



Category: Research and Innovation  
Topic: Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarships  
Approved: February 14 2010  
Re-visited: \_\_\_\_\_  
Amended: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expires: February 14 2013

Whereas,

Nova Scotia currently has no means of providing adequate assistance to graduate students in financing their post-bachelor studies and research at the graduate and post-doctoral level. While there are governmental programs in place for students studying in specific disciplines, namely the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation's Graduate Student Research Awards<sup>1</sup>, there are no such programs that provide research funding for students in other areas of study. This policy argues for the merits of a government-funded graduate scholarship program in Nova Scotia as both an access and affordability tool that will help students and also as a demographics tool that will attract and retain skilled youth in Nova Scotia.

While potential graduate students have completed undergraduate degrees, most are still paying for them. Just under 60% of Canadian graduates completed their undergraduate studies in 2009 with an average debt of \$26,680<sup>2</sup> (all sources). With this level of debt, many students are unable to even entertain the idea of pursuing a second degree before paying off their current debt. In Nova Scotia both the incidence and intensity of debt is even more significant – where 69% of students carry an average of \$31,900 in debt upon completion of their undergraduate degree<sup>3</sup>. With this debt load in mind, potential graduate students will no doubt be tempted to follow the money to jurisdictions where there is a greater opportunity for scholarships once they have narrowed their options down based on their interest area of research. Additionally, tuition for graduate students in Nova Scotia is the second highest in the country, and is \$2060 more expensive than the national average<sup>4</sup>. The combined burden of debt from an undergraduate degree, and top rank tuition fees are likely encouraging many scholars to put off future studies or pursue them elsewhere.

Graduate students are a central component in the process of creating and advancing research by providing capacity to the research institution. They also increase the opportunity for collaboration for the institution and the faculty through past experience and future networking (conferences, collaborative work, etc). Without a healthy supply of graduate students, research simply doesn't go forward.

Graduate students are heavily influenced by the availability of research funding when deciding where to pursue graduate research. However, the availability of research funding influences more than the students' decision; conversations with students indicate that supervising professors are often reluctant to take on an additional graduate student if that individual appears to be a financial burden and does not have the adequate amount of funding to support their studies. Additionally, specific funding for graduate student studies gives those students independence from their immediate supervisors and empowers them become independent researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation (2010). Student Research Awards: Competition Requirements Document. . Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <http://bit.ly/5TDV48> .

<sup>2</sup>Berger, J. (2009). Student Debt in Canada. In Berger, J., Motte, A., and Parkin, A., The Price of Knowledge (p. 185). Toronto: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada (2009). University Tuition Fees. Retrieved on 20 October 2009 from <http://www.tinyurl.com/tuitionstats>>.

The provinces that lead the country in research—Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia – have all established government funded graduate student scholarships providing assistance to students driven towards research<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, the government of Manitoba has introduced a relatively small number of graduate student scholarships for post-bachelor students. The federal government provides financial assistance for student research in the form of graduate scholarships to masters and PhD students through the tri-council funding agencies. The National Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) all provide funding for graduate scholarships. The Governments of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia have all prioritized the sponsorship of student research by creating graduate scholarship programs, some of which distribute funding to students who have not received a grant from one of the national granting councils.

With 6,692 graduate students registered at Nova Scotia institutions in the fall of 2009, our province educates almost three quarters (72.87%) of all maritime graduate students<sup>6</sup>. This gives us an incredible competitive advantage against our neighboring provinces for attracting some of the brightest minds on the East Coast. Nova Scotia has built a reputation for graduate studies within the region and our universities have the infrastructure to support research in a diverse number of fields. Unlike many undergraduate students, most graduate students will have developed much firmer roots to both the local academic community and the broader community throughout the course of their graduate studies. By the completion of these studies they will have increased their annual earnings at an average premium of \$13,109 above that of a Bachelor's Degree holder in Nova Scotia<sup>7</sup>. These earnings are not only partly captured in taxes by government, but can also be expected to land in the coffers of local business and the provincial economy.

It is in the best interest of government to invest in citizens through education and recognize both the individual and societal benefits of that education. By providing financial incentives for research and graduate studies, governments can begin to attract more bright minds, cultivate them through our quality institutions and turn them into sector leaders that will attract even more talent to our province. The combination of high tuition fees, high undergraduate debt-loads and lack of provincial graduate student scholarships in Nova Scotia is a recipe that is likely preventing many potential innovators from embarking on their post-bachelor studies at Nova Scotian universities.

Therefore, ANSSA

1. *Calls on* the Government of Nova Scotia to establish a Nova Scotia Graduate Scholarship for which any student studying in a Masters or PhD program in a Nova Scotia Institution is eligible for. Such a scholarship should be available to students studying in either thesis-based or course-based programs.
2. *Calls on* the Government of Nova Scotia to provide individual scholarship funding for PhD and masters students at funding levels comparable to the Ontario Graduate Scholarship described in Appendix A.
3. *Calls on* the Government of Nova Scotia to work with student groups and graduate students specifically in developing eligibility criteria and administrative practices for this program.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for an annotated summary of the scholarship programs offered in other provinces within Canada.

