



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Student Nutrition Program: Program Update

Date:	October 8, 2015
To:	Board of Health
From:	Medical Officer of Health
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The City of Toronto is a leader among Canadian municipalities in advocating for and funding high quality student nutrition programs. This report provides a brief overview of student nutrition programs in Toronto, including the progress on municipal funding enhancement, governance and food procurement strategies.

Since 2013, there has been an unprecedented growth in the number of student nutrition programs in Toronto. To help build sustainable programs, funding from multiple sources as well as a strong governance structure with clear strategic directions are vital. This report outlines the status of the shared partnership funding model endorsed by the Board of Health in 2012. It continues with an overview of the current governance model for Student Nutrition Toronto, the partnership with city-wide oversight for student nutrition programs. Building on the strengths of its existing governance model, Student Nutrition Toronto underwent a governance review. This report describes the review process and key findings aimed at building capacity to support future program growth.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health reiterate its request to the federal government to provide core funding for a national student nutrition program;
2. The Board of Health forward this report to the Premier of Ontario, the Ontario Ministers of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), Health and Long-Term Care, Education, and Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the Federal Minister of Health, the Toronto District School Board, the Toronto Catholic District School Board, le Conseil scolaire Viamonde, le Conseil scolaire de district catholique Centre-

Sud, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS), the Angel Foundation for Learning (AFL), and Student Nutrition Toronto (SNT).

Financial Impact

There are no direct financial impacts flowing from this report.

DECISION HISTORY

At its June 25, 2012 meeting, the Board of Health adopted with amendments the report *Nourishing Young Minds – A Review of the Student Nutrition Program in Toronto*, which was subsequently adopted by City Council on July 11, 2012

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL15.3>

On September 24, 2012 and October 22, 2012, the Board of Health endorsed a shared partnership funding model and an incremental increase in the City's investment from 2013 to 2017 to strengthen core funding of existing student nutrition programs and to expand programs into higher need publically funded schools

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL16.5> and <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.HL17.5>. City Council approved enhancements in the 2013, 2014, and 2015 Operating Budgets.

At its September 30, 2013 meeting, the Board of Health requested that the Medical Officer of Health report on options to strengthen the governance of the student nutrition programs to enhance future capacity for fundraising, accountability, efficiency, and quality assurance, and to best position the program for future growth and success in achieving child health and education objectives.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Student nutrition programs are community-based meal and snack programs that operate primarily in schools and a few community sites. Participating students in kindergarten to grade twelve receive culturally appropriate nutritious food mainly during the school morning hours. Using a model which does not stigmatize participants, programs are run locally by students, parents and volunteers with support from partner organizations committed to optimizing student health and learning outcomes. Funding for Toronto programs is through a shared partnership model which includes City of Toronto, Province of Ontario, parent contributions, community and school-board fundraising initiatives, and corporate grants. In addition, programs receive critical non-monetary support including food, product and equipment donations, volunteer time and efforts, in-kind use of space, and training. Program oversight is provided by a partnership named Student Nutrition Toronto which includes membership from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), the Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), their charitable foundations, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde, Toronto Public Health, and FoodShare Toronto.

Nourishing Young Minds – A Review of the Student Nutrition Program in Toronto

In 2012, the Board of Health adopted two key reports regarding the City of Toronto's role in Toronto's student nutrition programs. The report *Nourishing Young Minds – A Review of the Student Nutrition Program in Toronto* examined how the City of Toronto can maximize the benefits of its investment in student nutrition programs while strengthening

local program sustainability. It looked at the local and international landscape. A scan of international programs concluded that a shared funding model is a best practice element which leads to sustainable student nutrition programs. Furthermore, the review confirmed that students' health, learning and behaviour outcomes were improved when they regularly participated in morning time meal programs. Toronto-based research shows that students are better able to concentrate and focus in school achieving higher scores in reading, math, and science. Students also develop healthier eating habits which can lead to lower rates of childhood obesity/overweight and chronic diseases.

Despite these benefits, the report revealed that Toronto programs face chronic funding challenges that impact their ability to deliver an optimal program. There is a considerable burden on program coordinators and volunteers to meet nutrition standards with fewer funds per student. Constant pressures include annual increases to food costs and growth in the number of students participating. Funding shortfalls result in programs operating fewer days per week, providing less food, serving fewer children, and some closing before the school year ends. The report concluded that with adequate and sustainable funding, the shared partnership funding model was viable in Toronto. It recommended that a long-term funding strategy be developed to strengthen existing programs and support expansion over time to new schools whose students could benefit from having a nutrition program.

