



# TORONTO STAFF REPORT

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September 3, 2003

To: Board of Health

From: Dr. Sheela V. Basrur, Medical Officer of Health

Subject: Meeting the Student Nutrition Needs of Toronto's Children and Youth

Purpose:

This report responds to a request by the Board of Health to document the level of funding necessary to meet the needs of student nutrition programs in Toronto and a strategy to achieve such funding.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no 2003 financial implications arising from this report. Any recommended changes in service levels will be addressed through the 2004 operating budget process.

The increase in food costs and the growth of programs each year since 1998 has resulted in the proportion of costs for student nutrition programs subsidised by the City falling from 24% to 20.8%. Restoring the municipal contribution to 24% of program expenditures would cost a total of \$3,420,074. This would be a net increase of \$1,420,734 over the current budget of \$1,999,340.

A higher contribution rate (up to 60%) is warranted for 28 programs in highest needs areas of the City, which represents 10% of the total number of programs city-wide. This would cost an additional \$732,475. There are 33 youth nutrition programs in Toronto, serving 2,400 teenagers each day. These programs receive some provincial but no municipal funding. Establishing a municipal contribution for existing youth nutrition programs would cost an additional \$184,829.

In total, service level changes to meet the student nutrition needs of Toronto's children and youth would require that \$2,338,038 be added to the Consolidated Grants Budget. This would bring the total municipal contribution to \$4,337,378.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact statement.

## Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) the Board of Health endorse a net increase of \$1,420,734 to cover food costs and restore the municipal contribution to the student nutrition program to 24%;
- (2) the Board of Health endorse a higher contribution rate for the 10% of programs in highest need locations for a total of \$732,475;
- (3) the Board of Health endorse municipal core funding for the 33 nutrition programs currently serving youth in Toronto at \$184,829;
- (4) the Board of Health request the provincial government to restore matched funding for Toronto student nutrition programs at 24% of actual costs and to provide additional subsidies to achieve equity of outcomes in high needs neighbourhoods;
- (5) the Board of Health request the federal government to include student nutrition programs as a component of the National Healthy Living Strategy and to ensure that funding is provided to support evaluation of student nutrition programs;
- (6) this report is forwarded to the Children and Youth Action Committee, the Grants Subcommittee, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, The Food and Hunger Action Committee and the Toronto Food Policy Council; and
- (7) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

## Background:

On April 19, 1998, Toronto City Council approved \$1,310,500 as the municipal contribution to the Student Nutrition Program. This Program was designed to subsidize meal programs for approximately 30,000 children in 210 student nutrition programs within the newly amalgamated City of Toronto.

Five years later, in 2003, the number of students participating in these programs has increased by over 100% to 64,730, while funding has increased only 52.5% to \$1,999,340 (Appendix A). Public Health administers this grants program but the funds flow through the Consolidated Grants budget. The proportion of costs subsidised by the City has decreased from 24% in 1998 to 20.8% in 2003.

At the May 12, 2003 Board of Health meeting, the Board requested the Medical Officer of Health to report, prior to the 2004 Budget process, on the level of funding necessary to meet the needs of student nutrition programs and a strategy to achieve such funding.

Comments:

a) Nutrition Status of Toronto's Children and Youth

Increasing rates of obesity in Toronto's children are occurring at the same time that many children and adolescents experience food insecurity and hunger. Higher proportions of children living in low-income families in Canada are overweight and obese (1). More detailed information about the health risks of childhood obesity can be found in the September 12, 2003 Board of Health Report: Promoting Healthy Weights.

