

Planting the Seeds of Growth

Standing Committee on Finance

Submission on priorities for the 2019 Federal Budget



Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada

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About Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada

Community-based services. Positive relationships. Life-changing programs. As Canada's largest child- and youth-serving organization, Boys & Girls Clubs provide vital programs and services to over 200,000 young people in 700 communities across Canada. During critical out-of-school hours, our Clubs help young people discover who they are, what they can do, and how they can get there. Our trained staff and volunteers give them the tools to realize positive outcomes in self-expression, academics, healthy living, physical activity, mental health, leadership, and more. Since 1900, Boys & Girls Clubs have opened their doors to children, youth, and families in small and large cities, and rural and Indigenous communities. If a young person needs it, our Clubs provide it. Learn more at bgccan.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @BGCCAN.

Summary of recommendations

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada would like the government to **recognize the importance of after-school programs in the lives of children and youth across Canada**, and its investments in such programs, by including a special mention in the budget.

"... after-school programs support many of the goals set by this government, including those related to: alleviating the effects of poverty, offering education support and skills development, and creating an environment that improves physical and mental well-being.

These programs are particularly beneficial to young Canadians living in low-income communities and racialized children and youth.

We also ask that the government **continue to invest in after-school programs and partnerships as effective vehicles for achieving positive health, employment and life outcomes**.

Recognize the importance of after-school programs

Government and child care advocates are increasingly discussing how to meet the needs of children in their early years, but recreation based after-school programs are being overlooked. Such programs represent a distinct, developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed approach for children in their middle years, especially those who have had adverse childhood experiences.

The after-school time period provides a unique opportunity to support young people's healthy development. Regular participation in after-school programs mitigates the risk of unhealthy behaviours and helps young people become healthy, active, engaged adults, who make positive contributions to society. After-school programs benefit families and communities, and lead to reduced health care, social welfare, crime and justice costs down the road.

High-quality before and after-school programs for children, youth and their families are the centerpiece of Boys & Girls Clubs' work in communities. Clubs support those who are at greatest risk, namely, Indigenous and racialized children, children of recent immigrants, children with disabilities or who have parents with disabilities, children whose parents are on welfare, and children whose parents were poor when they were children.

The government has sought to address low-income as a source of disadvantage by generously increasing child benefits. While this is a welcome investment, more is needed to ensure that Canada's most vulnerable children and youth can thrive.

Government should target program resources of departments such as Employment and Social Development, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Innovation, Science and Economic Development, and Public Safety Canada towards after-school programming that meets the developmental needs of children and youth and gives them a chance at a great future.

- Children who regularly participate in after-school programs make considerable **health and well-being gains**.¹ They exercise regularly, eat well and are protected from injuries and threats. They have a sense of well-being, choose safe activities, and are able to get the resources they need for good health. Because these behaviours are learned in childhood, they are more likely to affect children's lifestyle and health status into adulthood.²
- When they take on active roles in after-school programs, **young people gain skills and build confidence in their ability to make positive contributions**. "Young people who take active roles in organizations and communities have fewer problems, are better skilled" and more likely to be active citizens.³ Boys & Girls Clubs participants who frequently attend programs report "higher levels of community service involvement and increased integrity".⁴
- Children who have access to "relevant neighborhood destinations" such as recreational clubs have **stronger developmental outcomes, greater social competence** and better well-being.⁵
- The presence of positive relationships with adults and a sense of one's place in the community have been correlated with **decreased rates of risky behaviour**,

violence, and adolescent depression.⁶ Children who benefit from an adult mentoring relationship show **greater academic success**, less risk-taking behaviour and better life satisfaction.⁷

Boys & Girls Clubs are the largest provider of after-school programs in Canada. Our Clubs, primarily located in low-income communities where we help to meet the needs of children, youth and families, deliver programs that inspire, challenge and support vulnerable children to succeed.

We ask the government to recognize the importance of after-school programming in the lives of children and youth across Canada, and its own investments in such programs, by including a special mention in the budget.