Action to Strengthen and Expand Toronto's Student Nutrition Programs

In support of the *Nourishing Young Mind* report recommendations, the Board of Health recognized the importance of strengthening existing programs and enabling new programs to open. First, it endorsed a shared partnership funding model which proposed that government (municipal, provincial and federal levels) and the private sector each contribute 20% of program costs to match 20% contributed by parents and local communities. The Board of Health issued a call to action for increased support by other sectors. Second, the Board of Health endorsed Toronto's Five-Year Plan (2013-17) for student nutrition programs aimed at gradually increasing the municipal investment to strengthen the funding base for existing programs and to support expansion of new programs opening in other higher need publically funded schools in Toronto. Progress on these actions is highlighted below.

COMMENTS

Progress of the Partnership Funding Model

Student nutrition programs depend on many different sources for their operating funds. Each year, programs apply for City of Toronto and Province of Ontario student nutrition program grants. Local programs and school board foundations work to raise the other funds needed for operations, yet continue to experience annual budget shortfalls. To help build sustainable programs the Board of Health endorsed a shared partnership funding model for Toronto's student nutrition programs in 2012. It envisioned needing the collective efforts by five sectors (i.e., municipal, provincial and federal governments, corporate, and parent/community) to each contribute 20% of ongoing program costs to enable program sustainability.

The City of Toronto has made considerable progress towards this vision, increasing its contribution rate from 9% to just over 14% between 2012 and 2015. This progress embraces a principle of the partnership model whereby programs have stable core funding from government sources to ensure stability against the variable funding from parent/community and corporate sources. Details of the impact of the municipal investment, as well as a proposed updated municipal funding plan are included in the report *Student Nutrition Program 2016 Operating Budget Request and Municipal Funding Plan to 2018*, also before the Board of Health at its October 26, 2015 meeting. Partners from Student Nutrition Toronto have been instrumental in coordinating efforts to engage other stakeholders regarding their potential role in the partnership funding model. The following highlights progress by other sectors.

Government of Ontario

In 2013, the Government of Ontario began a new plan to increase its investment in the Ontario Student Nutrition Program in support of recommendations from the Healthy Kids Panel and its Renewed Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy. For Toronto, the provincial investment through the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) increased from \$5,716,508 in 2012 to \$8,647,408 in 2015, an increase of \$2,930,900. During this same time period, the increased provincial funding for Toronto provided 217 publically funded schools serving higher needs communities with core start-up and on-going funding for a breakfast/morning meal program. The increased investment also included cost of food increases for existing provincially-funded programs and enhanced funds for administration, community development, and equipment needs. Starting in 2013, the provincial investment provided on-going funding for one Food and Logistics Coordinator which continues to work through Student Nutrition Toronto to facilitate efficient sourcing, purchasing, and distribution of food for Toronto's programs. Between 2012 and 2014, the provincial contribution rate for food costs remained relatively stable at 10%, although when combined with funds provided for non-food items the contribution rate increases to 14%. By 2014 the provincial expansion was reaching over 15,000 more students than the municipal investment.

An independent provincial review by Deloitte Inc. of the Student Nutrition Program model in Ontario is currently underway with expected completion in the spring of 2016. Its purpose is to identify opportunities to increase efficiencies, promote sustainability, promote innovative partnerships, and demonstrate outcomes for children and youth. The six key themes to be explored include program administration and governance, funding, data collection, collaboration with charitable partners, food/logistics, and private sector partnership/fundraising. Toronto Public Health has met with the province regarding City of Toronto's review and recommendations of its investment in student nutrition programs, as well as the Student Nutrition Toronto governance model review.

Government of Canada

There is no federal funding for student nutrition programs. The Board of Health has a long history of advocacy to the federal government for a national student nutrition program. Organizations, stakeholders, and decision makers across Canada continue to seek opportunities to keep conversations active to build support for a national school food program with federal financial support. The shared funding model endorsed by the Board

of Health has been referenced at local, provincial, and national discussion tables concerned with the nutritional and educational welfare of Canada's children. In November 2015, the first national school food conference is being hosted in Montreal, Canada by Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, Farm to Cafeteria Canada, and Équiterre. Toronto Public Health, together with partner staff from Student Nutrition Toronto will be presenting the collaborative partnership and funding model used in Toronto. A call to the federal government to share in the cost of a national student nutrition program remains a vitally important action.

Parents and Local Community

At the local level, community-based programs rely on parent/student volunteers, program coordinators and school staff to organize local fundraising initiatives, coordinate parent contributions and seek food, product and equipment donations from local businesses. With 92% of student nutrition programs located in higher need communities (2015), there are many competing needs on individuals, families, schools and communities. Parental contributions are often limited. Between 2012 and 2014, local programs increased their combined yearly total funds raised through parental contributions and local fundraising by about \$300,000, recognizing that there is wide variation in locally raised funds from program to program. Also, food donations are often not included in the cash component of program budgets and estimates of funds raised.

