

# Pre-budget brief

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The Honorable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance  
Submission to pre-budget consultations, Budget 2017



**Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada**

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# About Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada supports and encourages children and youth as they grow and develop. We are a national charity serving 200,000 young people in more than 625 locations across Canada. Boys and Girls Clubs provide relevant programs and initiatives that inspire, teach, challenge and respond to evolving social concerns. This helps young people realize their best potential in a complex world. All of our programs are closely monitored, measured, evaluated and adapted to address changing needs and opportunities.

## Who We Serve:

- 57% are from low income families
- 43% are from single parent families
- 10% are Aboriginal children and youth
- 14% have special needs (learning and/or physical)
- 11% are new immigrants to Canada

## Summary of recommendations

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada asks the government to invest in programs and initiatives that will mitigate the effects of poverty for children and youth and help them achieve their best possible future. More specifically, we ask the government to do the following:

1. As part of a national strategy to reduce poverty, ensure children have access to after school programs that foster their healthy development and academic achievement, and that provide social supports for families.
2. Help low-income youth complete their education and enter the labour market by investing in the *Rogers Raising the Grade Program*.
3. Invest in culturally relevant programming for Indigenous youth so that they have equal opportunity to achieve and thrive.

## 1. Include after-school programs in the national plan to eliminate poverty

**Recommendation:** BGCC asks the government to include a role for quality after-school programming in Canada's national strategy to end poverty.

### Background on the National Poverty Reduction Strategy

The government has promised to:

- Lift 315,000 children out of poverty through the Canada Child Benefit.
- Invest in social infrastructure, including affordable housing and Housing First initiatives.
- Develop a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on progress.

To maximize the value of these commitments, the government should include an explicit role for after school programs that not only help reduce poverty in the future, but that will alleviate the effects of poverty now.

### How does poverty harm children?

Living in impoverished conditions exposes children and youth to difficult social environments, poor material conditions, with few incentives and supports for positive development.

Youth from low-income families have an increased risk (not a certainty of) poorer cognitive, physical, and social development outcomes, poor educational attainment, and lower employment success.

It is important to note that Indigenous children, racialized children, the 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 are at greatest risk of these harms.

### After school programs mitigate the effects of poverty

Boys and Girls Clubs are primarily located in low-income communities, where they help meet the needs of children, youth and families. Nearly 60% of the 200,000 young people who walk through Club doors each year live in low-income families. Clubs mitigate the effects of poverty by providing the opportunities and supports that children and youth need to succeed and thrive.

Effects of poverty	Quality after school programs offer...
Lack of adequate food and nutrition	Access to nutritious foods, food literacy programs
Inadequacy of supportive organizations and institutions Family stress	Social supports for families
Inadequate opportunities for health promoting activities	Recreation, sports and other programs that support physical, emotional and intellectual development
Stigmatization, discrimination, social exclusion	A supportive place to belong, with mentors and peers from all social backgrounds
Inadequate network of relationships	Access to training, volunteering, and jobs opportunities
Poor educational and employment outcomes	Education, training and youth engagement programs

Nearly two decades of research<sup>1</sup> has shown that children who consistently participate in after-school programs are more likely to become physically and emotionally healthy adults who are involved in a variety of caring relationships, who are self-sufficient and independent, and who participate fully in society. Structured, supervised, and nurturing after-school environments have lasting positive effects on children's emotional and physical well-being and their academic development. Children benefit most from a range of high-quality programs that include recreation, play, arts, civic engagement and learning, a mix most often found in quality after-school programs.

Boys and Girls Clubs have long been leaders in after-school programming. We know from experience that providing the optimal conditions for the healthy development of children should involve the community that surrounds children and their families. To ensure that all children have the opportunity to make the most of their after-school hours requires concerted and coordinated efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> The Harvard Family Research Centre Project has a database and bibliography of research supporting the positive outcomes of after-school programs for children and youth ages 5 to 19 years. <http://www.hfrp.org/out-of-school-time>

As part of its national poverty strategy, we ask the government to work with provincial governments, non-profit organizations, and the private sector to ensure children have access to quality after-school programs.

## 2. Invest in the Rogers Raising the Grade Program

**Recommendation:** BGCC respectfully requests an investment of \$2 million per year, for three years for the *Rogers Raising the Grade* (RRTG) program.

