

October 29, 2024

Hon. Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
premier@ontario.ca

Hon. Michael Parsa
Minister of Child, Community and Social Services
MinisterMCCSS@ontario.ca

Hon. Jill Dunlop
Minister of Education
minister.edu@ontario.ca

Dear Premier Ford and Honourable Ministers:

Re: Funding support for Student Nutrition Programs

The Board of Health at Peterborough Public Health would like to stress the importance of the Government of Ontario negotiating and signing an agreement with the federal government that will see federal funding to support provincial student nutrition programs (SNPs), as outlined in the [National School Food Policy](#). In addition, the Board of Health urges that the Province address and increase government funding to SNPs that would close the gap between the national median contribution and provincial contribution. Specifically, the Board urges an increase of provincial funding contribution by \$0.29/student/day to match the national median (provincial/territorial and municipal government contribution) of \$0.39/student/day.

Universal access to nourishing food every day at school supports students' academic success, reduces tardiness, and improves student behaviour. An important step towards health equity and well-being, student nutrition programs contribute to students' physical and mental wellness and foster social connection in a welcoming, stigma-free environment. Program success requires all levels of government to be engaged and supportive of an adequately funded delivery model.

The Board of Health supports negotiating the terms to enhance current programming and help fund new SNPs at schools. As public health experts with extensive experience, including a 32-year history of supporting local programs and working with Ontario SNPs, we urge that a universal program provide a nourishing and culturally appropriate daily meal, use best practices in food safety and delivery, as well as function in inspected and adequately equipped spaces. Programs teach students Canada's Food Guide messages by providing a hands-on learning opportunity to eat more vegetables and fruit, whole grains and protein foods in a socially inclusive environment where they enjoy, prepare and eat healthy food with others.

While a sustainable school food program does not replace adequate income support for underserved families, they do provide nourishment so that students are better able to learn and participate in school, establish healthier eating habits (which may reduce the risk of chronic disease), and foster academic success with improved scores in math, reading and science.

We look forward to seeing the Province enhance their support for adequately funded SNPs in order that all children have access to nourishing food at school every day which will contribute to their overall health and well-being and academic success.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Councillor Joy Lachica
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Local MPPs
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health