



REPORT FOR ACTION

Student Nutrition Program: Independent School Update

Date: November 7, 2018

To: Board of Health Budget Committee and Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on providing student nutrition programs in independent schools. Since 2009, City funding to expand Toronto's student nutrition programs has been directed to publically funded schools to align with provincial policy and to maximize the benefits of the program's partnership funding model. In 2016, the Board of Health recognized that some independent schools may have a student base with a similar level of need to some public schools, and considered extending municipal funding for eligible independent schools. In 2018, the provincial policy changed to consider eligibility of independent schools. Funding for student nutrition programs helps to provide a more equitable environment for children and youth through access to safe, adequate and nutritious food at school to help them focus and learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial impacts related to this report are outlined in the report on the Toronto Public Health 2019 Operating Budget request to be considered at the Board of Health Budget Committee meeting on November 13, 2018 and at the Board of Health meeting on November 19th, 2018.

DECISION HISTORY

On April 25, 2016, the Board of Health requested that the Medical Officer of Health develop a needs-based strategy to provide the Student Nutrition Program to independent (private) schools that meet approved criteria.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.HL11.12>

On October 31, 2016, the Board of Health approved a strategy to apply a needs-based health equity lens to develop an objective and consistent means of assessing the level of need in independent (private) schools.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.HL15.7>

On September 25, 2017, the Board of Health recognized that all schools in Toronto should be eligible for consideration for municipal funding for student nutrition programs based on need. At the same meeting, the Board of Health approved a methodology which proposed the use of socio-demographic data to assess need in independent schools interested in student nutrition program funding.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.HL21.4>

COMMENTS

Municipal policy aligns with provincial policy

Beginning in 2008, the provincial government incrementally expanded its funding for student nutrition programs with a focus on breakfast/morning programs exclusively located in public schools serving higher need communities. Since 2009, when the Board of Health (BOH) recommended that the City align its student nutrition program funding with the provincial mandate, the BOH endorsed funding plans to extend municipal funding to provincially funded programs located in public schools.

Independent schools serving higher need communities

Since 2007, six 'grandfathered' independent schools in faith centres have been operating student nutrition programs, four of which receive municipal funding. In 2016, local community action raised the BOH's awareness that additional independent schools have a student base with a similar level of need to some higher need public schools. In fact, in 2017, the BOH approved a methodology to use socio-demographic data to assess need among independent schools interested in student nutrition program funding. In addition, the BOH recognized that all schools in Toronto should be eligible for consideration for municipal funding for student nutrition programs based on need. The BOH endorsed a 2018 municipal budget enhancement for student nutrition program funding for eligible independent schools, which ultimately was not approved by City Council in the final 2018 City budget.

New provincial policy on student nutrition program funding

In 2018, the provincial government updated its program guidelines for student nutrition programs. Although no new provincial funding was announced for 2018, the new program guidelines allow for independent schools to be reviewed for provincial funding

eligibility on a case-by-case basis, based on the level of aggregate student need at the school level.

In light of this new provincial policy shift, Toronto Public Health (TPH) is requesting funding to gradually expand the Student Nutrition Program into Independent Schools serving higher need communities in Toronto. Details about this funding request are included in the report on the TPH 2019 operating budget request to be considered at the November 13, 2018 BOH Budget Committee meeting and the November 19, 2018 BOH meeting.

Toronto Public Health has also requested a legal opinion on the City's current policy of funding student nutrition programs.

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SIGNATURE

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