

2011 Budget Request for Strengthening Student Nutrition Programs in Toronto: Year Two of a Five-Year Plan

Date:	December 22, 2010
To:	Board of Health
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

In June 2009, the Board of Health endorsed a five-year plan to strengthen Student Nutrition Programs in Toronto. The programs continue to grow in response to the health and nutrition needs of Toronto children and youth. In 2011, the Student Nutrition Program will be entering its second year of the plan. A full status update of the five-year plan will be part of a subsequent report to the Board of Health.

This report presents the program status during year two of the five-year plan and outlines a service enhancement request for 2011 in accordance with the key objectives of the original plan. The report proposes incorporating a minor funding adjustment to address the rising cost of food and an incremental increase to extend municipal funding to 30 designated school communities currently receiving only provincial funding.

The provincially designated communities are low income communities where children and youth are at nutritional risk. A key objective of the five year plan is to expand student nutrition program coverage in phases and to the extent possible, pursuing alignment with provincial efforts – thereby increasing the sustainability of the programs in high need areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. the Board of Health endorse the request for a \$22,780 net increase to the Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) 2011 Operating Budget for existing student nutrition programs to cover increased food costs;
2. the Board of Health endorse the request for an additional net increase of \$274,141 to the CPIP 2011 Operating Budget to extend municipal funding to 30 student nutrition programs in provincially designated communities that have not previously been funded by the City;
3. the Medical Officer of Health report to the Board of Health, prior to the 2012 budget process, with a status update on the five-year plan for student nutrition programs, and a separate report on the student nutrition program review currently underway, as directed by the Board of Health in 2009;
4. the Board of Health forward this report to the Budget Committee for consideration during the 2011 Operating Budget process; and
5. the Board of Health forward this report for information to the Ontario Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Minister of Health Promotion and Sport, the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Financial Impact

To extend municipal funding to 30 provincially designated school communities that currently receive provincial funding but not municipal funding and to meet the increased cost of food for existing programs in Toronto, an additional \$296,921 is required for 2011.

This enhancement is less than outlined for year two in the original Student Nutrition Program five-year plan endorsed by the Board of Health in June 2009. This difference is solely due to a lower rate of food inflation (0.6%) than originally projected (3%) based on long-term averages.

This recommended service enhancement of \$296,921 will bring the student nutrition program base budget of \$3,796,576 within the Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP) to \$4,093,597 and is subject to the 2011 Operating Budget process.

Focus of Investment	Recommendation	Net Increase
Food costs Provide a 0.6% cost of food increase for all programs, based on the 2010 Nutritious Food Basket, which found that food costs increased by 0.6% between 2009 and 2010.	Endorse additional municipal funds of \$22,780, to cover increased food costs, noting that the municipal funding of Student Nutrition Programs is meant for improving access to nutritious foods.	\$ 22,780
Extension of municipal grant to programs in provincially designated communities Provides for municipal core government funding to 30 additional school communities.	Endorse additional municipal funds of \$274,141 to provide core government funding to 30 school communities reaching approximately 9,300 children.	\$ 274,141
	Total net increase recommended	\$ 296,921
	New recommended base budget: \$3,796,576 + \$296,921	\$4,093,497

The Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial impact information.

Funds are allocated to programs by the Toronto Partners for Student Nutrition (TPSN) Steering Committee. Standardized meal costs per student are used to estimate program costs.

DECISION HISTORY

On May 12, 2008, a motion was made at the Community Development & Recreation Committee (CDRC) meeting for a five-year plan for student nutrition programs to be submitted for the 2009 budget process.

In order to assess the impact of the 433 provincially designated communities, which included 191 new communities at the time of the provincial announcement in 2008, development of the plan was delayed to the following year.

In June 2009, a 5-year plan for strengthening Student Nutrition Programs in Toronto was presented to and endorsed by the Board of Health.

The full review and update of the 5-year plan is delayed to the 2012 budget process, such that the recommendations from the collaborative program review of the Student Nutrition

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Program regarding the most appropriate organization and funding model to support program growth and sustainability can be considered.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In 2010, Student Nutrition Programs provided over 131,393 Toronto children and youth with access to nutritious food. The programs provided food skills training and social connections for about 2,250 volunteers in the community, contributing approximately 237,000 hours (2010).

Student Nutrition Programs help to create healthier eating habits and prevent obesity and the related early onset of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Although these programs are not a substitute for adequate income support, nutritious meals/snacks provide students with nutrients and energy they need to be ready to learn and participate in school.

Funding for the program comes from the City of Toronto, the Province of Ontario and fundraising and parental contributions at the local level. Appendix 1 provides a detailed government funding history of student nutrition programs in Toronto. Adequate core government funding is key to developing high-quality programs that meet nutrition standards and is paramount to achieving and maintaining program stability.