New evidence suggests that children from poor households are at greater risk of chronic diseases in adulthood, even if they live in higher income households as adults (2). Student nutrition programs continue to serve multiple purposes to address these health issues: to provide needed nutrients to food insecure children, as a vehicle for nutrition education for all children, modelling of healthier food choices and promotion of physical activity on a daily basis; all of which serve to combat overweight and prevent early onset of chronic disease. The importance of these issues cannot be overstated and a recently released position statement by the American Dietetic Association reflects this opinion:

“All children and adolescents, regardless of age; gender; socio-economic status; racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity; or health status, should have access to food and nutrition programs that ensure the availability of a safe and adequate food supply that promotes optimal physical, cognitive, and social growth and development. Appropriate food and nutrition programs include food assistance and meal programs, nutrition education initiatives, and nutrition screening and assessment followed by appropriate nutrition intervention and anticipatory guidance to promote optimal nutrition status.” (3)

b) Vision

Toronto Public Health and its community partners supporting student nutrition have the following vision for student nutrition in Toronto.

Every student in every school/community has access to a daily snack or meal and each program builds partnerships that develop community capacity for program sustainability. Student nutrition programs are integrated into a comprehensive school nutrition program that supports the development of health promoting schools. Toronto Public Health works with schools as a health promotion channel through which other programs can be funnelled as desired by the school community. Student Nutrition Program Food Coordinators are well trained, adequately supported and fairly compensated. Toronto Public Health provides quality assurance and conducts relevant educational and skill-building workshops for staff, partners, teachers, parents and community volunteers. Food programs are valued, reflective of the community and used to develop competent eating and lifelong healthy habits in children. Every student nutrition program has a safe environment that supports cooking, physical activity and other healthy lifestyle choices.

c) Socioeconomic Environment

Over 50,000 children in Toronto rely on food banks and other food relief programs each month, representing a 15% increase in the number of children getting food from these programs since 1995 (4). Of families using food banks, 25% of the children go hungry at least one day per week and 34% go hungry at least once a month. 44% of parents in these families go hungry at least once a week, often to sacrifice their own food intake so their children have something to eat.

d) Provincial Funding

Provincial funding for student nutrition programs has been provided from the outset through the Canadian Living Foundation. While municipal funding has increased 52.5% over the past five years and program expansion has increased over 100%, provincial funding has increased only 37%. Also, the provincial proportion of total costs has dropped from 21.5% in 1998 to 15% in 2003.

Securing ongoing provincial core funding is essential to program stability. It is crucial that the Province restore the matched dollars to equal Toronto's commitment to ensure quality food is served in sufficient quantity in all student nutrition programs. An additional provincial subsidy for high needs communities is also warranted to help achieve equity of outcomes for low income children.

e) Community Capacity

Toronto Student Nutrition Programs operate on a community-based partnership model designed to maximise parental contributions; the majority of financial support (averaging 52%) is expected to come from parents and local fundraising. This model was developed in 1998 to ensure both a stable income base and to ensure community ownership and involvement.

Community-based Partnership Model	% of Program Costs
Community funding*	52%
Municipal funding	24%
Provincial funding	<u>24%</u>
	100%

\*Community funding = parental contributions + local fundraising

The level of expected parental contributions is calculated according to census tract income data for neighbourhoods served by student nutrition programs. Unfortunately, many low income communities cannot achieve this level of contribution.

The Children's Strategy that was approved by City Council in 1999 calls for equity of outcomes for Toronto's children, rather than equity of investments. It recognises that investments in children should be universal and scaled where necessary to address the issues of high needs communities, families and children.

On this basis, it is recommended that municipal funding to support student nutrition programs average 24% city-wide, with a range from a minimal contribution for established programs in communities with greatest economic capacity to 60% in areas of greatest health and economic need.

f) Location of Programs in Areas of High Need

In order to identify the areas of highest need for student nutrition programs across the City, both access to programs and low income levels must be assessed. According to Statistics Canada, the low income cut-off for a family of four living in an urban area is an annual household income of \$32,759.

While student nutrition programs operate in almost every ward of the City, there are eight wards (shown in Appendix B) in which 60% or more of the children in low-income households have no access to nutrition programs (5).