Student nutrition programs offer capacity development and job skills training opportunities to parents, students and community volunteers. It is especially important during this time of unprecedented program growth that capacity in the area of local fundraising continue to be strengthened. With almost 5,000 volunteers during the 2014/15 school year contributing about 325,000 hours in total, most time is dedicated to program operations. Programs would not be implemented without this remarkable volunteer commitment and community engagement. Student Nutrition Toronto, the partnership with city-wide program oversight, enlists partner staff to coordinate a variety of group and individual training opportunities for volunteers, including budgeting and fundraising. The school board foundation partners take a leadership role in supporting local fundraising efforts by offering strategies, guidance, and other supports, in addition to leading city-wide fundraising campaigns. During these times of program growth, volunteers play an especially important role in maintaining program stability.

Corporate Sector

A report to the Board of Health in August 2014 provided a summary of the fundraising landscape for Toronto's student nutrition programs. Through the collaborative partnership structure which oversees student nutrition programs in Toronto, the lead fundraising role for Toronto programs is designated to the Toronto Foundation for Student Success (TFSS) and the Angel Foundation for Learning (AFL). As partners in Student Nutrition Toronto, they coordinate city-wide opportunities for corporate donations, sponsorship and other fundraising, as well as support local student nutrition programs in their fundraising efforts. Furthermore, funds raised nationally by organizations such as Breakfast Clubs of Canada, Breakfast for Learning, and other foundations and non-government agencies are administered by the TFSS and AFL for Toronto-based programs. Preliminary figures indicate that funds from corporate and

other sources reached approximately \$1.8 M in 2014, slightly increased from 2012. Food and voucher donations from corporate sponsors is not included in the cash component of funds raised, yet are a considerable support for local programs.

Student Nutrition Toronto recognized that despite efforts, the Foundations have limited resources to increase fundraising for student nutrition programs. In 2013, with municipal and provincial expansion plans underway, Student Nutrition Toronto began to explore options to better position the program for continued growth. The partnership identified several conditions that were required for effective fundraising, namely improved branding and communication about the program, coordinated food logistics and procurement systems, and a stronger governance structure. Furthermore, the Toronto Office of Partnerships is in discussions with the TFSS and AFL to identify innovative partnership opportunities that could enhance private sector contribution to student nutrition programs. Highlights are provided in the report *Student Nutrition Program 2016 Operating Budget Request and Municipal Funding Plan to 2018* also before the Board of Health at its meeting on October 26, 2015.

Student Nutrition Toronto Current Governance Model

Student Nutrition Toronto is a collaborative partnership which oversees community-based student nutrition programs in Toronto. Its mandate includes approving municipal and provincial allocations to student nutrition programs in Toronto, ensuring the quality and accountability of funded programs, and strategic planning for program growth and sustainability. Membership includes the following organizations: Toronto Public Health, Toronto District School Board, Toronto Catholic District School Board, Conseil Scolaire Viamonde, TFSS, AFL, and two community members – FoodShare Toronto and the second currently vacant. The partnership is chaired by the Medical Officer of Health or his designate. Both TFSS and AFL are the contracted lead agencies with the City to administer the municipal grant. The TFSS is also the contracted lead agency with the Government of Ontario to administer the provincial grant to Toronto programs.

Student Nutrition Toronto has two sub-committees: an Allocations Sub-Committee and an Operations Sub-Committee. The Allocations Sub-Committee, together with its Application Review Panel, lead an application and review process whereby recommendations to the partnership for allocating municipal and provincial funds are based on criteria and funding formulae established by Student Nutrition Toronto as well as municipal and provincial grant requirements. The Operations Sub-Committee oversees the implementation of policies and procedures established by Student Nutrition Toronto with an emphasis on operational support for programs through training, material/resource development, and regular site-visits and consultations. Both Sub-Committees are co-chaired by a member of Student Nutrition Toronto and a staff member from one of the partner organizations. While oversight is provided by the Student Nutrition Toronto committee, each partner organization also has a lead role to provide in-kind operational support to local programs (e.g., infrastructure, administration, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, community development, training, etc.).

Student Nutrition Toronto Governance Review

With new needs emerging as a result of the significant growth in the program, Student Nutrition Toronto recognized that their existing governance model would not support increased need for program growth, fundraising, accountability and quality assurance. In 2014, Student Nutrition Toronto contracted an independent consultant to complete a governance review. The aim was to recommend an oversight model that could better accommodate future program growth, include enhanced capacities in accountability, efficiency, quality assurance, and fundraising, and build on the strengths of the existing governance model. The process included a review of historic and current documents related to the development and structure of Student Nutrition Toronto and an examination of governance models used by Lead Agencies for other student nutrition programs in Ontario. The consultant interviewed Student Nutrition Toronto members individually, as well as led two group consultation sessions during committee meetings. Other key stakeholders including funders were also interviewed. Literature on governance models and best practices was also reviewed and indicated that principles of good governance include accountability, transparency, leadership, clarity of purpose, good stewardship, and independent of influence. The final report and recommendations were presented to Student Nutrition Toronto in November 2014.

