

FOR A UNIVERSAL HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAM

Presented by the Members and Supporters of
The Coalition for Healthy School Food



THE COALITION
FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD

THE COALITION FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD is seeking an investment by the federal government in a cost-shared Universal Healthy School Food Program that will enable all students in Canada to have access to healthy meals at school every day. Building on existing programs across the country, all schools will eventually serve a healthy meal or snack at little or no cost to students. These programs will include food education and serve culturally appropriate, local, sustainable food to the fullest extent possible.

DID YOU KNOW?

Canada remains one of the few industrialized countries without a national school food program. Canada's current patchwork of school food programming reaches only a small percentage of our over 5 million students. Only federal government policy can ensure universal coverage of the population.

WHY?

All children should have access to healthy food at school. We need to lay the foundation for healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime and ensure that learning is not hindered by a lack of access to good food.



HEALTHY EATING CHALLENGES

Only about 1/3 of children between the ages of 4 and 13 years eat **five or more** servings of vegetables and fruit daily.

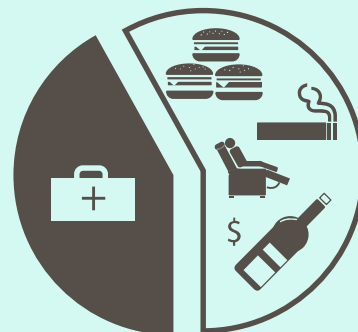
1/3 of students in elementary schools and 2/3 of students in secondary schools do not eat a nutritious breakfast before school, leaving them at risk for learning, behavioural and health challenges at school.

The prevalence of diabetes and obesity are at all-time highs particularly amongst Indigenous peoples, for whom prevalence is higher than in the rest of the population.

About 1/4 of children's calorie intakes are from food products not recommended in Canada's Food Guide.



More than half (58%) of all annual healthcare spending in Canada is for the treatment of chronic diseases for which the main risk factors are unhealthy eating, physical inactivity, smoking and the harmful use of alcohol.





SCHOOL FOOD FACTS

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS SUPPORT STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLNESS AS WELL AS SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS.

- School food programs have been linked with positive impacts on children's mental health, including reductions in behavioural and emotional problems, bullying, aggression, anxiety, and depression as well as fewer visits to the school nurse.
- Children who eat a morning meal are sick less often, have fewer problems associated with hunger, such as dizziness, lethargy, head aches, stomach aches and earaches and do significantly better than their peers in terms of cooperation, discipline, and interpersonal relations.

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS INCREASE THE CONSUMPTION OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND OTHER HEALTHY FOODS.

- Studies have shown that school food programs can contribute to reducing the risk of cardiovascular events and chronic disease such as stroke, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer by increasing the intake of vegetables, whole grains, and macro- and micronutrients.
- Research from northern Ontario and British Columbia found that students that who participated in a school food program reported higher intakes of fruits and vegetables and lower intakes of "other" (i.e., non-nutritious) foods.
- Students who participate in school food programs consume more fibre and micronutrients and consume less saturated and trans fat, sodium and added sugars.

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS ASSIST WITH STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS AT SCHOOL.

- An evaluation of a morning meal program in the Toronto District School Board found that students who consume a morning meal most days show at least a 10% increase in skills such as independent academic work, initiative, conflict resolution, class participation and problem solving at school.
- When children attend school hungry or undernourished their energy levels, memory, problem solving skills, creativity, concentration, and other cognitive functions are all negatively impacted. They are also more likely to repeat a grade.
- Food insecurity is an urgent public health challenge in Canada, affecting 1.15 million, or one in six, Canadian children under age 18. Not all populations are affected the same. Two in three Inuit children experience food insecurity, where the household food insecurity rate for Inuit is the highest amongst any Aboriginal population living in an industrialized country.