<sup>6</sup> Association of Atlantic Universities (2009). *AAU Survey of Preliminary Enrollments*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/6szOdq>>

<sup>7</sup> Berger, J. and Parkin A. (2009). The Value of A Degree: Education, Employment and Earnings in Canada. *Price of Knowledge*. In Berger, J., Motte, A., and Parkin, A., *The Price of Knowledge* (p. 11). Toronto: Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

## Appendix A

### *Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la nature et les technologies bourse*<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of this program is to provide financial assistance to students pursuing research in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering. It is renewable on a yearly basis and is valued at \$15,000 annually for a Masters Student and \$20,000 for a PHD candidate. In order to be eligible to receive such a scholarship students are required to have been a resident of Quebec at least one year prior to application and are required to attend an institution in Quebec.

### *Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program (OGS)*<sup>9</sup>

The Ontario Government awards recipients of the OGS \$5,000 per term, which can mean up to \$15,000 in funding annually for some students. Scholarship recipients are eligible for two years of funding as masters students and four years of funding as PhD students. The funding is only dispersed to students who are not receiving tri-council funding. Each year, 2000 scholarships are awarded, of which 60 are awarded to international students. The province of Ontario contributes two-thirds of the funding for this program, while the host-institutions are responsible for delivering the remaining third for each scholarship recipient conducting research at their institution

### *Manitoba Graduate Scholarship*<sup>11</sup>

The Manitoba Government provides scholarships to students studying at the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg<sup>12</sup>. The program provided assistance to the small number of graduate students in the province. Scholarship recipients at the masters level received \$15 000 in support annually for up to two years, while doctoral candidates were eligible for \$7,500 annually for up to four years in addition to the previously existing provincial funding of doctoral candidates which provides \$16,000 in funding each year.

### *Alberta Ingenuity Graduate Student Scholarship (AIGSS)*<sup>13</sup>

The AIGSS provides graduate students pursuing research in the natural sciences or an engineering discipline with funding to undertake full-time research training at an Alberta institution. Masters students can receive up to 23,000 annually while doctoral candidates receive up to \$26,000 annually. An additional \$1,500 yearly research allowance is provided. The maximum total period of support is four years. Approximately \$11 Million in such scholarships is distributed to graduate students annually. The initiative of the Alberta Government is funded in partnership with iCore, an arms length government agency intended to expand the provinces research capacity and competitiveness in the field of informatics.

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<sup>8</sup> Government of Quebec (2009). *Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la nature et les technologies: Scholarships*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/7czaRk>>

<sup>9</sup> Ontario Student Assistance Program (2009). *Ontario Graduate Scholarship Program*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/rd90Q>>.

<sup>10</sup> Council of Ontario Universities (2003). *Full-Time and Part-Time Student Enrolment by Level, Fall 1990 to Fall 2003*. Retrieved on 5 December 2003 from <<http://bit.ly/83q0CM>>.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Advanced Education and Training (2005). *University of Manitoba Students Receive Graduate Scholarships*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/5LRLBX>>

<sup>12</sup> The University of Winnipeg (2009). *Graduate Studies: Internal Awards*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/8AtxD>>.

<sup>13</sup> Alberta Ingenuity Fund (2009). *Alberta Ingenuity Graduate Student Scholarship*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/4JW5F4>>

### *Alberta Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship Program<sup>14</sup>*

This scholarship program provides up to \$10, 800 in annual funding to students at the Masters Level, and up to \$15,000 in annual funding to students at the doctoral level. Recipients are selected by their institution of study, and each institution in Alberta is empowered to provide 10% of their graduate students with such a scholarship.

### *Pacific Century Graduate Scholarship (British Columbia)<sup>15</sup>*

This program provides 1,000 scholarships valued at \$10,000 each over four years to masters, doctoral and post-doctoral students at the University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, the University of Victoria and the University of Northern B.C. Masters students may receive up to two years of renewal of these scholarships, while doctoral and post-doctoral students are eligible for up to three years of funding. Special consideration will be given to students who are intending to research in areas overlapping with the priorities of the government, namely: Life Sciences, Technology, Clean Technology, Natural Resources, Asia Pacific Gateway Strategy and Developing Business Skills. A portion of the scholarships will be used to support aboriginal students studying in B.C., and up to 20% are to be used to support international students with study permits in the province. The scholarships are to be administered by institutions themselves to deserving candidates who will be known as Pacific Century Scholars.

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<sup>14</sup> Alberta Learning and Information Service (2009). *Scholarship and Bursary Information: Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship Program*. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/6CRjYL>>

<sup>15</sup> Government of British Columbia (2007). Pacific century scholarships to draw top graduate students. Retrieved on 5 December 2009 from <<http://bit.ly/86prFL>>