Big Brothers Big Sisters of Winnipeg

Written submission to
Executive Policy Committee
City of Winnipeg
March 13, 2012

Good morning, Councillors. We believe the healthy development of every child is enhanced by positive mentoring relationships. The results can be life-changing. And changing a young person's life before they become entrenched in the criminal justice system is a known benefit of mentoring.

We currently receive a grant of $12,000 from the City of Winnipeg, for which we are truly grateful. However, we are asking you to continue supporting our work by increasing our annual operating grant to $30,000, an additional $18,000.

It costs approximately $1,200 a year to match and monitor a Big and a Little. Using that dollar amount, your current investment supported 10 of the 663 kids we served last year. Our request today for increased funding would equate to helping another 15 young people receive a mentor who can guide them towards success. A small investment given the preventative impact that mentoring has on a young person's life.

In a National Crime Prevention Council Research Report in 2007, three types of community-based programs are identified as being promising in preventing crime:

- Gang member intervention programs
- Community-based mentoring;
- After-school recreation.

Mentoring is often segmented as being separate from after-school recreation programs, but our mentoring almost always includes an after-school recreation element. So our work actually covers two of the three recommended approaches from NCPC.

The Government of Manitoba's own literature on gang prevention, consistently points to 'relationship poverty' as a substantial risk factor for crime and entry into gangs. Mentoring programs are lauded as important community programs.

The Manitoba Justice Handbook clearly recognizes the need for belonging as an essential basic need and explains that "positive role models can have a major impact on what children think and how they behave."

We recently spoke with a young man, whom I will call 'John', who is currently being held at the Agassiz Youth Centre in Portage la Prairie. John and he agreed to let me tell you a bit of his story. **John** is in custody at the age of 15, facing aggravated assault charges. He assaulted a member of a rival gang. John is a very interesting young man because he contacted my organization from Agassiz, seeking our

help. He wants a Big Brother in his life because he doesn't want to end up back in a gang or back in jail. John found himself in a gang at the age of 13. When we asked him what might have helped him back then, he said:

> "I didn't have no older role models except my parents; if I'd had someone older who'd been there, I probably wouldn't be here in this situation. Not that I'm blaming my parents or anything, but you know? I didn't have anyone else."

We asked him if there was ever someone in his life that he could admire and look up to. He said:

> "I had a teacher in grade 7. Ever since I was little, I was bad at school. He had a different approach than other teachers. Other teachers just sent me into the hall, or sent me home. He never did. He just kept trying. He never really gave up on me. "

John is trying not to give up on himself. He wants a mentor in his life. We asked him what he thought that would do for him. He said:

> "Something along the lines of learning right from wrong. I didn't really know what I was getting into. My parents didn't really have time to sit down and talk to me. Gangs give you a fake sense of belonging."

He added, "and having places to go is good and all, but it's gotta be more than just a drop in place to hang out in and do things. It's having someone to do those activities with, someone who'll be a good influence. For sure. Having a Big Brother would show me a different kind of way to behave. They'd show you that you don't gotta go around getting into fights."

John wants out of the gang life, he wants to finish school and move on.

"Yah, I hope to go into carpentry or mechanics until I'm older, and then I want to be a social worker to help kids like me. I think there isn't anyone better to work with kids than someone who has been there and doesn't just think we're all just bad kids. Some people treat us like that. We're not bad. We've made bad mistakes. But some people get that, and they want to help us out. And that would be my objective – sharing my story."

John keeps in touch with our Big Brothers Big Sisters agency, letting us know what is happening with his case. He is grateful for the positive contact from our workers. He has the capacity to make incredible changes. We can't wait for him to get out so we can find him a mentor.

We're proud of our record and our ability to offer high quality programs, but there's still more to do, more kids to be matched, and we need secure core funding to continue to build sustainability. We hope you will see a way to increase our funding to the recommended amount in the motion from the Standing Policy Committee on Protection and Community Services. Thank you.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Winnipeg
Budget 2012-2013 (Draft)

REVENUE	
Operating Grants Revenue	
Government of Canada	0
Government MB Justice	30,000
Government MB Healthy Child	89,500
Government MB Family Services	142,800
City of Winnipeg Operating Grant (Requested)	30,000
United Way	244,800
Total Operating Grants Revenue	**537,100**
Fundraising Revenue	
Corporate Giving	45,000
Foundations	100,000
Individual Giving	16,000
Bowl for Kids Sake	65,000
Big Smiles Revenue	175,000
Other Fundraisers	50,000
3rd Party Fundraising	17,000
Miscellaneous Revenue	1,000
Total Fundraising Revenue	**459,000**
Special Project Funds	
Special Opportunities	15,000
Find Your Dreams Fund	3,000
Total Special Project Funds	**18,000**
TOTAL REVENUE	**1,024,100**
EXPENSE	
Direct Programme Costs	85,475
Central Operating Expenses	154,140
Fundraising Expenses	50,250
Staff Salaries	660,000
Staff Benefits	72,550
TOTAL EXPENSE	**1,022,415**
NET INCOME	**1,685**