



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Pre-budget brief

**House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance  
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Investing in Future Prosperity of Youth:  
**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada**

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*“Economic progress translates into social progress; a society where all citizens benefit, and no one is left behind.” Deputy Minister Al Hilton, Saskatchewan Northern Affairs*

## Summary

Over 42,000 children and youth are mentored in a Big Brother Big Sister mentoring program in Canada. We employ over 1000 individuals, engage over 50,000 volunteers per year, are one of the 86,000 registered charities and contribute positively to the 8.1 percent of Canada’s GDP.

In a recent Social Return on Investment Study released by Boston Consulting Group, Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs yield a social return of \$18 for every dollar invested and for the most economically disadvantaged group there was a \$23 return on every dollar invested. The results show significant economic value across multiple dimensions with a cumulative lifetime benefit: employment (increased lifetime earnings); philanthropy (greater propensity to give back to the community); life skills and positive mental health.

Results showed an increased lifetime income of participants of \$315,000 more income earned over their working life. Adults mentored as children were found to be 10% more likely than non-mentored adults to donate an additional \$65 dollars per year on average and 24% more likely to volunteer 23 extra hours per year on average.

The study also clearly showed that vast numbers of former mentees see the relationship with their mentor as a transformational moment in their lives that led to enhanced life outcomes, an ability to make better decisions, increased confidence and a general sense of well-being and happiness.

**Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs impact our vulnerable populations and aligns with the focus of the 2014 Throne Speech which stated “Families are the cornerstone of our society. Families raise our children and build our communities. As our families succeed, Canada succeeds.”**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada (BBBSC) increases economic value by:

- 1. Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training**

**Mentoring North: Aboriginal, Northern and Remote Communities**

To invest in a department within BBBSC referred to as Mentoring North, which will advance services to northern, remote and Aboriginal communities in Canada. ***With a funding request of one million dollars.***

- 2. Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada supports building on the First-Time Donor’s Super Credit that was announced in 2013.

## Recommendations

### **1. *Supporting families and helping vulnerable Canadians by focusing on health, education and training***

#### ***Mentoring North: Aboriginal, Northern and Remote Communities***

The numerous issues facing a large number of Aboriginal youth include, but are not limited to, suicide, unemployment, low graduation rates, homelessness, violence and substance abuse are well documented. Although successful strategies for addressing these issues are scarce, many of the root causes can be addressed through intentionally designed, high-quality mentoring programs. Although mentoring programs are not the panacea for all the challenges young people face today, mentoring relationships can provide a buffer for youth against serious struggles and build their resilience and capacity to manage difficulties.

In order to consistently respond to requests for service from remote, northern and Aboriginal communities in a responsible and flexible manner, BBBSC would like to establish a small department within its existing infrastructure tentatively called Mentoring North. This service recognizes that mentoring already exists, in some way, in many northern, remote and Aboriginal communities. It has the flexibility to respond to the diverse needs of communities and mentoring programs and would support training, program development and casework guidance. The focus would not be on the Big Brothers Big Sisters style of mentoring but mentoring in a broader sense.

#### ***An Overview of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada's Efforts in Remote and Aboriginal Communities<sup>1</sup>***

Since 2000, BBBSC has received over 140 requests from communities to start an agency or a mentoring program with approximately 1/3 coming from Aboriginal communities and the remainder from small, isolated rural communities.

The Big Brothers Big Sisters model works better in an urban setting with a large enough population and financial base to sustain a volunteer Board of Directors and an office with a staffing structure. As mentioned, many of the requests for service received in the past decade are from rural and remote areas without the population base necessary to support an independent agency. To achieve our vision – Every child in Canada who needs a mentor has a mentor – BBBSC recognizes a need to be more flexible in its approach to serving remote and Aboriginal communities.

As a result, BBBSC launched a Northern and Remote Communities Initiative designed to respond to requests for service and to explore collaborative, tailored strategies for fulfilling a growing need expressed by these communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that these terms – rural, remote, northern, Aboriginal – are used interchangeably in an effort to keep the submission brief. We recognize that the needs and strengths of individual communities will vary.

