



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Mentoring for a prosperous Canada  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada

Pre-budget Submission  
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Executive Summary

Mentorship is an opportunity for the government to utilize a cost-effective approach to improve a country's prosperity. The Boston Consulting Group conducted a Social Return on Investment Study in 2013 that highlighted an \$18-\$24 return for every dollar invested in mentoring.

The Huffington Post highlighted in an article on May 18<sup>th</sup> that **Sophie Grégoire Trudeau** emphasized the importance of good role models for boys and the need for "Men to Be Better Mentors for Boys" in a speech.

Former President **Barack Obama** invested financial resources and his time to Mentorship through a campaign referred to as 'My Brother's Keeper'.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada has been providing mentoring programs for young Canadians for 104 years, and is leading a Pan-Canadian Mentoring Strategy to advance mentoring as an effective approach to reducing risk and vulnerability for children and youth. The development of this unique strategy will involve collaboration with numerous partners/stakeholders including other youth-serving organizations, mentoring organizations, governments, and diverse communities (e.g. ethno-racial, LGBTQ). Youth will be engaged throughout this development stage. A Pan-Canadian Mentoring Strategy will increase access to various forms of mentoring and its health and social impacts (e.g. improved mental health, academic completion, civic engagement, and increased employability) to improve the well-being and productivity of our young people.

Mentoring generates protective factors for our most vulnerable populations, ultimately supporting them with the confidence to achieve their full potential in their own lives. It has direct implications in the following areas:

- ✱ Enhanced Mentoring for **Youth Employability**
- ✱ Improved educational outcomes for **Indigenous** young people;
- ✱ Enhanced mentoring services for young people's **mental health and well-being**
- ✱ Increased connectedness among **immigrant and refugee** children, youth and families in Canada

**"What Federal Measures would help Canadians be more productive?"** We recommend that Canadians, by way of the Finance Committee, invest **\$20** million over three years to fulfil five main goals:

- ✱ Advance a **Pan-Canadian approach, 'Mentoring Canada'** – to support collaboration and partnership to increase access for tens of thousands of vulnerable young Canadians to the benefits and impacts of mentoring. An investment of **\$5 million**.
- ✱ **Increase access** to various forms of mentoring through enhanced recruitment, screening, monitoring, matching, volunteer mentor support and supervision ensuring the safety of young people and increased positive outcomes/impacts. An investment of **\$12 million**, impacting an additional **12,000** young people in mentoring relationships;
- ✱ Ensure **youth** from across Canada are involved in the development, execution and evaluation of the pan-Canadian strategy **\$1 million**,
- ✱ **Evaluate** the pan-Canadian strategy and outcomes of various forms of mentoring. An investment of **\$1 million**, and
- ✱ National **Coordination** by fostering tangible commitments to mentoring. An investment of **\$1 million**.

As well, the government of Canada would be supporting a Call to Action to mobilize Canadians to give their time and volunteer as mentors.

The average Canadian believes that young people deserve the best opportunities in life, and are willing to invest in young people to give them an opportunity to reach their full potential for the well-being of our nation. The

government of Canada for the first time in history has a mandate that engages youth in Canada's future, and the proposed investment will launch a national network for Canada's young people.

### What Science Tells Us

Youth well-being requires immediate attention to increase productivity in this country. 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 such as neglect, abuse, and poor living conditions.

According to the *Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University*, **"children who do well despite serious hardship have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult"**.

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 often deprived of the opportunity to live life to their full potential (e.g., completing school, finding employment, being a contributing member of society) or worse, are at risk of living a life of poverty, crime or mental health issues. Mentoring programs and services can help young Canadians reduce or avoid these risks, and achieve their full potential. Mentoring can repair the damage of toxic stress resulting from the societal barriers and/or adverse conditions in hundreds of thousands of young lives.

Mentoring is an intervention that re-maps brain architecture and builds resilience. Brain development is like building a house. Children need support from mentors and other people who can assist in the construction process. Brains are built over time through back and forth interactions. Relationships with mentors provide this kind of interaction, not only helping to build children's brains but also making the connections in their brains stronger. The protection afforded by responsive relationships provides a buffer to negative environments and fosters resiliency.

Recent work in neuroscience proves that the presence of supportive adults in a child's life contributes to building healthy brain architecture, a result which sets the child up for a lifetime of resilience, positive social interaction, and academic and career success.<sup>i</sup> In addition to this neuroscience, the Big Brothers Big Sisters network in Canada, has evidence-based research which demonstrates significant outcomes. *A longitudinal analysis, on the Health and Well-Being of Canadian Children<sup>ii</sup>*, demonstrates that mentoring contributes to: reducing poverty; reducing unemployment; decreasing risky-behaviour; reducing violence; increasing positive civic engagement; and improving career readiness.

### THE NEED

In keeping with the government of Canada's priorities for youth employability, youth mental health and well-being, equitable outcomes for Indigenous young people and support for Refugee, Immigrant and new Canadian young people, the following integrated, effective and cost-efficient investments are recommended.

