



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
Grands Frères Grandes Sœurs du Canada

Investing in Young People for Future Economic Growth

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

Pre-budget Submission

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National Youth Mentoring Advisory Council
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

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Preamble

Mentorship is an opportunity for the government to use a cost effective approach to improve a country's economic growth. The Boston Consulting Group conducted a Social Return on Investment Study in 2013 that highlighted a \$23 value for every dollar invested in mentoring for the most vulnerable young people.

Young Canadians have potential to do well, however those of us that do not have the appropriate supportive, positive influences in our lives or networks to create protective factors that can help guide and connect young people to positive opportunities, our potential becomes risk factors and we end up in the following situations; 11.8% youth are unemployed; only 30% of indigenous youth graduate high school; 10-20% of Canadian youth face poor mental health; 48% of child welfare youth are Indigenous; 1 in 5 youth have contemplated suicide last year; Indigenous youth represent 3x the national average of youth crime.

Mentoring 'Opportunity Youth' allows vulnerable young Canadians to flourish as ethical citizens, empathetic, and responsible young people with healthy relationships BEFORE becoming gang involved, drop out of school, and become diagnosed with a mental health issue or unemployed.

Investments in mentoring as an intentional prevention service create the best future outcomes for all young Canadians. For example youth who had the support of a mentor in our lives are;

-  2x more likely to stay in school and graduate
-  2x more likely to get higher paying jobs;
-  13% more likely to donate to charity and 20% more money donated
-  50% more likely to volunteer

Mentoring is crucial to a child's development because these positive and supportive relationships promote the development of cognitive skills essential for personal and professional success in life.

With a shrinking labour force, Canada "cannot afford to leave anyone behind"⁶. Research demonstrates immigration will be a primary resource pool for the labour market, the Indigenous working age population will potentially be a significant pool of employees, increased investment in education is required to engage youth in the new economy, and the removal of "artificial barriers in the labour market as prescribed by government multiculturalism/diversity and employment equity programs" must be prioritized.⁷

Today, Canada's youth endure pressures of navigating within an education system that may not be adequately equipped to address our particular needs, and a labour market that necessitates a more diverse set of skills. Some youth, from traditionally marginalized groups, encounter a series of systemic and institutional barriers which may impede our ability to contribute fully to the country's economy, which leads to increased feelings of frustration and marginalization¹.

For the labour market, Indigenous and immigrant youth will continue to become more demographically significant in 2017. Despite the systematic barriers to our participation in the social sphere. If the aforementioned barriers are maintained, Canada will suffer a cost between \$72 and \$236 billion per year (equivalent of 6 percent to 20 percent of GDP). These barriers to contribution will lead to a decrease of skilled human capital, and an increase in social and justice spending.

As the National Youth Mentoring Advisory Council for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada we **recommend** through the Finance Committee the investment of **\$25 million in MENTORING** to fulfil three main prevention areas for the best **Economic Growth: Ensuring Canada's Competitiveness;**

¹ <http://horizons.gc.ca/en/content/unlocking-potential-marginalized-youth>

- ✎ **ONE:** Investing in **increasing** Mentoring Services in Canada by 10,000 additional young people focusing on underrepresented young people for equitable outcomes;
- ✎ **TWO:** Investing in Mentoring **Research** in Canada;
- ✎ **THREE:** Investing in Mentoring for **Youth Employment** through the Youth Employment Strategy.

The Government of Canada for the first time in history has focused on young people as contributing to Canada's economic wellbeing. Mentors will provide positive influences which assists 'Opportunity Youth' with the supports we need to reach our full potential.

Recommendations

Recommendation One: Increasing Mentoring Services

An investment of \$13,000,000.00 would provide an additional 10,000 young people in Canada with a much needed mentor through partnerships and relationship development, as well as creating culturally relevant and equitable outcomes that shift to deeper learning and effective and accountable service delivery. For Example Mentoring;

1. **Indigenous Young People:** On a path of on-going reconciliation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples based on mutually respectful relationships within the commitments outlined in 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, will serve as a framework for the work of Mentoring to be critical and transformative in our current practices and policies and reflective on reconciliation within all facets of mentoring organizations:
 - ✎ **Cultural competency training** within all levels of our organization.
 - ✎ **Appropriate visuals and written communications** reconfirming our commitment to the TRC's Calls to Action.
2. **Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Healthy development depends on healthy relationshipsⁱ and healthy relationships provide a strong foundation for life-long engagement. Research shows the links between mental health realities and the impact of mentoring:
 - ✎ Mentoring intervention for children in foster care results in improved mental health outcomes, especially those associated with trauma, anxiety, and depression.ⁱⁱ
 - ✎ Support from caring adults can lower the risk of disconnection among disadvantaged young people.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - ✎ The presence of positive relationships with adults has been correlated with lower rates of substance use and exposure to violence, increased academic performance^{iv}, and prevention against poor mental health.
3. **Mentoring Refugee, Immigrant and Newcomer:** through continued partnership and leveraging our networks introducing a mentor can provide a protective factor against culture shock, a new climate, language barriers, a new education system, parental underemployment, which can put them at increased risk of falling behind.

