



POLICE & PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL RIBBON SOCIETY

The following is the speech given by the Scholarship Council Chair C. Scott M. Shepherd, at the official announcement of the Memorial Ribbon Scholarship, to MPs, Law Enforcement, and guests in the Centre Block of Parliament on February 3, 2011.

“Prime Minister, Ministers, Members of Parliament, Senators, ladies and gentlemen:

It is an honour for me to be here today to announce the launch of the scholarship program to support the families of fallen peace officers through the memorial ribbon society.

As Canadians, we take for granted the security and peace of mind which is provided by women and men in uniform serving as peace officers in Canada's many police forces or corrections facilities. We go about our daily routine, deciding whether or not to have a low-fat double cappuccino at Starbucks or what we would like for lunch. The daily routine with simple choices that we take for granted.

Some Canadians, the families of peace officers who have been killed in the line of duty, however, have tougher choices to make as they go forward in their day-to-day activities- without the financial and loving support of their mother or father.

Tough choices- many times - lonely choices.

Daily, we see our people in uniform serving in their many jobs, but rarely stop to think about the ultimate risk and sacrifice that some pay while they are performing their jobs in the line of duty. Yet if you talk to them, you will realize that they view their job as an honour and privilege to serve. The risk comes with the territory and they are proud to protect us.

We feel the loss of each of these officers as they are announced, but perhaps don't think of the long-term consequences of this loss to the individual families as the years go by, and their children grow up without their mother or father.

Tough choices, lonely choices. Particularly for the costs of post secondary education.

I ask myself, how can such a compassionate and caring society not in some way ensure that these children are provided for as they grow up. To give each access to education excellence that we would be proud of for each of our own sons and daughters. For make no mistake, they are our sons and daughters. Each of these children is Canada's ward, and we should embrace them and ensure that their educational needs are met if they wish to proceed with post secondary education.

The burden of paying for post secondary education can be heavy, and weighs on these families as they make education decisions. Indeed, ask any police officer- it weighs on their mind as they respond to danger. What if this is the one where I don't come home? Who will look after the kids? What about their future?

It is the goal of this scholarship Council to lessen these burdens and make the dream of the post secondary education a reality to all children of peace officers who have given their lives in service.

As a measure of who we are as Canadians, and our enduring respect and commitment to our peace officers, we need to get behind this project and ensure that it is funded adequately to address the educational needs and dreams of these children.

It is a commitment I believe we can all support and ensure that it is successful.

We ask each of Canada's post secondary institutions to set aside one bursary or scholarship for free tuition for these children for this valiant cause. Such a simple act would immediately deal with the cost of tuition for the student and gain the respect and trust of all Canadians.

In this respect, I am pleased to announce our first two generous commitments. Dalhousie University, one of Canada's oldest Universities, on the east coast in Halifax has committed to provide one of these positions.

Tom Travis, President of Dalhousie, simply said "it is the right thing to do, for the right cause for the right people, and we are pleased to provide a leadership gift for this cause".

Similarly, on the West Coast, in Victoria, one of Canada's newest post secondary institutions, Royal Roads University rose immediately to the challenge and said "AYE AYE Sir" to quote the Navy term.

Forged from its deep military roots and a sense of honour and service. Allan Cahoon said, "we are 100 percent behind this initiative. It is the honourable thing to do. It fits well with the Royal Roads history of service and commitment."

Each of you here has unique relationships with Post secondary institutions in your home ridings and provinces. Please- ask these institutions to join in this great cause and help us gain their commitment. Together we can solve this education challenge for these kids. So let us send out the challenge here today, - join us. Help make things happen. I know we can do it.

There is no greater gift than education, and there is no greater sacrifice than the one that was given to each of us by their parent. It is the least that we can do as Canadians.

Thank you."