Student Nutrition Program Five-Year Plan: Summary

In June 2009, the Board of Health endorsed a five-year plan (see Appendix 2) to strengthen student nutrition programs in Toronto by addressing the needs of priority communities while ensuring that existing programs across the City continued to thrive and were better able to meet the nutritional needs of Toronto's children and youth. The three key aspects of the five-year plan include:

- to incrementally extend municipal funding so that all provincially designated communities within the City would receive municipal funding by 2014;
- to account for ongoing increases in the cost of nutritious food; and
- to conduct a review of the Student Nutrition Program that would evaluate how program participation, fundraising capacity and parental involvement impact upon program success and to identify the optimal organization and funding model to ensure long term sustainability.

The Student Nutrition Program is currently in year two of the plan. During the 2010/11 school year, municipal and provincial funding for student nutrition programs in Toronto will provide over 131,398 children and youth with access to nutritious foods in schools and community sites. At a minimum, provincial funding will reach almost 10,000 additional students.

Many of the provincially designated schools, which are in high needs areas of the City, have not been able to either start or sustain a student nutrition program. The Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services has therefore approved for school boards to substitute alternate school communities as eligible for inclusion within an originally designated schools catchment area.

This decision has resulted in provincial funding being redirected to a number of schools with existing municipal funding, thereby reducing the total number receiving only provincial funding for which additional municipal funding is required to meet the original plan objectives.

In addition, the Ministry also reports having met its overall target for reaching new students largely due to higher than anticipated student participation rates at designated sites that have succeeded in creating or sustaining a program.

The overall result for the City is that there will be fewer new programs remaining to be municipally funded than presented in the original five-year plan. Should the 2011 budget request be approved, there will be less than 30 provincially designated school communities remaining to be funded in 2012. More information will be presented in a subsequent report, once the program review is completed.

COMMENTS

The Student Nutrition Program in Toronto has experienced rapid growth over the past decade. Student nutrition programs serving elementary students are in every Ward in the city, and serving youth in most Wards. While this level of growth is responding to community needs, the ongoing pressure on the program due to rising food costs and increasing participation rates, along with the program's dependence on parental contributions and fund-raising, threatens the sustainability of the program.

Extending municipal funding to an additional 30 provincially designated school communities that receive provincial funding, but not municipal funding, will help these programs be more sustainable. These designated communities are low income communities where children and youth are at nutritional risk. It also means that greater numbers of children and youth in Toronto will have access to safe, adequate, and nutritious food at school, thereby enabling them to be more ready to learn and creating healthier eating habits. Specifically, in schools with student nutrition programs, the elementary participation rate is 98.7% (up from a projected rate of 70% in 2008/2009). Similarly, the youth participation rate is 35% (up from a projected rate of 28% in 2008/2009).

Rising Food Costs

The rising cost of food is an ongoing pressure for the Student Nutrition Program. Toronto Public Health monitors the cost of healthy eating in Toronto by conducting an

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annual Nutritious Food Basket survey. The 2010 results indicate an increase of 0.6% from 2009. However, over the past decade, food costs in Toronto have risen on average by 3% per year. Funding must keep pace with inflationary changes in food prices, or nutritional quality will suffer. The full municipal grant is dedicated to the cost of purchasing food by the student nutrition programs.

Growing Participation Rates

Participation in student nutrition programs has more than tripled, from about 35,000 students in 1998 to over 126,000 in 2010. Another 44,000 students will be reached if all of the new designated school communities initiate a program with provincial funding. As the number of students participating in nutrition programs has increased, the proportion of program costs covered by government sources has decreased. This has placed a significant burden on program staff/volunteers to continue to meet nutrition standards with fewer funds per student.

Local Fundraising, Parental Contributions and Volunteerism

Student nutrition programs in Toronto are community-based programs that rely on volunteers and other sources of funds to make up the difference between actual program costs and funding provided by provincial and municipal governments. Ideally, the difference in funds is made up by a combination of parental contributions, fundraising, obtaining food or in-kind donations from local businesses, and utilizing volunteers.

In 2010, the proportion of program costs funded through government sources ranged from 9-21%, down from 12-23% in 2009. This meant that school communities needed to look for 79-91% of their program costs from other sources. Although program participants are asked to make a financial contribution toward the student nutrition program, all students are invited to participate regardless of ability to pay. Unfortunately, in today's economic situation, family food budgets are even more constrained, so parental contributions are often limited. In reality, many school communities lack the parental capacity to contribute enough time and money to support high quality student nutrition programs at the levels needed for long term sustainability.

When school communities are not able to successfully fundraise or obtain parental contributions and other donations, the nutritional quality of food served suffers. Often portion sizes and the number of food groups offered are reduced. Other school communities may be forced to limit how often the nutrition program is offered. Limited resources for paid program staff and insufficient volunteers may lead to over-reliance on packaged, processed foods rather than fresh foods that require preparation.