### About Rogers Raising the Grade

Launched in 2012, *Rogers Raising the Grade* reduces barriers to education for youth who face multiple barriers. It is a partnership between BGCC and the *Rogers Youth Fund*. Currently offered to over 2,000 youth in 36 locations across the country, the program:

- Provides after-school homework help and career mentors to youth aged 14 to 18.
- Increases high school graduation rates and improves access to post-secondary education.
- Matches youth with a mentor who helps them discover their own career interests, select the right high school courses to reach their career goals, study for and succeed in their courses, and fill out applications to post-secondary institutions and scholarships.
- Supports youth learning through technology centres that provide a designated space with computers, high-speed Internet access and software.

### Current scope of the program

- The *Rogers Raising the Grade* program is currently offered in:
  - BC - Vancouver, Victoria, Kamloops
  - AB - Edmonton, Wetaskiwin, Ponoka, Airdrie, Calgary, Lethbridge, Cochrane
  - SK - Saskatoon, Yorkton
  - MB - Winnipeg
  - ON - London, Niagara, Hamilton, Kingston, Kawartha Lakes, Ottawa, Durham, Cornwall, and the GTA Toronto
  - QC - Montreal, LaSalle
  - NB - Fredericton, Moncton, Riverview
  - NS - Truro, Spryfield
  - PE - Summerside
  - NL - St John's

### Why is *Rogers Raising the Grade* needed?

*This program saved my life. I couldn't seem to learn anywhere else.  
I can't believe I'm finally going to graduate – RRTG participant*

- Young people from modest socio-economic backgrounds face many barriers to completing high school and pursuing post-secondary education. *Rogers Raising the Grade* helps level the playing field.
- Participation in *Rogers Raising the Grade* helps young people complete their high school education and access post-secondary training, increasing their chances of securing a good job.

- Mentorship and leadership training give youth a better ability to identify and achieve goals.
- Over time, we expect the following outcomes:
  - Youth participate equitably in post-secondary education
    - Graduate high school, apply to and enroll in post-secondary education
    - Persist in and graduate from post-secondary education
  - Youth have skills and credentials to succeed in the labour market
    - Identify educational and employment goals and identify the resources and steps needed to achieve them
    - Connect to the labour market through a meaningful first job experience
    - Self-sufficiency and independence

### 3. Give Indigenous youth opportunities to grow and learn

**Recommendation:** Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada asks the government to invest in culturally relevant on- and off-reserve programs for Indigenous youth.

#### Background

The government has promised to ensure better economic, health, and social outcomes for Indigenous peoples – that work starts with Indigenous children and youth. Part of the government’s promise involves implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Call to action 66 asks the federal government to establish multi-year funding for community-based youth organizations to deliver programs on reconciliation, and establish a national network to share information and best practices.

Youth on reserve, those in remote communities, and Indigenous youth living in Canada’s big cities are in dire need of culturally appropriate programs that support their health and well-being, their academic achievement, and their employment and life aspirations.

An increase in funding for recreational programs, when combined with increased funding allocations for education and First Nations child and family services (as per the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal decision), will go a long way to improving the lives of children and youth today and ensuring they have a bright future.

#### Improving outcomes for Indigenous youth together

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is one of the founding partners of the 4Rs Youth Movement, a youth-led initiative whose mission it is to change the country by changing the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people.

Boys and Girls Clubs are enthusiastic and dedicated champions of the principles of the 4Rs Youth Movement – **Respect, Reciprocity, Reconciliation and Relevance** – and are honoured to be part of this historic and unprecedented partnership between national youth serving agencies, national Aboriginal organizations, and foundations.

Canada’s Indigenous population is young and growing. The 4Rs Youth Movement enables Indigenous youth to celebrate their identity through cultural enrichment and leadership opportunities. By creating relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth they are co-creating a mandate for reconciliation that will translate into a new vision for a future Canada and bold actions to reach that vision.

We are extremely supportive of the important work being undertaken by the 4Rs Youth Movement and we are hopeful that it will have a significant, measurable effect not only on the educational, economic, political, and social outcomes of Indigenous youth, their families and communities, but for all Canadians.

Initiatives like the 4Rs are important, but there is an urgent need to invest in community-based programs for Indigenous youth that can meet their need for recreation, mental health supports, and leadership opportunities close to home. Resources for Indigenous youth are lacking, especially on reserve, but also in Northern and remote communities and in cities.

Partnerships such as the 4Rs Youth Movement serve as an example of what can be accomplished when organizations come together and put Indigenous youth first. BGCC has extensive expertise in delivering quality programs for children, youth and families – including a Boys and Girls Club on the Saddle Lake Reserve. We are ready and able to partner with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis groups and organizations to provide much needed supports and programs for Indigenous youth.