

Supporting Youth Employment

Submission to the Standing Committee on Human
Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of
Persons with Disabilities: **Canada Summer Jobs**



Gwendolyn Moncrieff-Gould, Director, Public Policy & Engagement
90-701 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto
Tel 416 556 9581
gmoncrieffgould@bgccan.com
www.bgccan.com

Recommendations:

1. Increase funding for the Canada Summer Jobs program.
2. Increase program flexibility and stability by allowing multi-year agreements, earlier funding decisions, and including part-time, year-round, and extended placements.
3. Ensure participants have access to paid sick days.

Our Clubs Make an Impact

As Canada's largest dedicated child- and youth-serving organization, BGC Clubs provide vital programs and services to over 150,000 young people in more than 600 locations across the country. Over the past 120 years, Clubs have been there for vulnerable children, youth, and families. As trusted community organizations, BGC Clubs continue to support young people and their families, by removing barriers and creating opportunities.

Because of a Club;

- 92% of kids say they are more accepting of others
- 91% of kids say they are more physically active
- 90% of kids say they make better choices, and,
- 93% of kids say they take more initiative.

In addition to our impact on the children we serve, BGC Clubs are also top employers for youth in their communities. Clubs provide training, mentorship, and first jobs, launching thousands of careers every year.

Supporting Youth Employment

Clubs are located in communities where they are needed most. This is made possible by the contributions of thousands of Club staff who strive to make a difference in their Club and their community. Throughout Canada, BGC Clubs rely on the skills of more than six thousand highly qualified, trained staff to create real opportunities for children and youth to thrive. Through a combination of both licensed child care and recreation, our Clubs also ensure that parents can remain in the workforce.

Clubs provide skills training, workforce readiness and employment programs to the youth we work with. Programs like LeadUp enable Clubs to provide hands on volunteer opportunities, developing youth leadership capacity and work skills. Skilled for Success, aimed at older youth, provides participants with training and work placements. More than 70% of participants who were not in education, employment or training at the start of the program are successfully hired or return to school. Both programs are partially funded by the Government of Canada.

Most important to both Clubs and youth, however, is the Canada Summer Jobs program. Through Canada Summer Jobs, Clubs create up to seven hundred jobs for youth every summer. Canada Summer Jobs support more than 10% of BGC Canada's national workforce per year, inspiring a new generation of child care and social service workers and launching thousands of successful careers in a sector experiencing a severe labour shortage.

Since the program's inception, the youth population has grown, and employment patterns have shifted. To address these changes, and based on data collected from both youth and Clubs in annual surveys, BGC recommends the following.

Increase Funding for the Canada Summer Jobs Program

Based on Club survey data, we know that youth employment is not a luxury, but rather a necessity. **72% of CSJ participants at Clubs relied on their jobs to make ends meet**, including paying for rent, groceries, health services, and tuition. Youth face double the unemployment rate of the general working population, and will need more job opportunities to make ends meet as the cost of living crisis continues.

Youth employment – for teens in particular – also leads to higher lifelong employment rates and income levels¹. This impact helps future-proof youth from labour market scarring from economic shocks like recessions, to which they are particularly vulnerable².

Because pandemic funding for CSJ has sunset, BGC Clubs provided 40% fewer job opportunities for youth this summer than in the two previous years. At the same time, the youth unemployment rate started to increase³. The continued projected decline in

BGC Canada conducts an annual survey of youth employed through Canada Summer Jobs at Clubs.

Highlights from 2023:

80% of staff employed through Canada Summer Jobs secured their next job

thanks to their placement – either staying on at their Club, or through the references they earned.

60% of staff stayed employed in the child and youth sector in their next role,

helping address the ongoing labour shortage.

75% of staff received professional development opportunities.

¹ <https://ottawacitizen.com/life/parenting/the-working-life-there-are-benefits-later-in-life-for-teens-who-work>

² <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/commentary/article-young-canadians-jobs-unemployment-rate/>

³ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/canada-jobs-unemployment-1.6870263>

"I applied to this position hoping to get more experience working with children. I hope to be a teacher someday. I wanted to increase my skills in classroom management and patience and I believe I have done that through this job." – CSJ participant, BGC Greater Saint John

"I applied here for money, but then stayed because of the very valuable work experience I was gaining. This job has genuinely had a positive impact on my day to day skills." – CSJ participant, BGC Gander

program funding, to \$60 million less than pre-pandemic levels by 2025, will compound the labour market challenges youth are already facing.

BGC Clubs and other employers have the capacity to provide significantly more employment opportunities for youth with appropriate funding. Increasing Canada Summer Jobs funding to either increase the number of positions available, or extend the length of contracts, will make a meaningful difference in the youth unemployment rate.

Increase program flexibility and stability by allowing multi-year agreements, earlier funding decisions, and including part-time, year-round, and extended placements.

Beyond meaningful job opportunities, youth also need stability to be successful in their careers. Streamlining application processes for employers, and allowing greater predictability and flexibility will ensure that youth have jobs that fit their schedules and needs.

Multi-year agreements and earlier funding decisions: BGC Clubs and other CSJ employers have consistently struggled to meet short program deadlines for applications and hiring. Employer applications are often not processed until late spring, making it incredibly challenging to hire staff for summer months. In some cases, youth are forced to find employment elsewhere, outside of their field, because CSJ positions are posted so late. Without a guaranteed position in future years, staff may also change employers, losing continuity, seniority, and valuable opportunities for relationship building with their employer. Guaranteeing trusted employers CSJ positions over a multi-year period would drastically reduce administrative burdens, and ensure that employers can start recruitment before the end of the school year, providing stability to both youth employees and the programs and services they provide.

Flexible placement timing: Over the course of the pandemic, a majority of all BGC Clubs took advantage of increased placement flexibility, hiring youth part-time, outside of the summer months, and over longer periods of time beyond eight weeks. Part-time CSJ positions allowed youth to stay enrolled in education while also earning

an income, increasingly a necessity as outlined above. Pre-pandemic, the Federal Government's Expert Panel on Youth Employment had formally recommended evolving the program to run year-round⁴, recognizing that youth often prefer or need to study and work in tandem.

Ensure participants have access to paid sick days.

BGC Canada was concerned to hear over the summer that some employers faced increased reporting requirements and funding clawbacks if CSJ staff took sick leave. Employers were asked to report any absences, including of only a few hours, and were then denied funding for the missed work. Employers only reported this requirement in some regions of the country.

As the federal government has recognized, access to paid sick days reduces overall absences, reduces the spread of illness in the workplace, and helps Canadians recover faster. Paid sick days are a requirement in federally regulated industries⁵, and should also be funded for Canada Summer Jobs participants. Access to paid sick days are also critically important for staff working with children, who are more susceptible to illness.

Providing paid sick days and ending funding clawbacks would not increase the overall program cost. Trusting employers to implement paid sick day policies, and not requiring dedicated reporting on sick days or absences would also reduce the administrative burden placed on employers in the Canada Summer Jobs program.

Conclusion

BGC Clubs have been eager participants in the Canada Summer Jobs program since its inception. As employers, we benefit from the direct increased capacity to hire and train staff. As youth-serving organizations, we also see the long-term impact that hiring youth has – on young people themselves, their families, and their broader communities.

Youth face incredible challenges in today's economy, and the supports that they need to succeed have changed. We look forward to continued partnership with the federal government to ensure that all youth have access to stable, meaningful employment.

⁴ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/youth-expert-panel/report-modern-strategies-youth-employment.html>

⁵ <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/news/2022/12/10-days-of-paid-sick-leave-now-in-force-for-nearly-1million-federally-regulated-workers-across-canada.html>