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CITY OF CALGARY  
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*Big Brothers Big Sisters*  
CITY CLERK'S DEPARTMENT

**Speaking Notes:**

- We've been partners with FCSS for 17 years, so I want to start by recognizing and thanking you for the long term support and investment in prevention and in mentoring for children and youth in our community who need support.
- At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we work in the community and in over 50 schools in Calgary to provide mainly 1:1 mentoring for over 1700 children and youth each year who are facing significant adversity and in need of caring and supportive mentors.
- The kids who come to us for support are struggling with trauma and adversities such as **poverty, grief and loss, substance abuse, domestic violence, and mental health issues**. In fact, more than half of the kids we serve have faced four or more forms of adversity in their young lives, and we know from the research that without nurturing relationships, children who experience 4 or more adverse childhood experiences (or ACEs) are at risk for a lifetime of chronic physical and mental health issues.
- Relationships with our children and youth are not a "nice to have", they are an absolutely essential "need to have" to ensure children can reach their full potential, grow up healthy and resilient, and for communities thrive.
- The social return on investment is incredibly high in mentoring as a form of prevention and early intervention. We have the research to show that children who are mentored are more likely to earn more throughout their lifetimes, give back to their communities when they grow up, be engaged and healthy citizens. As children they are also less likely to bully, more likely to do well academically, and more able to regulate and manage their emotions in a healthy way.
- FCSS currently provides BBBS with approximately \$400,000 per year which is almost 9% of our 3.5 million dollar operating budget.
- The programs that are funded by FCSS include:
  - o Calgary After School (CAS) which is our Teen Mentoring Program
  - o Building Asset Through Mentoring which is our In-school mentoring program which includes both traditional in-school mentoring where adults visit local school and spend time with their mentee each week, and our Between Generations in which our more "senior" community members come together in our schools each week to build supportive relationships with both each other and with children who need mentors.
- While we serve over 1700 children and youth each year, we also work with at least that many volunteers. Hardly a day that goes by where someone doesn't reach out to let us know that while they started mentoring to make a difference in the life of a child, they found that their own life has been incredibly enriched through their volunteer mentoring work with BBBS.
- I wanted to note for you that our biggest challenge here in Calgary is actually not a shortage of mentees or mentors. We have both a long waitlist of over 300 children who are currently waiting for mentors, and many volunteers who are screened and trained and ready to be matched. Our challenge

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is our own staffing capacity to take on more matches with our existing level of funding, staffing and very full caseloads.

- Continued support from FCSS is absolutely critical for us to be able to do the good and impactful work that we do.
- Also wanted to say to you that we take your partnership and our role as part of the continuum of services for Calgarians very seriously. Not only do we work closely with our City of Calgary Social Planner, we also sit on the Calgary After School (CAS) Steering Committee and work with our partners to ensure that children and youth have access to healthy and productive activities that foster positive child and youth development during those after and out-of-school hours that are so critical. We are also a member of the FCSS Calgary Forum where we work with our partners in an advisory capacity and focus on both increasing awareness about FCSS, and on advocacy to address FCSS policy and financial issues.
- If I can share perhaps the most impactful quote I heard this year from a mentee in our In-School mentoring program. At the beginning of the year we asked this little girl why she wanted a mentor, and she told us, "I want someone to love me." At the end of the school year that same little girl said, "my mentor makes me feel loved, and that is a good feeling."
- I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today, and for your continued support. I'm also happy to answer any questions that you may have.