

# Pre-budget brief

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Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada  
Clubs Garçons et Filles du Canada

2005 Sheppard Ave. E., Suite 400  
Toronto, ON M2J 5B4  
T 905/ 477-7272  
F 416/ 640-5331  
[www.bgccan.com](http://www.bgccan.com)

## Summary

There is a lot government can do to support Canada's most vulnerable children, youth and families, and ensure that communities are prosperous and safe. In this short brief, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGCC) will focus on youth employment programs that provide valuable work experience early in a young person's life, reduce violence in communities, and increase interest in high demand fields. We also note the importance of youth having a voice in shaping public policy on these issues.

1. **Giving youth a voice will result in stronger policies and programs** – Government should include youth in assessing and developing policies, strategies and programs. Youth-serving organizations can help support their participation with skill-building and mentoring.
2. **Bolstering Canada's Youth Employment Strategy will benefit more vulnerable young people** – Government should continue to fund the Youth Employment Strategy, renew the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, and increase program funding to help vulnerable youth become employed.
3. **Investing in promising youth employment programs will reduce violence in disadvantaged communities** – Government should partner with youth-serving organizations to provide promising employment programs that combine a job, mentoring, and social-cognitive skills programming.
4. **Supporting partnerships will provide youth with skills and training to be competitive in the labour market** – Government should contribute to innovative cross-sector partnerships by supporting rigorous evaluation and scaling up evidence-based practices that help meet Canada's training and employment needs.

## Giving youth a voice will result in stronger policies and programs

1. **Government should include youth in assessing and developing policies, strategies and programs. Youth-serving organizations can help support their participation with skill-building and mentoring.**

As government seeks to create safer communities and improve training and employment opportunities for young Canadians, we encourage you to consult with youth themselves. Invite youth to address committees about a bill or share their experience and recommendations within the scope of a study. Create a youth advisory panel that can support the review of youth employment programs.

An active effort to bring youth into policy and legislative processes will increase their democratic participation and help Canada better meet the needs of its young citizens.

Youth-serving organizations can help youth prepare and engage to the best of their abilities. BGCC has its own National Youth Council and several Provincial Youth Councils – engaging youth is an area of expertise for Clubs and we would be available to help the government in this regard.

# Bolstering Canada's Youth Employment Strategy will benefit more vulnerable young people

## 2. Government should:

- continue to fund the Youth Employment Strategy,
- renew the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy, and
- increase program funding to help vulnerable youth become employed.

A comprehensive survey of young people in Canada tells us that when considering the future, youth are most concerned with securing a good job (56%), with family (37%) and financial stability (24%). Financial stability grows in importance as teens become adults and 'having enough money' is an important concern for young adults (30%).<sup>1</sup> When asked what adults can do to help them be successful, youth overwhelmingly identified their need for support, encouragement and guidance. They also want academic support and skill building opportunities.

Hundreds of youth involved with Boys and Girls Clubs across Canada benefit from Employment and Social Development's Youth Employment Strategy. Students are hired through Career Launch, youth get their first summer job thanks to the Summer Jobs Grant, and vulnerable youth become employable through Skills Link.

In 2013, Boys and Girls Clubs hired and trained nearly 300 youth with the help of Canada Summer Job Grants. Over 100 wrote to their MP to share how they had:

- developed marketable skills and confidence in their abilities;
- saved for postsecondary studies and gained financial stability;
- gained a sense of direction for their studies and career options;
- become better leaders for other youth in their community; and
- taken pride in giving back to their community.

### Benefits of the Youth Employment Strategy

The **Canada Summer Jobs** program increased young people's attachment to the labour market, improving their long-term career prospects.<sup>2</sup> It helped ensure youth were making good use of their summer months, contributing positively to their community, and avoiding negative behaviour. Most importantly, these employment opportunities provided valuable training and skills development for Canada's future workforce.

The **Skills Link program** is also helping to meet the government's objectives. Boys and Girls Clubs delivering Skills Link are achieving 70-85% success rates, employing youth with multiple barriers or helping them enroll in an educational program that will help them secure work.

In one program, most of the graduates went to private career colleges to complete chef's training or become construction labourers. Some became pre-apprentices in electrical, network cabling, plumbing, welding, domestic appliance repair, refrigeration and air

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<sup>1</sup> GlobeScan. 2013. [http://theworldaccordingtous.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/BGCC\\_infographic\\_first-page-FINAL.jpg](http://theworldaccordingtous.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/BGCC_infographic_first-page-FINAL.jpg)

<sup>2</sup> HRSDC. 2012. Employment Challenges for Canadian Youth in a Changing Economy: A Backgrounder. Symposium. Ottawa, HRSDC & Public Policy Forum. March 27.

conditioning repair. The graduates are well on their way to good paying careers which will allow them to contribute to Canada's economy.

The government has seen the wisdom of reallocating funds to bolster its Youth Employment Strategy, committing an extra 50M over two years (2011-2013).

BGCC again recommends that the government help youth integrate into the labour market by making permanent its extra commitment of 25M per year to the Youth Employment Strategy. While several commitments were announced, this extra, and much needed funding, does not appear to have been renewed. We hope to see more support for employment programs in budget 2015.

