

Endowment Funds Changing Career Trajectories

Over the past three years the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons (CFPDP) has been working tirelessly to encourage corporations to give qualified people with physical disabilities a chance to compete for a seat in their boardrooms.

At the same time, CFPDP recognizes that education is a key to success.

A 2021 report from the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) contains a sobering reminder that students with disabilities are less likely to attend post-secondary school, and less likely to attain higher degrees. Consequently, they are less likely to pursue careers that could lead them to top-level corporate positions.

Even when new graduates hit the job market, the HEQCO study confirmed what most already know – they have a more difficult time finding a job and will be less satisfied with their salary and benefits than their non-disabled peers.

To compensate, some students try to stay in school to obtain advanced degrees to compete in the job market. They then face yet another barrier. Students with disabilities generally have lower incomes than their peers without disabilities. Their need for financial assistance is therefore even greater than other students.

“We need to increase the pool of qualified candidates to compete for board room positions,” says Honourable Vim Kochhar, Founder and Chair of CFPDP. “We can’t do that unless more disabled persons are able to acquire degrees and professional designations to help propel their careers. With

financial difficulties of students with disabilities in mind, we must provide them with more bursaries and scholarships to pursue post-secondary educational opportunities.”

With this firmly in mind, CFPDP is continuing its efforts to establish endowment funds for students with disabilities at major universities and colleges across Canada.

CFPDP is inviting donors to give \$100,000 and asking the higher education institutions to match the funds. Donors will receive a tax receipt and CFPDP will add \$10,000 to every fund that is established. The \$110,000 per fund would then be matched by the school of their choice and the endowment fund named after the original donor.

To date, CFPDP has created endowment funds with York University and Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson). Hon. Kochhar has personally established an endowment fund that has been matched by Pearson College in Vancouver. The Asper Foundation has done the same at the University of Manitoba. In addition, five other schools have set aside a total of \$455,000 and are waiting for matching donors. Hon. Kochhar is currently speaking to other universities and possible corporate donors, asking them to participate and help broaden the program across Canada.

“I am very pleased by the enthusiastic response we have had to date,” says Hon. Kochhar. “With all my heart, I feel certain that we will soon have even more donors, universities and colleges from coast to coast getting involved in this worthwhile and life-changing endeavour.”