CONCLUSION

While childhood obesity and diet-related chronic diseases are threatening the health of our population, an economic downturn and increases in the price of nutritious food are making it even harder to ensure the nutritional health and well-being of Toronto's children and youth. Improving the nutritional health of all Toronto children is a matter of

public health importance. Only with adequate core government funding can high-quality, sustainable and universally accessible student nutrition programs contribute to meeting the nutritional needs of Toronto's children and youth. To realize this vision, a larger investment of municipal and provincial funds is required, as is advocacy to urge the federal government to share in the cost of a national student nutrition program.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Toronto Student Nutrition Programs - Summary of Municipal and Provincial Funding 1998-2010.

Appendix 2: Five-Year Plan to Extend Municipal Funding for Student Nutrition Programs, June 2009

Appendix 1

Toronto Student Nutrition Programs Summary of Municipal and Provincial Funding 1998-2010

Year (School Year)	Total Municipal Funding	Total Provincial Funding
1998 (1998-99)	\$1,310,500	\$ 802,422
1999 (1999- 2000)	\$1,310,500	\$1,123,401
2000 (2000-01)	\$1,791,800	\$1,240,656
2001 (2001-02)	\$1,880,000	\$1,370,841
2002 (2002-03)	\$1,955,340	\$1,527,001
2003 (2003-04)	\$1,999,340	\$1,019,351
2004 (2004-05)	\$2,499,340	\$ 637,501 ⁽¹⁾ <u>1,200,000</u> ⁽²⁾ \$1,837,501
2005 (2005-06)	\$2,399,340	\$1,439,455
2006 (2006-07)	\$2,599,340	\$1,444,008
2007 (2007-08)	\$2,799,340	\$1,444,008
2008 (2008-09)	\$2,799,340 ⁽³⁾	\$1,956,000 ⁽³⁾ <u>5,248,394</u> ⁽⁴⁾ \$7,204,394
2009 (2009-10)	\$3,255,327 ⁽⁵⁾	\$5,336,508 ⁽⁶⁾
2010 (2010-11)	\$3,796,576 ⁽⁷⁾	\$5,336,508 ⁽⁸⁾

Notes:

Provincial funding to 2007 included up to \$120,000 for community development. Provincial funding is administered through the Toronto Foundation for Student Success.

- (1) one-time funding for capital expenditures;
- (2) actual funding allocation for program grants and community development;
- (3) one-time grant for 2008 allocated for start-up costs, equipment and other program resources in provincially designated communities;
- (4) new annual base funding for 2008 comprised of:
 - \$1,444,008 existing annual base funding (\$1,235,008 program grants, \$65,000 community development and \$144,000 administration); both designated and non-designated communities eligible
 - \$2,729,386 for existing and new morning meal programs in designated school communities only
 - \$1,075,000 new community development funds
- (5) new annual base funding for 2009 comprised of:
 - \$2,799,340 existing base funding for 2008
 - \$55,987 economic factor adjustment of 2% from 2008 budget
 - \$400,000 service enhancement for additional increased food costs and initiation of new programs in provincially designated school communities
- (6) new annual base funding for 2009/10 comprised of:
 - \$1,444,008 existing annual base funding (\$1,235,008 program grants, \$65,000 community development and \$144,000 administration); both designated and non-designated communities eligible
 - \$2,817,500 for existing and new morning meal programs in designated school communities only
 - \$1,075,000 community development funds
- (7) new annual base funding for 2010 comprised of \$3,255,327 existing base funding plus \$541,247 service enhancement to offset the 7.4% increased food cost and fund about 30 new SNPs in provincially designated communities
- (8) no change to the overall annual funding for 2010/2011 from the previous year; change to the distribution of the funding as follows:
 - \$1,300,008 existing annual base funding for both designated and non-designated communities
 - \$2,817,500 for existing and new morning meal programs in designated school communities only
 - \$1,219,000 community development funds

Appendix 2

Five-Year Plan to Extend Municipal Funding for Student Nutrition Programs, June 2009

Budget Year (School Year)	Projected Request for Increase in Food Costs	Additional Number of New Designated School Communities	Projected Municipal Enhancement Request for New School Communities	Total Municipal Enhancement Request	Total Municipal Funding
2010 (2010/11)	\$240,894	30	\$300,355	\$541,249	\$3,796,576
2011 (2011/12)	\$113,897	30	\$274,141	\$388,038	\$4,184,614
2012 (2012/13)	\$125,482	30	\$237,617	\$363,099	\$4,547,713
2013 (2013/14)	\$136,328	30	\$241,261	\$377,589	\$4,925,302
2014 (2014/15)	\$147,608	26	\$273,208	\$420,816	\$5,346,118
Total		146			