

Source: Jeff Roberts, Communications Officer
McGill University Relations Office

Prominent Canadian Businessman Promotes Human Rights with Generous Gift to McGill University
Prestigious O'Brien Fellowships will fund top young human rights scholars from around the world

Five fellowships will inaugurate a new era for human rights scholarship in Canada thanks to a generous donation by David O'Brien (B.C.L. 1965), a well-known executive who has given \$3million to the McGill Faculty of Law. The gift creates a permanent endowment that will be used each year to attract top young scholars to do graduate work in human rights at McGill.

David O'Brien is the chairman of the Royal Bank of Canada and the head of Encana Corporation, the country's largest independent oil and gas company. His gift reflects what has become a priority in his life.

"I've been a business man for a long time, but in the last few years, I've taken a growing interest in human rights and organizations that support them," says O'Brien. "I knew that first and second year law students at McGill do field work in human rights, and I wanted to find a way to encourage them to continue that work beyond the under-graduate level."

The O'Brien Fellowships will make this possible through a program that offers a generous amount each year to five young scholars from around the world who will come to McGill to focus on pressing issues of human rights law and policy. The O'Brien Fellows will also provide a pivotal source of energy and ideas for the newly created McGill Centre of Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, an interdisciplinary research group dedicated to studying legal and cultural issues related to human rights.

The O'Brien Fellowships will find a perfect home at the McGill Faculty of Law, whose scholars possess a unique perspective on multiple legal traditions, and whose bilingual students learn a rich mix of common, civil and international law. The Faculty is excited about the gift, and looks forward to welcoming the inaugural recipients who will be announced early in 2006.

"We salute David O'Brien. His gift will attract some of the greatest young minds from around the world to this University and light up our faculty for years to come," says Dean of Law, Nicholas Kasirer. "My expectation is that, in twenty years, there will be a network of O'Brien Fellows setting a new standard for human rights achievements in countries across the globe."

McGill University will be joining David O'Brien to celebrate the creation of the Fellowships on September 30th at 5 pm.