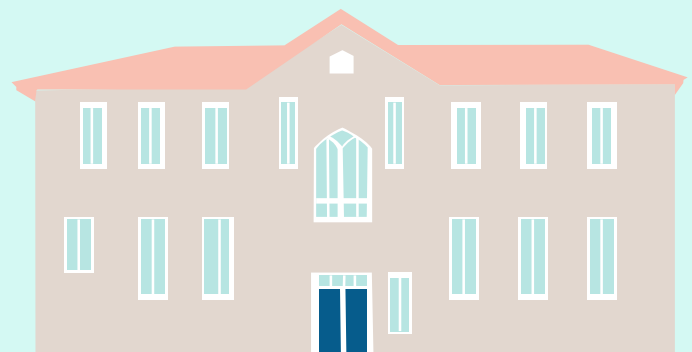


SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY DUE TO THE HEALTH BENEFITS AND INCREASED SCHOLASTIC SUCCESS ATTRIBUTED TO SUCH PROGRAMS.

- 78% of students in Grade 10 at a Toronto District School Board school who ate breakfast most days were on track for graduation compared to 61% of those who did not have breakfast.
- It is estimated that each 1% increase in graduation rates could result in a \$7.7 billion savings per year in Canada since high-school graduates earn higher salaries, pay more taxes, have lower healthcare costs, are less likely to encounter the justice system, and are less dependent on social assistance.
- Supporting a Universal School Food Program reduces the financial burden on our healthcare system by reducing the risk of diet-related chronic disease and mental illness, which are some of the most costly and long-term health problems to treat.

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT NATIONAL AND LOCAL ECONOMIES BY INCREASING JOBS AND THE DOMESTIC MARKET FOR FRESH LOCAL FOOD

- A Universal School Food Program in Canada has the potential create thousands of new jobs in communities across Canada.
- When local food is served, the local multiplier of the increased local food purchases will impact regional food production, household and business earnings, long-term gross domestic product, and part-time jobs created or sustained.

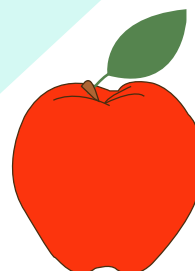
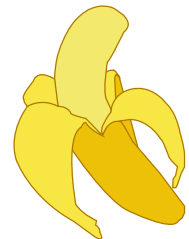
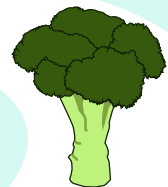


A HEALTHY WAY FORWARD

School food programs are increasingly seen as vital contributors to students' physical and mental health. Growing research demonstrates the potential of school food programs to improve food choices and support academic success for all students. Our schools can become places that model healthy living. Eating healthy meals together is an important, hands-on experience through which children can learn healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

Many leaders and experts have called for a universal school food program, including the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Ontario Healthy Kids Panel and Dr. David Butler-Jones, former Chief Public Health Officer for Canada.

For more information:
<http://foodsecurecanada.org/coalitionforhealthyschoolfood>



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About

The Coalition for Healthy School Food is a growing network of over 170 non-profit member organizations who are seeking public investment in and Canada-wide standards for a cost-shared school food program that would see all children having daily access to healthy food at school. Our members in every province and territory advocate for stable funding and support from their jurisdictions. The Coalition's vision is endorsed by over 40 government agencies and other organizations.

The Issue

Canada experiences \$13.8 billion in treatment and productivity losses due to nutrition-related chronic diseases every year. Only one-third of children aged 4 to 13 eat five or more servings of fruit and vegetables, and over 50% of the total energy intake of children aged 4-18 is from ultra-processed foods. Canada is one of the only industrialized countries without a federally supported school food program and was recently ranked 37th of 41 countries around providing healthy food for kids. Our kids are not ok. There is a real concern that our children will live shorter and sicker lives than their parents because of an increase in the rate of illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other preventable diseases, most of which are closely linked to diet including inadequate access to healthy food.

Why a Canada-wide School Food Program?

Health and well-being: Canadian research shows that school food programs increase consumption of healthy foods, build food literacy and positively influence children's eating patterns. These programs reduce students' risk of developing chronic disease and improve their mental health.

Learning: School food programs improve educational outcomes and increase graduation rates by reducing hunger in classrooms, a known barrier to concentration and learning. They help students feel connected and feel that they belong.