## Investing in promising youth employment programs will reduce violence in communities

3. **Government should partner with youth-serving organizations to provide promising employment programs that combine a job, mentoring, and social-cognitive skills programming.**

High unemployment rates for youth, especially over the summer, are translating into a situation that will have life-long consequences and high social costs for all Canadians. This is especially evident in low-income neighbourhoods that contend with high unemployment rates, high dropout rates, and high levels of violence.

Researcher Sara Heller, from the University of Chicago Crime Lab, recently provided rigorous evidence to support the power of summer jobs to keep communities safe and young people thriving. Her randomized control trial found that at-risk youth (aged 14 to 21) who participated in the *One Summer Plus* program experienced a 51 percent drop in arrests for violent crime.<sup>3</sup> "Depending on how one monetizes the social costs of crime, the benefit-cost ratio may be as high as 30:1 from reductions in criminal activity alone."<sup>4</sup> Delivered in high-crime Chicago neighbourhoods, the program provided youth with a summer part-time job for seven weeks and included regular interactions with a mentor, and "programming designed to reduce common judgment and decision-making problems related to automatic behavior and biased beliefs".<sup>5</sup> In 2013, the program engaged young men aged 16-24 who had been involved with the criminal justice system. Chicago's Mayor hopes the One Summer Plus can serve as a model for successful youth employment programs.

Boys and Girls Clubs located in neighbourhoods with elevated rates of violent crime can attest to the power of a job, a mentor, and mental health supports. Clubs employ hundreds of youth each summer with the help of the Canada Summer Jobs Grant. They are unique employers with the capacity to mentor youth and help them succeed in the job market. Additional resources and mental health training for Clubs operating in high-crime neighbourhoods would permit them to implement a model resembling the One Summer Plus program. This has the potential to bolster the impact of Clubs and significantly improve outcomes for youth in these communities.

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<sup>3</sup> UChicago News. 2014. <http://news.uchicago.edu/article/2013/08/07/crime-lab-study-finds-youth-employment-program-has-impact-violent-crime-arrests>

<sup>4</sup> Heller, S., H. A. Pollack et al. 2013. Preventing Youth Violence and Dropout : A Randomized Field Experiment. The National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19014>

<sup>5</sup> Heller, Pollack et al. 2013

# Supporting partnerships will provide youth with skills and training to be competitive in the labour market

4. Government should contribute to innovative cross-sector partnerships by supporting rigorous evaluation and scaling up evidence-based practices that help meet Canada's training and employment needs.

We commend efforts that encourage youth to consider careers in the skilled trades and STEM fields. BGCC has developed cross-sector partnerships that provide youth with opportunities to explore career options they might not have considered, gain new skills, and the experience they need to succeed in the job market. Below are two examples that are helping Canada achieve its youth employment, skill and social development goals.

## **Skilled4Success**

Over the past two years, BGCC and Kal Tire have reached over 400 youth in 29 communities with Skilled4Success, a national program designed to help young people explore, discover and develop career possibilities in the skilled trades.

Skilled4Success helps ensure the paths leading to future careers in the trades are well marked out, accessible and enticing. It combines:

1. Job skills training and pre-employment skills;
2. Job-shadowing and career exploration opportunities;
3. Connections to community members working in the skilled trades and other careers;
4. Reliable skilled trade and career planning information; and
5. Support for youth in pursuing a certified apprenticeship in their province.

Skilled4Success is one of many ways our Clubs encourage personal growth, learning and community involvement. A partnership with the government would allow BGCC to evaluate the program more thoroughly and gauge the value of scaling it up to reach more young people, providing them with knowledge of and experience in more trades.

## **STE(A)M Ahead!**

Fidelity Investments and BGCC have partnered to develop STE(A)M Ahead! a comprehensive national education program that will introduce, enhance, and expand young people's skills in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art/Design and Math. We are designing the program, developing evaluation tools, and identifying program delivery partners and pilot sites within Boys and Girls Clubs for the fall of 2014.

STEM education is more than just science, technology, engineering or mathematics – it is an interdisciplinary and applied approach that is coupled with real-world, problem-based learning. There is solid evidence to suggest that the fastest-growing and highest-wage jobs in future years will be in STEM fields and all employees will need to utilize STEM skills for problem solving in a wide range of industries.

Art and design are also poised to transform our economy, enabling young people to become true innovators, designers and critical thinkers. We have thus added art into the equation – transforming STEM to STE(A)M.

BGCC and Fidelity Investments know that young people – particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds – are failing to achieve the critical skills during their school years that will enable them to participate effectively and successfully in the world and workplace of the 21st century. By working together, we will help prepare Canada's workforce.

STE(A)M Ahead will integrate mentoring and experiential learning, teach STEAM knowledge and skills through hands-on, interactive activities and expose youth to career options linked to STEM fields. BGCC and Fidelity Investments hope to develop new areas of interest for the youth we serve, make connections between concepts and real world applications, and spark young people's interest in pursuing education and careers in high demand fields.

## About Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is dedicated to supporting and encouraging children and youth as they grow and develop. We are a national charity serving 200,000 young people in more than 650 locations across Canada. We listen to their opinions and ideas, applaud their accomplishments, lend support during their struggles and provide ways to explore their interests and talents. With this encouragement they develop the confidence and sense of belonging that helps them succeed in school, form positive relationships and mature into responsible, caring adults. For over 110 years we have welcomed children, youth and their families into clubs that reflect the diversity of Canada in small and large cities, rural communities and First Nations Reserves.

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