

Support for a Canada-wide Universal Student Nutrition Program

Date: October 3, 2023

To: City Council

From: Mayor Olivia Chow

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Mayor recommends that:

1. City Council join cities across Canada, including Kingston, Halifax, Vancouver, and Victoria in calling on the Federal government to act on its promise to implement a National School Food Program and allocate appropriate funds in Budget 2024 to establish a National School Food Program with funds flowing this year to contribute to municipalities, provinces, territories and First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners; and
2. That City Council urge the Federal government to work with Toronto's Student Nutrition Program so more children can receive nutritious food at school through a universal program.

SUMMARY AND COMMENTS

The rising cost of groceries is putting pressure on families in our City. In Toronto, 28% of food bank clients are children and youth. More children are going to school hungry. When you're hungry, you can't learn.

Student nutrition programs ensure that all children are able to enjoy meals at school so they can focus on their teacher, not their hunger. As grocery prices climb and more families turn to food banks for support, we can plainly see just how essential these programs are.

City Council and the Toronto Board of Health have a long history of offering nutritious meals at school through the Student Nutrition Program. This program is funded through municipal and provincial funding streams, however Canada does not have a national, universal student nutrition program. I am proud to have helped establish Toronto's student nutrition program as councillor and Child and Youth Advocate. In Toronto, over 200,000 children participate.

The federal government has committed in recent years to work with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners, and stakeholders to develop a National School Food Policy and explore how more Canadian children can receive nutritious food at school. The 2024 Federal Budget is the federal government's opportunity to fund and expand student nutrition programs in Toronto and across Canada - so that every child has the best chance to learn.

SIGNATURE

Oliva Chow
Mayor