

Investing in Youth for Canada's Social & Economic Future

Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations
in Advance of the 2020 Budget

By Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada
July 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Direct support for youth facing adversities

That the government provide annual funding in the amount of \$25 million for Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programs.

Recommendation 2: Strengthening the Charitable Sector

That the government implement the recommendations of the Senate Special Committee on the Charitable Sector, as noted in its first report *Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*.

Who We Are

Big Brothers Big Sisters enables life-changing mentoring relationships to ignite the power and potential of young people. Founded in 1913, we are a federation of 102 local charities operating in 1,100 communities across Canada.

In 2018, we mobilized 21,300+ volunteers to provide the mentorship needed by 41,400+ children and youth. These young people face adversities in their lives, resulting in toxic stress that can negatively impact their development. Our mentors are adults who create a positive developmental relationship with a young person, providing guidance, support, and constructive role modelling. We meet community needs that are not always addressed through government social support structures.

As a national mentoring organization, we have a vested interest in improving the lives and outcomes for children and youth across the country, including those from Indigenous, newcomer, racialized, and LGBTQ2S+ communities. This is only possible through their involvement in mentoring programs that acknowledge, honour and celebrate their communities and their stories.

Investing in Youth for Canada's Social & Economic Future

Today, young people represent nearly one-third of the Canadian population. The Government of Canada has taken measures to underscore its commitment to Canada's future, via the creation of the Prime Minister's Youth Council, new programs and investments introduced in Budget 2019, and the first-ever Canada's Youth Policy.

We thank the Government of Canada for launching the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy and for recognizing the importance of mentors in this work through investment in the Canadian Mentoring Partnership. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada is proud to have stewarded the creation of the Canadian Mentoring Partnership, alongside the Alberta Mentoring Partnership and the Ontario Mentoring Coalition, and will actively participate in its development over the next few years.

While the government is taking steps to listen and respond to young Canadians, the need remains high. Young people are asking for an even-more responsive political system, with two-thirds giving governments a score of 5 or less out of 10 for their responsiveness to the needs and views of young people.¹ Economic inclusion continues to be a critical issue, with 85% of surveyed youth indicating that there is still a lot of discrimination in Canada and 80% saying it is harder to get ahead today than in the past.

Budget 2020 represents an opportunity to build and expand on youth-centred investments to ensure a more inclusive, innovative Canadian economy for generations to come.

For this fiscal year, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada recommends the following:

¹ "ANOTHER YOUTHQUAKE? Exploring the concerns, priorities, and political engagement of Canadian youth aged 15 to 30." was written by David Coletto, PhD & Oksana Kishchuk, and conducted for a coalition of Canadian national youth-serving agencies. The survey was conducted and analyzed by Abacus Data.

Recommendation 1: That the government provide annual funding in the amount of \$25 million for Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring programs.

Intentional mentoring relationships are critical to addressing five of the priorities identified by young people in Canada's Youth Policy.

- **Leadership & Impact.** According to the Boston Consulting Group's multi-stage study of Big Brothers Big Sisters alumni, young people with mentors are 30% more likely to volunteer, and when they do, they give 50% more of their time.²

Big Brothers Big Sisters also creates over 12,000 meaningful volunteer opportunities for young people every single year, with nearly 60% of our mentors being under the age of 30. Our mentors report a greater sense of connection with the community and a broader world-view.³

To further boost volunteerism and civic participation, Big Brothers Big Sisters is implementing a national Youth Engagement Strategy to ensure that young people's voices are heard. The diverse members of our National Youth Mentoring Advisory Council are actively advising staff on the future of mentoring, and they recently shared their concerns on youth employment and youth mental health with political and government leaders in Ottawa.

We also collaborate with other national youth-serving agencies and stakeholders to highlight civic engagement opportunities for young people in our programs.

