

January 22, 2007

Memo to: Chair and Members of the Toronto Board of Health

From: Olivia Chow, MP, Trinity Spadina

Re: Children's Health and Nutrition Initiative

Recommendations:

1. That the Toronto Board of Health endorses the Children's Health and Nutrition Initiative and request the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to support this initiative.
2. Further that the Federal government (through the Minister of Health and Finance) be requested to begin the implementation of the Children's Health and Nutrition Initiative by providing needed funding in its upcoming spring budget.
3. That the Toronto Board of Health invites its partners in the community, especially those who are involved in the Students Nutrition Program to urge their MPs to support this initiative.

Background:

Toronto has long been a leader in providing nutritious meals and snacks for children through its Student Nutrition Program. And for years, the Toronto Board of Health members have urged the Federal government to investigate the establishment of a national food program for children.

For the past few months, a group of community based children nutrition experts including Breakfast for Learning, Foodshare and the Center for Science in the Public Interest came together to formulate a national plan. This plan was launched on January 17, 2007.

The Initiative calls for a nutritious breakfast, snack or lunch to be available to any Canadian child under eighteen years of age in the form of nutritious food programs. This would be based on a flexible made-in-Canada community development model building on the existing knowledge base of local organizations and parent groups.

Funding support would be provided by the Federal government to expand pre-existing programs and build efforts in parts of Canada where independent programs aren't in place. Programs would be created and managed locally by parents, educators, public health and local government representatives to meet the needs of local children and families. The Federal government will be required to develop national program standards for healthy foods, with an emphasis on nutrition education, cooking and growing skills, and inclusion of locally and sustainable sourced foods. Long-term monitoring and evaluation of standards and implementation will also be critical.

Much of the Initiative is based on the good work done by the Toronto Board of Health. For more information, please see the attached documents, including an executive summary. You can also log on to www.childrensfood.ca

I hope the Toronto Board of Health will join with me in championing this worth while plan for children.