Continue government support for quality after-school programming

Across 700 service locations, Clubs serve the populations that need us most – newcomer families, urban Indigenous youth, and those in rural and remote communities where options for after-school programming are often lacking.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada has rigorous quality guidelines and operating standards that have led to a strong track record. An evidence-based model for success guides program development and evaluation.

We are proud to work with the Government of Canada and private sector partners on several initiatives that help young people from low-income communities reach their full potential.

- **Kid Food Nation** – The largest food literacy effort Canada has ever known is being supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Aimed at children aged 7-12, Kid Food Nation promotes healthy eating, celebrates Canada's culinary heritage, and reaches all Canadians through an ambitious media campaign.
- **Kid Tech Nation** – Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada, supported by Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada, is increasing the number of Canadian children and youth equipped with science, technology, engineering, mathematics, coding, and digital skills, especially among groups who are underrepresented in those fields.
- **Lead Up** – Supported by Employment and Social Development Canada, Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada's Lead Up program promotes youth civic engagement by intentionally engaging youth in service experiences that they feel passionate

about and that address community needs. The objectives of Lead Up include: helping 1,000 youth build leadership, communication and social skills through Boys & Girls Clubs programming; and connecting 1,000 youth to Club and community service opportunities.

- **Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach (GPTTO):** Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada is currently **seeking \$6.9M over 5 years from Public Safety Canada to implement a specialized gang prevention approach for pre-teens and youth at risk and involved in gangs.** GPTTO is a customized and evidence-based approach that includes: 1) community mobilization; 2) recruitment of youth who are at risk or involved with gangs; 3) individualized case management; 4) group mentoring; and 5) interest-based programming that Public Safety has deemed effective in addressing gangs and youth violence.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada are able to direct federal program funding and high quality interventions to the children and youth who need them most. Our Clubs are effective vehicles for programs that build young Canadians' ability become healthy and productive members of their communities and workplaces.

In Conclusion

High-quality before and after-school programs for children, youth, and their families are the centerpiece of Boys & Girls Clubs' work in local communities. Our comprehensive, integrated programs – which include physical activity and healthy eating, homework help and academic support, arts and culture, personal growth, leadership, youth civic engagement and other activities – meet young people's developmental needs at all of the key ages and stages of their lives.

Boys & Girls Clubs are committed to working collaboratively with key partners, including the federal government, to ensure a better, brighter future for children, youth and families across Canada. Together, we will prepare young Canadians to meet the challenges ahead.

As it plans its 2019 budget, the government should recognize the importance of after-school programming to aid in the stated goal of growing the economy and creating a better future for all Canadians.

¹ Bottrell, D., and K. Russell. 2010. International "Best Practice" for Out of School Services and Activities for 9-12 year old Children: Literature Review Report. Australia: University of Sydney.

² Public Health Agency of Canada. 2004. Young People in Canada: Their Health and Well-Being. Chapter 11, Division of Childhood and Adolescence, Ottawa.

³ Pittman, K., Toleman I., Yohalem, N. & T. Ferber. 2003. Preventing Problems, Promoting Development, Encouraging Engagement: Competing Priorities or Inseparable Goals? The Forum for Youth Investment.

⁴ Arbreton et al. 2009, cited in Afterschool Alliance. 2015. Evaluations Backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of afterschool programs' impact on academics, behavior, safety and family life.

⁵ Christian, H., Zubrick, S., Foster, S., Giles-Corti, B., Bull, F., Wood, L., Knuiman, M., Brinkman, S., Houghton, S. & B. Boruff. 2015. The influence of the neighborhood physical environment on early child health and development: A review and call for research. *Health & Place*, 33: 25-36

⁶ Schonert-Riechl, K. 2011. Middle childhood inside and out: the psychological and social worlds of Canadian children ages 9-12. Full Report for the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Vancouver: University of British Columbia..

⁷ Schonert-Reichl. 2011.