- In Flying Dust First Nation, SK, we established a one year pilot program, supported by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. A licence agreement was signed to deliver teen mentoring in this reserve community of approximately 800 people.
- In Constance Lake First Nation, ON, we established a six month pilot program. A licence agreement was signed to deliver Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds in this Oji-Cree community of just under 1,500 people
- We have signed a partnership agreement with DreamCatcher Mentoring in Yellowknife, NWT to deliver a hybrid mentoring program in response to the numerous requests for service from that community. This mentoring program addresses high school transitions and employability.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada, in partnership with YMCA Canada, YWCA Canada, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada and United Way of Canada, received funding from Employment and Social Development Canada to explore the need for services for young people and their families in Iqaluit, NU. The model of delivery that emerged from community conversations has led us to establish a Community Connections position which will facilitate sharing of evidence-based programs from the national organizations to the service providers in Iqaluit. The evaluation of this project will provide us with the understanding of how best to approach and structure services in remote, Arctic communities.
- Big Brothers Big Sisters has licensed a Niskga'a band in New Aiyansh, BC to provide group mentoring services to boys at a local school.
- We have responded to requests for service in Iskut BC, English River SK and Whaskaganish QC, amongst others; those discussions are all proceeding internally in their respective communities.
- We commissioned a report to help us better understand opportunities and barriers to working in remote, northern and Aboriginal communities.

We continue to respond to numerous requests for service from First Nations communities throughout the south and the north working by the assumptions and principles that BBBSC needs to take an active role in addressing service gaps in northern, remote and Aboriginal communities as member agencies are focused more on their existing community service areas and are limited in their capacity to reach out and support new communities.

- start where we are wanted and follow the lead of the community.
- build on the strengths of the community and make connections.
- collaborate and engage meaningfully with these communities.
- follow a paced and sustainable path.
- be flexible and responsive as one model, one approach will not work in all communities

### **General Impacts of investing in Mentoring North**

The Centre for the Study of Living Standards estimates that closing education and labour market gaps between Aboriginal people and the Canadian average by 2026 would add \$401 billion to Canada's cumulative gross domestic product.

Canada's aboriginal population is expected to grow by 1.8 per cent annually, more than twice the rate for the general population which is 0.7 per cent. By 2017, there will be an estimated

1.43 million aboriginal persons, representing 4.1 per cent of the Canadian population, according to Statistics Canada. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/aboriginals/aboriginalday.html>

Investing in Mentoring North would provide the opportunity for transformational results in Aboriginal and northern children, youth, families and communities thus increasing economic prosperity for the country as a whole.

### **With government support**

By investing in mentoring and in turn, young people's future prosperity, the federal government, in time, would also be able to reduce costs associated with incarceration, social assistance programs, unemployment and health costs.

The federal government spends \$5.5 billion on criminal justice each year and an additional \$83 billion is spent on remedying the harm that results from crime and 1% of funding is supporting evidence-based prevention programs to reduce crime. Prevention and social interventions have positive benefits within three years, with reductions in crime of 25% to 50% within 10 years. <http://www.ccsd.ca/cpsd/ccsd/>. The cost to incarcerate a youth for one year is \$95,826.37. If mentoring deters young people from becoming involved in deviant behaviour and crime the cost for incarceration for one youth for one year could be deferred and invested to support mentoring activities for 60 youth for one full year.

The Canadian Council on Learning has demonstrated the enormous fiscal implications of the failure to complete high school in terms of expenditures on social services and programs, education, employment, criminality, lower economic productivity, and health. High-school dropouts cost Canada's social assistance programs and criminal justice system more than \$1.3 billion annually: the public cost of social assistance amounts to a total of \$969 million a year for those who drop out of high school; and costs for dropouts to the criminal justice system total \$350 million a year.

### **Funding Request**

**The request is to invest \$3 Million in the development and support of Mentoring North for children, youth and families in Aboriginal, rural and northern communities.**

**As indicated by the Social Return on Investment Study by Boston Consulting Group a \$1 million dollar investment would yield a \$24 million dollar return to society.**

## **2. *Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving***

Full implementation of the Stretch Tax Credit for Charitable Giving would promote a culture of long-term and incremental giving and provide charities additional support. We commend the government in their work of the Super Credit and see it as an important step on the road to achieving the full Stretch Tax Credit. Additional funding as a charity would provide our organization with the ability to serve more children and youth in need of a mentor and facilitate strategic partnerships and collaboration with other youth serving organizations across the country.

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

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been delivering evidence-based mentoring programs to Canada's children and youth for over 100 years. In over a century of service our programs have evolved to better meet the needs of today's young people. In the past decades we have introduced school-based programs, group mentoring programs, partnership programs with police officers and a variety of mentoring programs targeted to specific populations of youth.

Serving as role models, our mentors teach by example the importance of giving back, of staying in school and of having respect for families, peers and community. Each time we pair a child with a mentor, we start something incredible – a life changing relationship built on friendship, trust and empowerment.

Mentoring is a proven approach and contributes to the reduction of poverty, unemployment, to safe schools and neighbourhoods. Recently released by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CMHA) in partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada identifies significant findings on the impacts of Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring.

Whether it's in the form of time or money there is no more important investment we as individuals can make than in helping our nation's children realize-and share-their full potential.

***Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the pre-budget consultation process, we would be honoured to further discuss these recommendations at the hearings.***