

Manitoba 4-H Council Inc. submission to Pre-budget Consultation

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The Manitoba 4-H Council would like to thank the Honourable Cameron Friesen, Minister of Finance, for this opportunity to provide consultation toward the 2017 provincial budget.

4-H in Canada was founded in Manitoba in 1913 as a mentor-based, hands-on model for skill development in agricultural youth. Although adapting and evolving to offer programming to include non-Ag rural and urban youth, the format of mentored training and soft skill development has essentially remained the same over the past 100 years. The success of positive youth development programs like 4-H is evident in communities, businesses and organizations throughout Manitoba and beyond. A number of prominent Manitoba MLAs, including Premier Pallister, have made reference to the impact which the 4-H program had during their early years and how those experiences have contributed to present-day successes. In 2013, 4-H Leaders were inducted into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame for their role in shaping the lives of Manitoba youth and the resulting positive impacts on society.

Effective extra-curricular development programs foster numerous personal attributes in youth, including: sense of belonging, sense of purpose, employable skill development (soft and hard skills), appreciation of community and respect and appreciation for volunteers. Instilling these values in youth encourages them to become productive and contributing members of society. To reference the Measures of Success II national survey of 4-H Alumni, over 80% of alumni have a high level of citizen engagement via belonging to a group or organization, with almost 100% of those engaged citing their experiences in 4-H as the reason for this. Additionally, 4-H alumni pursued and attained post-secondary education at double the rate of the general population.

Outside of school, the positive, long-term impacts on society of providing opportunities for youth, especially at-risk youth, to participate in structured, valuable learning experiences cannot be overstated. Investment in our youth is an investment in every one of us. Organizations like 4-H, which focus on providing these opportunities, rely on the support of the provincial government and its respective departments to continue to deliver the valuable programming which they offer. The commitment of the Province of Manitoba to support such programs through direct funding and/or departmental funding for staff and program development/delivery is critically important for many of these organizations, including 4-H, to continue to be effective. Additionally, access to departmental expertise and training opportunities is crucial in helping to guide these organizations and also build capacity within them. These efforts would be further enhanced by commitment of departmental resources to foster inter-organizational relationships and/or collaborations with like-minded organizations focused on positive youth development.

The Manitoba 4-H Council sincerely appreciates the commitments and contributions the provincial government has made to the 4-H Manitoba program, which have been significant, and respectfully requests that we continue to work together to further youth development.