There are three wards (Wards 8, 12 and 28) in which over 50% of the children live in low income households. There are 28 existing student nutrition programs in these wards serving 6,804 children, which represents 10% of the total number of programs city-wide. In order to fund 60% of the actual operating costs of these 28 programs, an additional \$732,475 would be required in 2004. This level of funding would help achieve equity of outcomes in communities where parental contributions and fund-raising capacities are the lowest.

g) Actual Program Costs

For the past five years, student nutrition programs in Toronto have received municipal subsidies based upon approved costs of no greater than \$0.85 per breakfast, \$2.00 per lunch and \$0.65 per snack. Municipal core funding was initiated in 1998 based upon an average cost of \$0.89/student/day over 185 school days. A key strategy to enhance all snacks with the nutrients lacking in the diets of most children today would be to implement a citywide milk program, along with culturally appropriate calcium-rich alternatives, to augment every snack. Calculations reflecting this recommendation are shown in Appendix C.

The increase in food costs and the growth of programs each year since 1998 has resulted in the proportion of costs for student nutrition programs subsidised by the City falling from 24% to 20.8%. Restoring the level of subsidy to 24% at full coverage of actual costs would total \$3,420,074, which would be a net increase of \$1,420,734 over the current budget of \$1,999,340.

h) Youth Programs

The City of Toronto does not provide any subsidy to nutrition programs serving youth in secondary schools or community sites. There are currently 33 programs serving 2,400 youth. They receive some provincial funding, but must rely on donations and fundraising for the remainder of their costs. These programs are strained even further due to the higher food costs required to meet the greater energy needs of teenagers, relative to younger children. The municipal portion (24%) of the total annual cost to serve the 2,400 youth in existing programs would be \$184,829 (Appendix C).

i) Projected Program Growth

A net increase of 22 programs (37 new programs less 15 that have ceased operating) is expected for the 2003/2004 school year. This follows a net increase of 12 programs between 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. If an average net growth of 15 programs per year is predicted, the student nutrition program will grow to 400 programs over the next five years. Costs for such a program expansion are beyond the scope of this report.

Conclusions:

The municipal contribution to the Student Nutrition Program is key to the partnership funding model, in that it enables communities to leverage additional resources from other donors including the Canadian Living Foundation, local school board foundations, local businesses and parents.

Sustainable core funding reflective of current actual costs is essential for nutrition programs for all children and youth in Toronto. Our children face unprecedented health risks through inadequate nutrition and the growing rates of overweight and obesity, which are most prevalent in low-income families. Student Nutrition Programs enhance consumption of vegetables, fruit, whole grains and milk products thus helping to ensure adequate nutrient intake, while reducing future risk of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer.

An additional \$1,420,734 in municipal funds would be required to cover increased food costs and to restore the municipal contribution to 24%, according to the partnership funding model. In addition, \$732,475 would be required to subsidize those 10% of existing food programs in highest needs locations across the city.

Currently the city provides no funding for the 33 nutrition programs serving youth in Toronto, although these programs receive some provincial funding. Additional municipal funding at 24% of program costs for youth nutrition would require an additional \$184,829. Provincial funding that fully matches municipal contributions is needed for all programs serving children and youth.

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List of Attachments:

Appendix A: Toronto Student Nutrition Programs: Summary of Municipal Funding 1999-2004

Appendix B: Wards with Shortage of Student Nutrition Programs and/or High Proportion of Children Living Below the Low Income Cut-off

Appendix C: Real Cost of Providing Toronto Student Nutrition Programs in 2003

References:

1. Health Canada (2002). National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: Childhood obesity.
2. Lawlor DA, Ebrahim S, Smith GD (2002). Socio-economic position in childhood and adulthood and insulin resistance: cross sectional survey using data from British women's heart and health study. *British Medical Journal*; 325(805).
3. Stang J, Taft Beyerl C. (2003). Position of the American Dietetic Association: Child and adolescent food and nutrition programs. *American Dietetic Association Journal*; 103(7).
4. Daily Bread Food Bank (2002). Turning Our Backs on Our Children: Hunger + Decrepit Housing = Unhealthy, Unsafe Children.
5. Toronto Public Health, Planning and Policy, Health Information, July 2003.
6. Toronto Foundation for Student Success, 2002-2003 statistics.
7. Toronto Children's Services Ward Report on Children, Update 2002.

