



MEDIA RELEASE

GOVERNMENT'S "SAFE STREETS" AGENDA OVERSHADOWS POSITIVE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUTH

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada concerned that 2006 Federal budget falls short of goal to provide meaningful opportunities for Canadian children and youth

For Immediate Release (Toronto, May 3, 2006) - Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada (BGCC) acknowledges the Conservative Government's efforts, through yesterday's budget announcement, to invest in communities to prevent youth crime. However, the 20 million allocated over 2 years falls far short of what is required to truly support opportunities and hope for Canadian youth.

"Despite all the evidence that demonstrates the correlation between positive social programs and crime reduction and the benefits of providing positive alternatives for young people," said Pam Jolliffe, National Executive Director, BGCC. "This government has chosen to short change preventative approaches in tackling crime and community safety."

Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, a national movement, whose mission is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life, is dedicated to helping young Canadians discover, develop and achieve their potential.

"We know that quality programs, supportive environments and an emphasis on positive aspects of youth development give young people hope and equips them with the life skills to say no to drugs, violence, gangs and other anti-social behaviours," added Jolliffe.

While there are a number of factors that influence health and well-being during the teen years, one key set of factors that help adolescents succeed are "positive relationships, opportunities, competencies, values and self-perceptions".¹ There is strong evidence that the more of these 'assets' adolescents possess, the greater the likelihood of engaging in healthy practices and the lower the risk of becoming involved in activities harmful to themselves or others.

In a recent commentary on youth civic engagement a BGCC alumnus stated "Engaging today's youth in activities helps give them hope that the society believes in them, and sees the value in investing in them and working for a better future. It's also a way to give hope to disadvantaged communities that are struggling with a variety of social ills."²

BGCC believes that the federal government has a role to play to ensure that social and community programs are available in communities across the country and that the necessary resources are there to sustain them.

¹ Canadian Institute for Health Information, 'Improving the Health of Young Canadians', (2005), Canadian Population Health Initiative, Ottawa

² Canadian Council on Social Development, The PROGRESS of Canada's Children and Youth, (2006), Ottawa, Canada

While the budget focuses on the Conservative priority area of getting tough on crime, allocations are weighted toward law and order priorities. We hope that these initial investments in community crime prevention programs for youth will be expanded upon in upcoming budgets.

We agree with the Government's perspective that the most important part of health care is prevention, including ensuring that Canadians, especially children have proper diet and exercise. The physical fitness tax credit will assist some families with the cost of keeping their children healthy and active. However, this measure does not replace the need for sustainable child and youth recreation and developmental programs. We know that low income families, whose children are already suffering most from the lack of access to physical recreation and sport, will not benefit from these tax measures.

“While in this budget there is some recognition of the need for investment in the well-being of Canadian children and youth, greater steps need to be taken in order make significant progress in achieving a higher quality of life for all young Canadian,” said Jolliffe.

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