you, collectively, for the tremendous contribution you are making at the University of Ottawa and will continue to make into the future to our Canadian society at all levels and to encourage you to continue and to build on those efforts.