- **Health & Wellness.** Many young people face adversities in their lives, resulting in toxic stress. Without positive adult support, this stress affects brain development and can have lifelong consequences on a person's physical and mental health.⁴

Positive developmental relationships, such as the ones created by Big Brothers Big Sisters one-to-one mentoring, are essential to mitigating the impacts of toxic stress. A growing body of research points to having at least one positive relationship with an adult as the single most common factor for building resilience and overcoming adversities.⁵

- **Innovation, Skills & Learning.** Mentoring can lower barriers to education, with research showing that young people with mentors are 2 times more likely to stay in school.⁶ Recognizing that adolescents are seeking additional mentoring supports to navigate the transition to post-secondary education and the workforce, Big Brothers Big Sisters is responding with a national expansion of RBC Post-Secondary Education (PSE) & Career Readiness programs in 16 locations across Canada. These programs will provide the support and mentorship necessary for youth to

² Boston Consulting Group (2013). Big Brothers Big Sisters Social Return on Investment Study.

³ Big Brothers Big Sisters of Saskatoon (2019). In-School Mentoring Program Logic Model.

⁴ Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child (2015). Brief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children's Development.

⁵ Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child (2017). Brief: The Science of Resilience.

⁶ DeWit, David & Lipman, Ellen (2013). Mentoring Relationships and the Well-Being of Canadian Youth: An Examination of Big Brothers Big Sisters Community Match Programs.

enrol in postsecondary programs and find meaningful employment.

- **Employment.** Young people with mentors are 17% more likely to *find* employment, earning an average of \$315,000 more over the course of a lifetime.⁷ Big Brothers Big Sisters is innovating and actively supporting marginalized youth in their transition to the workforce through the expansion of PSE & Career Readiness programs, the Canadian Mentoring Partnership, and collaboration with employer coalition initiatives such as [Opportunity for All Youth](#).
- **Truth & Reconciliation.** At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we recognize our responsibility to understand, honour, and respect the unceded territories and treaties of the lands on which we are situated. We are embarking on a multi-year journey to reflect on and evolve our practices, including scaling promising local and regional Reconciliation initiatives such as the Saskatchewan Indigenous Mentoring Partnership. An investment in Big Brothers Big Sisters youth mentoring enables the continuation of this journey.

Youth mentoring is also a cost-effective way to reduce crime. Analysis by Public Safety Canada suggests that the direct costs for a youth who gets engrained in a life of crime will total \$1.4 million by 30 years of age. That analysis also shows that targeted interventions at various points in life, such as mentoring, could have changed the course for the youth in question.⁸

Detailed Investment Framework

Our cost to make a successful match between a mentor and a youth is \$1,764 per year. A \$25 million annual investment would enable an additional 14,000+ youth to participate in life-changing mentoring relationships through Big Brothers Big Sisters. To look at that another way, based on the \$1.4 million in costs detailed in the previous paragraph, preventing just 18 of the 14,000+ youth from getting involved in a life of crime would pay for this annual investment.