Job creation: Preliminary research shows that a Canada-wide School Food Program would create jobs for food service workers, support Canadian farmers and local food producers, create and support stronger regional food systems, particularly if it incorporated local food procurement practices.

Families: A universal School Food Program for Canada would free up time for working parents, especially women, take pressure off the family budget, provide children equitable and dignified access to healthy food and provide support to low-income families (although it would not replace needed income supports for the unacceptable number of Canadians living in poverty).

Environment: A program designed with sustainability goals in mind reduces food system-related carbon emissions, helps students develop a palate for fresh vegetables, fruit and plant proteins, and helps students learn how to choose local and sustainable food, minimize food waste, and how to compost.

International commitments: A School Food Program for Canada would help the Government of Canada advance its Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments and meet carbon reduction targets.

Developing a Healthy, Universal, Cost-Shared School Food Program for Canada

A successful Canada-wide School Food Program will be:



Health-Promoting

Serve tasty, nourishing and culturally appropriate whole foods, focusing on vegetables and fruits. Ensure that programs are in line with the revised [Canada's Food Guide](#) and that they foster a healthy food environment where students can develop a positive relationship with food.



Universal

Ensure that ALL children in a school can access the program in a non-stigmatizing manner. Over time, all children in Canada will be able to participate in a school food program.



Cost-shared

Use federal funding to both expand on current provincial, city, parental and community funding and to initiate new programs in a cost-shared model.



Flexible and Locally Adapted

Successful school food programs reflect and respect the local context of the school and region and are connected to their local communities. Ensure that funding builds on existing programs, local knowledge, skills and relationships and that it supports different food service models, from breakfast to lunch to snacks.



Committed to Indigenous Control over Programs for Indigenous Students

Embed Indigenous Food Sovereignty in a School Food Program for Canada and negotiate funding for school food programs with Indigenous Nations and leaders.



A Driver of Community Economic Development

Encourage school food programs to set local and sustainably produced food purchasing targets, which would create jobs for Canadian farmers and local food producers.



Promoting of Food Literacy

Support the conditions for school food programs to be integrated into the curriculum and enable food literacy and experiential food skills education.



Supported by Guidance and Accountability Measures

Ensure that programs are guided by Canada-wide nutritional standards, conflict of interest safeguards that prevent programs from marketing unhealthy food and specific products, as well as a framework for consistent Canada-wide program evaluation.

Hey HRM Council, you're invited to CRUNCH for healthy school food!

The Great Big Crunch celebrates the importance of healthy food in schools and highlights the availability of locally grown apples all year round.



For HRM Council

Getting Started



Choose a date

The official Great Big Crunch date for 2022 is March 10th, but you can crunch anytime!



Choose a time & location

Apples can be enjoyed anywhere, from the office boardroom to Council Chambers!



Register

Count your crunches towards the grand total, no matter when you do it or what you crunch, by registering at: healthyschoolfood.ca/great-big-crunch.



Tell your community

Invite fellow politicians, staff, media and your constituents to participate from their homes or workplaces. Let them know you understand the importance of nourishing food in schools!



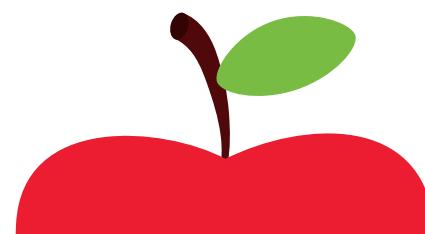
Buy apples

Purchase locally grown apples (or other crunchy vegetables or fruits) from your local grocer, farmers' market or wholesaler.



Crunch & share!

Take some photos, tell your story and share it with Nourish on Twitter/Facebook using @NourishNS, on Instagram using @Nourish_NS, or with #GreatBigCrunch.



[Click HERE](#) for more information about the Nova Scotia Advisory of the Coalition for Healthy School Food (NS-CHSF)



Universal healthy school food programs designed with the SDGs in mind have great potential to:

