

Planting the Seeds of Growth

Recommendations for the 2019 Alberta Budget
The Honourable Joe Ceci, President of the Treasury Board and
Minister of Finance



Boys & Girls Clubs of Canada

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About Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada

Community-based services. Positive relationships. Life-changing programs. As Canada's largest child- and youth-serving organization, Boys and Girls Clubs provide vital programs and services to over 200,000 young people in 700 communities across Canada. During critical out-of-school hours, our Clubs help young people discover who they are, what they can do, and how they can get there. Our trained staff and volunteers give them the tools to realize positive outcomes in self-expression, academics, healthy living, physical activity, mental health, leadership, and more. Since 1900, Boys and Girls Clubs have opened their doors to children, youth, and families in small and large cities, and rural and Indigenous communities. If a young person needs it, our Clubs provide it. Learn more at bgccan.com and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @BGCCAN.

In Alberta, 25 local community Boys and Girls Clubs offer quality social, recreation, education, job readiness and leadership programs **in over 70 service locations**, with more than half offering licensed out-of-school and daycare programs. We are located in urban, rural and remote communities with the only on-reserve Club in Canada located here in Saddle Lake. Over **35,000 children and youth** attend annually and many families benefit from the support offered through our Clubs.

Summary of recommendations

Boys and Girls Clubs in Alberta would like the government to **recognize the importance of out-of-school programming in the lives of children and youth across the province, especially in rural and remote communities and continue to invest in after school programs and partnerships as meaningful, culturally congruent supports for children, youth and families.**

Government and child care advocates are increasingly discussing how to meet the needs of children in their early years, but recreation based out-of-school programs are being overlooked. Such programs represent a distinct, developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed approach for children in their middle years, especially those who have had adverse childhood experiences.

The after school time period provides a unique opportunity to support young people's healthy development. Regular participation in after school programs mitigates the risk of unhealthy behaviours and helps young people become healthy, active, engaged adults, who make positive contributions to society. After school programs benefit families and communities, and lead to reduced health care, social welfare, crime and justice costs down the road.

High-quality before and after-school programs for children, youth and their families are the centerpiece of Boys and Girls Clubs work in communities. **Clubs support those who are at greatest risk, namely, Indigenous and racialized children, 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.**

- Children who regularly participate in after-school programs make considerable health and well-being gains.¹ They exercise regularly, eat well and are protected from injuries and threats. They have a sense of well-being, choose safe activities, and are able to get the

resources they need for good health. Because these behaviours are learned in childhood, they are more likely to affect children's lifestyle and health status into adulthood.²

- When young people take on active roles in afterschool programs, they gain skills and build confidence in their ability to make positive contributions. "Young people who take active roles in organizations and communities have fewer problems, are better skilled" and more likely to be active citizens.³ Boys & Girls Clubs participants who frequently attend programs report "higher levels of community service involvement and increased integrity".⁴
- Children who have access to "relevant neighborhood destinations" such as recreational clubs have stronger developmental outcomes, greater social competence and better well-being.⁵

The presence of positive relationships with adults and a sense of one's place in the community have been correlated with decreased rates of risky behaviour, violence, and adolescent depression.⁶ Children who benefit from an adult mentoring relationship show greater academic success, less risk-taking behaviour and better life satisfaction.⁷

Boys & Girls Clubs in Alberta are primarily located in rural and remote communities where we help to meet the needs of children, youth and families, deliver programs that inspire, challenge and support vulnerable children to succeed.

Boys and Girls Clubs follow rigorous national quality guidelines and operating standards that have led to a strong track record. An evidence-based model for success guides program development and evaluation across our Clubs.

We are proud to work with the Government of Alberta, the federal government and private sector partners on several initiatives that help young people from low-income communities reach their full potential.

Boys and Girls Clubs in Alberta are able deliver programs and high quality interventions to the children and youth who need them most. Our Clubs are effective vehicles for programs that build young Albertans' ability become healthy and productive members of their communities and workplaces.

Government should target the resources of the Departments of Children's Services and Human Services towards out-of-school programming that meets the developmental needs of children and youth and gives them a chance at a great future.

In Conclusion

High-quality before and after-school programs for children, youth, and their families are the centerpiece of Boys and Girls Clubs' work in Alberta communities. Our comprehensive, integrated programs – which include physical activity and healthy eating, homework help and academic support, arts and culture, personal growth, leadership, youth civic engagement and other activities – meet young people's developmental needs at all of the key ages and stages of their lives.

Boys and Girls Clubs are committed to working collaboratively with key partners, including the Alberta government, to ensure a better, brighter future for children, youth and families across the province. Together, we will prepare young Albertans to meet the challenges ahead.

As it plans its 2019 budget, the government should consider the importance of before- and after-school programming to aid in the stated goal of growing the economy and creating a better future for all Albertans.

¹ Bottrell, D., and K. Russell. 2010. International "Best Practice" for Out of School Services and Activities for 9-12 year old Children: Literature Review Report. Australia: University of Sydney.

² Public Health Agency of Canada. 2004. Young People in Canada: Their Health and Well-Being. Chapter 11, Division of Childhood and Adolescence, Ottawa.

³ Pittman, K., Toleman I., Yohalem, N. & T. Ferber. 2003. Preventing Problems, Promoting Development, Encouraging Engagement: Competing Priorities or Inseparable Goals? The Forum for Youth Investment.

⁴ Arbretton et al. 2009, cited in Afterschool Alliance. 2015. Evaluations Backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of afterschool programs' impact on academics, behavior, safety and family life.

⁵ Christian, H., Zubrick, S., Foster, S., Giles-Corti, B., Bull, F., Wood, L., Knuiman, M., Brinkman, S., Houghton, S. & B. Boruff. 2015. The influence of the neighborhood physical environment on early child health and development: A review and call for research. *Health & Place*, 33: 25-36

⁶ Schonert-Riechl, K. 2011. Middle childhood inside and out: the psychological and social worlds of Canadian children ages 9-12. Full Report for the United Way of the Lower Mainland. Vancouver: University of British Columbia..

⁷ Schonert-Reichl. 2011.