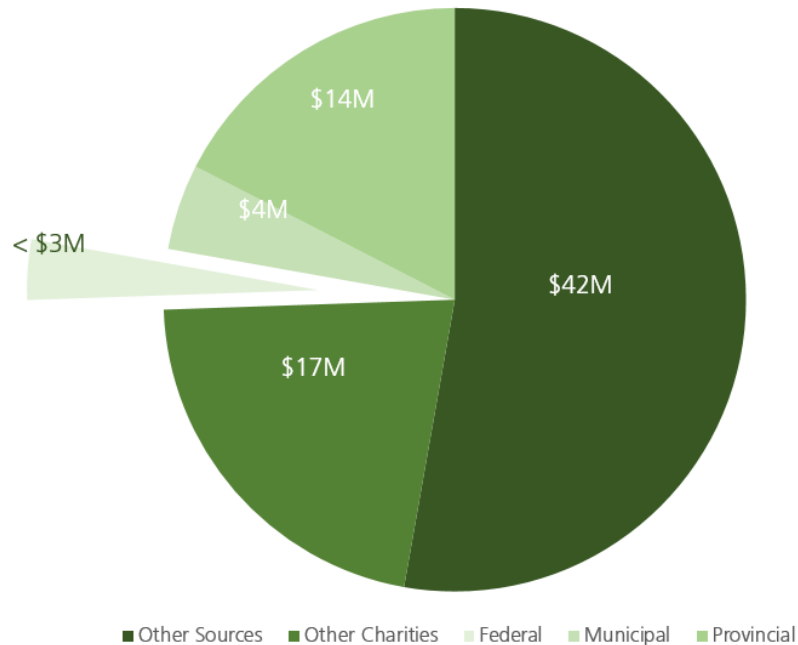
To enable life-changing mentoring relationships	For
Intentionally recruit volunteer mentors based on the needs of each community’s young people	14,000 youth across Canada, with a \$23-to-1 social return on investment
Match each young person with a professionally screened volunteer mentor	
Monitor and support the match through a professional caseworker	
Train and support the mentor, mentee, and family	
Graduate the match relationship towards a natural support system	

The government’s investment would match and help scale the contributions of thousands of individual Canadians and the private sector.

⁷ The Boston Consulting Group (2013). Big Brothers Big Sisters Social Return on Investment Study.

⁸ Public Safety Canada, Community Safety and Countering Crime Branch, Research Division (2016). Tyler’s Troubled Life. Ottawa, ON.

Federal government funding has represented 3% of Big Brothers Big Sisters revenue



Source: BBBS data, 2018.

Recommendation 2: That the government implement the recommendations of the Senate Special Committee on the Charitable Sector, as noted in its first report *Catalyst for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*.

As one of Canada's largest charities, Big Brothers Big Sisters was pleased to provide testimony for the Senate of Canada's study of the charitable sector. Young people are inextricably linked to the charitable and volunteer sectors; they are at the forefront of disruption within these sectors and they are beneficiaries of its services.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada recommends that the government carefully review the recommendations of the Special Senate Committee on the Charitable Sector, which can be found in the report *Catalysts for Change: A Roadmap to a Stronger Charitable Sector*.

In particular, we encourage adoption of the following recommendations:

#1: Develop and implement a national volunteer strategy.

The Government of Canada can coordinate nationwide promotion and recognition of volunteering. A national volunteer strategy would realize economies of scale for volunteer-powered charities, creating even greater efficiencies.

#2: Include costs associated with volunteer recruitment and retention in contribution agreements.

Young people seek mentors who understand or share their diverse lived experiences. Volunteer mentors may themselves face financial barriers to getting involved, and targeted volunteer recruitment based on

young people's needs has cost implications. The Government of Canada can help ensure effective volunteer recruitment and retention through its contribution agreements with charities.

#3: Explore ways to alleviate a financial burden for needed police checks for volunteers.

The well-being and safe participation of young people is a top priority for Big Brothers Big Sisters, and police checks for prospective mentors are a critical step in screening volunteers. Alleviating the costs related to police checks would ensure a more efficient and effective screening process for tens of thousands of prospective volunteer mentors.

#9: Review existing tax measures available to individual donors.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is fortunate to rely on the generosity of individual Canadians in addition to the support of the public and private sectors. A review of existing tax measures could recognize the full breadth of charitable giving and ensure sustainability of the charitable sector.

#12: Ensure that grants and contribution agreements cover a minimum of two years, renewable as appropriate; and minimize complexity for smaller amounts.

Stable, diversified funding is critical for charities and non-profit organizations to deliver essential services in the community. Longer-term grants and contribution agreements would help provide that stability, enabling greater efficiency in use of public funds.

By addressing sustainability in the charitable and volunteer sectors, the Government of Canada will be supporting a new generation of donors and volunteers. These investments will generate a ripple effect that benefits Canadians for decades to come.