Appendix A

**Toronto Student Nutrition Programs  
Summary of Municipal Funding 1999-2004**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Municipal Funding</b>
1999-2000	\$1,310,500
2000-2001	\$1,791,800
2001-2002	\$1,880,000
2002-2003	\$1,955,340
2003-2004	\$1,999,340

Appendix B

**Wards with Shortage of Student Nutrition Programs and/or High Proportion of Children Living Below the Low Income Cut-off**

Ward	Region	Number of Student Nutrition Program Locations	Number of elementary & middle schools in ward	Number & % of Children Aged 0-14 Living Below Low Income Cut-off	Number of Children Served by a Student Nutrition Program	% of Low Income Children Aged 0-14 with No Access to a Program
5	West	0	16	3,295 (35.6%)	0	100%
33	North	1	20	4,015 (38.3%)	410	90%
12	North	6	15	6,070 (53.0%)	1,025	83%
8	North	7	13	6,915 (55.4%)	1,867	73%
35	East	5	16	5,465 (49.0%)	1,461	73%
40	East	2	16	3,650 (39.2%)	1,080	70%
7	North	8	16	4,955 (44.3%)	1,662	66%
26	East	4	10	4,895 (47.3%)	1,972	60%
14	South	4	9	3,995 (47.5%)	2,084	48%
<b>TOTALS</b>				<b>43,255</b>	<b>11,561</b>	

Appendix C

**Real Cost of Providing Toronto Student Nutrition Programs in 2003**

Original Equation to Calculate Municipal Core Funding (1998)

(Average cost per student) x (number of students participating) x (number of school days program operates) x (municipal proportion of costs) = core municipal funding

Using 2003 Program Costs

Average cost/student is calculated using a weighted average of the program types and costs:

69 Breakfast programs costing           \$1.17/student  
37 Lunch programs costing               \$1.78/student  
173 Snack programs costing               \$1.07/student

Average cost per student in 2003 = \$1.19  
Number of students participating = 64,730  
Number of school days program operates = 185  
Municipal proportion of total costs = 24%

**Municipal Portion Using Current Numbers/Costs = \$1.19 x 64,730 x 185 x 24% = \$3,420,074**

**Current Food Costs of Toronto Elementary Student Nutrition Programs**

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
1998 Food Costs per child/day (includes 30% for program supplies & resources)	\$0.85	\$2.00	\$0.65*
2003 Food Costs per child/per day (food only)	\$0.90	\$1.37	\$0.82**
2003 Food Costs per child/per day (including 30% for program supplies & resources)	\$1.17	\$1.78	\$1.07**

Breakfast: minimum of 3 food groups served in all calculations

Lunch: minimum of 3 food groups served in all calculations

Snack: \*based upon 2 food groups served

\*\*based upon 3 food groups served; nutrient analysis conducted in 2003 of foods served indicated that a nutritionally superior snack is recommended, and is achieved by adding one food group.

Appendix C (continued)

**Current Food Costs of Toronto Youth Student Nutrition Programs**

	Breakfast	Lunch	Snack
2003 Food Costs (food only)*	\$1.35	\$2.20	\$0.84
2003 Food Costs (30% added for program supplies & resources)	\$1.75	\$2.85	\$1.45

\*based upon the average daily energy needs of a moderately active 15-year-old male (2756 Calories) weighing 60 kg, using 10% of daily Calories for a snack and 25% of daily calories for a meal (World Health Organization, Basal Metabolic Rate Tool, 2001).

Breakfast & Lunch: minimum of 3 food groups  
Snack: 2 food groups + milk/calcium-rich alternative