Key Findings

The consultant recognized that the shared commitment to student nutrition by the partners is strong and a key factor in the achievements of the partnership. It was recognized that partner staff have become internal champions within their organizations and are able to leverage resources and other needed supports. This commitment has developed into a strong working relationship between the partner organizations. The partnership has a good understanding of operations with quality mechanisms in place to support and guide local programs through capacity building and community engagement approaches. Collectively, these strengths have helped the partnership oversee the tremendous expansion over the last decade. However, the consultant identified that the ‘informal partnership’ structure of Student Nutrition Toronto makes it difficult for it to manage the current scale of program operations and significant growth. Although each partner organization is an active member of Student Nutrition Toronto, the current model has multiple accountability lines that present communication and oversight challenges.

Key Recommendations

The consultant recommended that a more formal governance model be adopted. The proposed model would see the creation of a new incorporated collaborative organization and would be based on a Memorandum of Agreement among the partner organizations which would form a Board of Directors. The proposed organization would create a common strategic vision with program priorities geared to specific impact and outcome measures. Redefined governance roles, functions, and responsibilities for the Board of Directors would help the new organization focus on strategic direction and oversight. Under this model, a staff Secretariat would provide the capacity to implement the strategic direction with support from a Program Committee composed of partner organization staff. Finally, the recommended model would have the systems available to manage the increased requirements for more rigorous transparency, accountability and communication among stakeholders.

Actions Taken and Next Steps

In February 2015, the Medical Officer of Health met with the Directors of Education for the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board, as well as the Board of Director Chairs for the Toronto Foundation for Student Success and the Angel Foundation for Learning. The consultant presented an overview of the governance review and findings. These key partners requested that a full cost analysis of governance and system level functions for the current model and recommended models be prepared. The analysis has been completed and will be presented to Student Nutrition Toronto and the school board directors and foundation board chairs this fall. In the meantime, Student Nutrition Toronto has implemented improvements and strengthened their oversight processes, as well as communication and monitoring functions.

In addition, the Medical Officer of Health shared the governance review report and recommendations with senior level staff at the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, who are undergoing a review of the provincial model used for their investment in student nutrition programs.

Procurement and Distribution

Student Nutrition Toronto, through the work of a provincially funded Food and Logistics Coordinator and other partner organization staff, have been collaborating to create opportunities to secure better pricing and delivery options by consolidating the purchasing power of over 700 programs. At the same time, the partnership aims to respect the strengths inherent in the community aspects of program operations which are built on volunteer capacity and relationships with local businesses.

As one system will not meet all program needs or corporate capabilities, several pilots are underway across the City to assess viability. Starting fall 2015, select programs will be participating in two separate pilots where they will be able to order from a core list of foods meeting the student nutrition program nutrition standard. One is a grocery warehouse store pilot where up to 65 programs will be participating. In the other pilot another selection of 25-30 programs will use an on-line portal, FoodReach, to order food and arrange delivery. The FoodReach initiative is a collaborative partnership with the Ontario Food Terminal, Parkdale Activity Recreation centre, a private sector partner (Freshtech consolidators), Student Nutrition Toronto, and Toronto Public Health. Logistics, pricing and ordering mechanisms are finalized, with customized aspects for student nutrition programs pending. Training materials for both pilots are being developed.

In-store grocery purchases are a common practice by coordinators and volunteers. In 2014, a grocery discount pilot offered twelve school locations with student nutrition programs a 5% discount on in-store grocery purchases. The pilot is transitioning into full implementation this fall with fifteen more school locations participating. Also, student nutrition programs continue to participate in the province-wide food voucher program offered by the Grocery Foundation where they redeem vouchers for significant reductions of 50% or more on food products purchased at select stores.

CONCLUSION

The Board of Health's continued endorsement of the shared partnership funding model for student nutrition programs reinforces to funders and communities that sustainable programs are attainable through our collective efforts. This City commitment and call to action to other funding partners is especially important during this time of unprecedented growth in new student nutrition programs. Continued progress by Student Nutrition Toronto to strengthen its existing governance model will further develop the partnership's capacity to support future program growth, sustainability and other emerging needs.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix 1: Student Nutrition Toronto – Current Financial Flow and Program Oversight, 2015