## MENTORING YOUNG PEOPLE FACING ADVERSITIES: CLOSING THE GAP AND DEVELOPING PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS THROUGH MENTORING

## Youth Employability

Becoming an engaged and productive citizen is a learned behaviour and mentoring is a low-cost, high-impact intervention that delivers on the promise of opportunities for school success and employment through:

- ✚ **School Completion** through positive mentoring to enhance connectedness to school and community;
- ✚ **Skill Readiness** by matching our baby boomer generation and longer-term staff to emerging employees who would benefit from support and knowledge transition; and
- ✚ **E-Mentoring** to provide an opportunity for mentors and mentees from anywhere in Canada to be connected for the purpose of extending support, knowledge and experience to young people without geographic and other accessibility constraints.

Mentorship can provide valuable training and skills development for Canada's future workforce.

**The OUTCOME: An investment of \$3 million will provide 3,000 young Canadians with mentorship to support school completion, skills development and employment readiness.**

## Indigenous Young People

The commitments outlined in 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action will serve as a framework for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to develop Mentoring programs that transform current practices and policies, and be reflective of reconciliation:

- ✚ **Cultural competency** training;
- ✚ **Appropriate** visuals and written communications;
- ✚ Dialogue and **youth engagement with Indigenous Youth**;
- ✚ **Partnership and relationship development** to ensure mentoring is responsive to Indigenous peoples and their communities; and
- ✚ **Culturally relevant outcomes** for knowledge mobilization, deeper learning, effective and accountable service delivery to Aboriginal young people.

With a Pan-Canadian approach to mentoring we have the collective capacity to serve Indigenous communities, with significant expertise across the country.

**OUTCOME: An investment of \$3 million will provide an additional 3,000 Indigenous young Canadians with access to culturally-based mentoring, by utilizing the framework above.**

## Mental Health and Well-being of Young People

Healthy development depends on healthy relationships<sup>iii</sup> and healthy relationships provide a strong foundation for engagement and life-long adaptation. Research shows the links between mental health and mentoring:

- ✚ Mentoring intervention for children in foster care results in improved mental health outcomes, especially for young people who have been exposed to trauma, anxiety, and depression<sup>iv</sup>;
- ✚ Support from caring adults can lower the risk of disconnection among disadvantaged young people<sup>v</sup>; and
- ✚ When young people lack a sense of belonging and lack the necessary social support networks, they are more likely to engage in negative behaviour<sup>vi</sup>; and

✱ The presence of positive relationships with adults has been correlated with lower rates of substance use and less exposure to violence, stronger connections to school and increased academic performance<sup>vii</sup>, all of which are protective factors for positive mental health.

**OUTCOME: Investment of \$3 million will provide enhanced mentoring services to an additional 3,000 young Canadians to maintain and improve mental health and prevent mental illness**

### **Refugee, Immigrant and Newcomer young people**

Mentoring for Refugee, Immigrant and Newcomer young people in Canada through continued partnerships will help provide protective factors against culture shock, a new climate, language barriers, unfamiliar food, a new education system, parental underemployment, and downward social mobility.

An Outcomes Report conducted by Taylor Newberry Consulting Sept 2015<sup>viii</sup> on the BBBSC pilot Refugee, Immigrant and Newcomer 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; and
- ✱ 85% of children felt that they had improved their English skills.

**OUTCOME: An investment of \$3 million would provide an additional 3,000 young refugee, immigrant, new Canadians with access to mentoring.**

**These four outcomes comprise the \$12 million referenced on page 1.**

### **Taking Action and the Mentoring Effect**

The proposed **\$20 million** investment in volunteer **MENTORING** will enhance the future prosperity of Canada.

### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada**

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a national organization with a mandate to provide the highest quality Mentorship Services to Canadian youth. We employ over 1000 individuals and engage 50,000 volunteers per year, serving 42,500 young people. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada represents 108 of the 170,000 registered charities and not-for-profits in Canada in a sector that contributes \$106 billion or 8.1% of Canada's GDP.

The Pan-Canadian Mentoring Strategy will lead to partnership and collaboration among multiple organizations and sectors. This will significantly improve access to various forms of mentoring to help young Canadians address the adversities and societal barriers that they face, improve academic achievement, enhance mental and physical health, and increase employability and civic engagement.

A Pan-Canadian Mentoring Strategy will help vulnerable young Canadians, including ethno-racial and Indigenous youth, to reduce or avoid the risks resulting from adversities and societal barriers present in their lives, and achieve their full potential. These outcomes will significantly increase our country's productivity and prosperity.

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<sup>i</sup> Alliance for Strong Families and Communities, *Using a Brain Science-Infused Lens in policy Development: Achieving healthier outcomes for children and families.*

<sup>ii</sup> Centre for Addiction and Mental Health 2013, *Longitudinal Study on Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada Mentoring.*

<sup>iii</sup> 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

<sup>iv</sup> *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

<sup>v</sup> *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

<sup>vi</sup> Canadian Institute for Health Information (2008). *Improving the Health of Canadians: Mental Health, Delinquency and Criminal Activity.* Ottawa, CIHI.

<sup>vii</sup> Scales, D. & Leffert, N. (1999). *"Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of Scientific Research on Adolescent Development."* Minneapolis. Search Institute.

<sup>viii</sup> Taylor Newberry Consulting, *"Conversation Club Report"*, Dr. Andrew Taylor. 2015