An Outcomes Report conducted by Taylor Newberry Consulting Sept 2015 on a Mentoring Program showed:

- ✎ 91% of mentored Refugee, Immigrant and Newcomer felt more confident after participation in the mentoring program;
- ✎ 62% believed that the mentoring program contributed to their completion of homework;
- ✎ 74% of children reported that the mentoring program helped them learn where to go if they needed help, and 94% of children believed that they were better connected to Canada resulting in them being better connected to community;

Recommendation Two: Canadian Research

An investment of \$7,000,000.00 toward the development of the Canadian Research Institute on the Impact of Mentoring in the areas of; youth employment, mental health and wellbeing, new Canadians, Indigenous Youth, etc.

What Science Currently Tells Us as an example of Canadian Research; youth well-being requires immediate attention when we are concerned with productivity in this country. As the UNICEF Report Card, Building A Future identified that Canada ranks 25th out of 41 countries, we need to be doing better for us youth.

The Palix Foundation highlights neuroscience research that indicates nurturing caring relationships provided through mentoring programs are critical in buffering the impact of toxic stress caused by adversity and trauma.

Toxic stress can have an adverse effect on the developing brain and impair development of executive functioning and emotional regulation, negatively impacting things like school behaviour and performance. Because of these vulnerabilities, these children and youth are at risk of not having the opportunity to live to their full potential (e.g., completing school, finding employment, being a contributing member of society). In addition, should these children experience a life of poverty, crime or substance abuse due to these vulnerabilities, the cost to society is significant. Mentoring programs and services support young people facing societal barriers and adverse conditions in their lives, and can actually repair the damage of toxic stress; not having a mentor, leaves our youth at risk.

Mentoring re-maps brain architecture and builds resilience. Our brains are built over time through back and forth interactions. Relationships with mentors that can provide this kind of interaction, not only builds children's brains but also makes the connections in their brains stronger.



Recent work in neuroscience proves the presence of supportive adults in a child's life contributes to building a healthy brain, a process which sets the child up for a lifetime of resilience, positive social interaction, and academic and career success.^v In addition, the Big Brothers Big Sisters network has evidence-based research which demonstrates significant mentoring from a recently released longitudinal study (the first of its kind in Canada) by the **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAM-H)**. This *longitudinal analysis, on the Health and Well-Being of Canadian Children*, demonstrates mentoring as a proven approach and contributes to: reduction of poverty; reduction of unemployment; decreases in risky-behaviour; reduced violence; significant increases in positive civic engagement; and career readiness.

To create the Canadian Research Institute on Mentoring would advance Canada on a global scale and provide critical learning, knowledge mobilization and demonstrate direct impact of mentoring to the economic growth in Canada.

Recommendation Three: Youth Employment




An investment of \$5,000,000.00 in mentoring for youth employment through the Youth Employment Strategy.

Employable skills are a learnt behaviour for young people to become engaged and productive citizens, mentoring is a low cost, high impact intervention that delivers on;

-  **School Completion**, engaging positive mentoring for connectedness to school and community.
-  **Skill Readiness** by utilizing the depth of knowledge of our long term staff to emerging employees who require support and knowledge transition.

Not only does mentoring provide valuable training and skills development for Canada's future workforce, it also provides a buffer against serious struggles while building resilience and capacity to manage difficulties and thrive.

As proof of success, employability mentoring, a study from MayTree Foundation recently focused on the mentoring of skilled immigrants, and found that protégés "had significantly improved employment outcomes, earning trajectories and shorter times to find employment". Some highlights:

-  A year after the start of their mentoring relationship, unemployment dropped from 73% to 19%
-  71% of protégés were employed in their field, compared to 27% pre-mentoring
-  Average full-time earnings increased by more than 60% from \$36,905 to \$59,944

With the government of Canada's current work through the ServiceCorp granting and the development of the first National Youth Public Policy Agenda are great ways that a young person can get involved, feel heard and also engage in our local communities. This work combined with mentoring will enhance the success of young people and provide the ongoing support needed for young people to thrive, do well and give back, we are on the right road and we're ready to do more.

Summary

Canadian competitiveness amongst other countries can be quantified by the benefits of youth mentoring that comes from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, which bases its estimates on the ability of mentors to keep students in school, making young people more productive members of society later on. It cites an estimate by the Alliance for Excellent Education that the economic benefit of achieving a 50% reduction in student drop outs in the 50 largest metro areas is more than \$13 billion.

Youth in Canada today have the most potential and we need you to invest in us. Opportunity youth are currently underperforming and by investing **\$25 Million in Mentoring** will provide the ongoing support needed for the greatest economic growth in Canada.

ⁱ PREVNet Healthy Relationships Project: Healthy Development Depends on Healthy Relationships, Debra Pepler and Wendy Craig, PREVNet and Dilys Haner PREVNet and York University, November 15, 2012

ⁱⁱ Impact of a Mentoring and Skills Group Program on Mental Health Outcomes for Maltreated Children in Foster Care, Heather N. Taussig, PhD; Sara E. Culhane, PhD, JD

ⁱⁱⁱ Youth Who Are "Disconnected" And Those Who Then Reconnect: Assessing The Influence Of Family, Programs, Peers And Communities, By Elizabeth C. Hair, Ph.D., Kristin A. Moore, Ph.D., Thomson J. Ling, MA, Cameron McPhee-Baker, BA, and Brett V. Brown, Ph.D. July 2009

^{iv} Scales, D. & Leffert, N. (1999). "Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of Scientific Research on Adolescent Development." Minnea polis. Search Institute.

^v Alliance fir Strong Families and Communities, *Using a Brain Science-Infused Lens in policy Development: Achieving healthier outcomes for children and families.*