

June 16, 2025

Executive Committee of Council
City of Toronto
100 Queen St. West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

Dear Members of the Executive Committee,

On behalf of Daily Bread Food Bankⁱ, our member agencies and valued community partners, we are writing to express our strong support for the [City of Toronto's Vision and Strategy for a Universal School Food Program](#), with the goal of providing a morning meal in all Toronto school communities by 2026/2027 and introducing a lunch program by 2030.

In December 2024, Toronto City Council took the landmark step of declaring food insecurity an emergency. The motion emphasized embedding this declaration into major initiatives including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Food Charter, and School Food Program. We applaud the City's leadership in moving forward on its commitment to ensure that every child has access to nutritious meals at school. This effort is both timely and essential, especially in light of these alarming trends:

- **Record breaking food bank usage:** More than 1 in 10 Torontonians now rely on food banks, 23% being children or youth. In 2024, Daily Bread's network recorded 3.49 million client visits, a 273% increase since pre-pandemic (2020)ⁱⁱ.
- **Alarming child poverty rates:** Toronto experienced an 8.5% increase in child poverty between 2020 and 2022, making it the city with the highest rate of child poverty among large municipalities in 2022ⁱⁱⁱ. Moreover, child poverty has increased in every Toronto Ward since 2020, with some areas reporting child and family poverty rates as high as 61%.
- **Widespread food insecurity:** In 2024, 10 million individuals—including 2.5 million children—across Canada lived in food-insecure households. This represents the highest increase in the almost twenty years of monitoring^{iv}.
- **Rising cost of living:** The cost of food continues to rise, with April 2025 marking the third consecutive month where grocery prices outpaced the overall inflation rate^v.

The benefits of school nutrition programs are well-documented, with research showing that they contribute to improved health, mental well-being, academic performance, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability^{vi}. The Toronto District School Board's evaluation of the *Feeding Our Future* program confirmed a strong link between morning meals and academic achievement^{vii}.

As the City expands the School Food Program, we support a model that is universal in design. Food insecurity exists in every part of Toronto, and a universal approach is the most equitable - it removes stigma, reduces administrative burden, and ensures that no child is left behind. We also urge the City to ensure that meals are culturally appropriate and locally sourced, aligning with efforts to strengthen Canada's economic resilience in response to U.S. tariffs.

Realizing this vision will require sustained investment from all levels of government. We join the City of Toronto in calling on the Province of Ontario to match the City's current and future investments in the Student





Nutrition Program—adjusted for inflation—and urge the Government of Canada to strengthen its commitment through enhanced funding under the National School Food Program.

We thank the City of Toronto for its commitment to expanding this vital initiative. It represents a meaningful step toward addressing child hunger and building a healthier, more equitable future for all.

Sincerely,

Daily Bread Food Bank
5n2 Meals4u
Abiona Centre
Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services
ACSA Community Services
Avenue Road Food Bank
Beach Interfaith Outreach
Bethlehem United Shelter
Bloor West Food Bank
Calvary Baptist Church
Canadian Red Cross
Centennial College Student Association Inc.
Centre for Immigrant & Community Services
Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre
Churches on the Hill
Covenant House
Creating Together
Evangel Hall Mission
Finhdelp|211
Flemingdon Community Food Bank
Fred Victor
Grace CRC McCowan Foodbank
Grace Place Food Bank
Grant AME Church
Haven on the Queensway
Hillcrest Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Holy Wisdom Church
Homes First Society
House of Compassion
Houselink & Mainstay Housing
Jane Alliance Neighborhood Services
LAMP Community Health Centre
Living Word Assembly of God Church
LOFT
Loyan Foundation
Native Women's Resource Centre of Toronto
Neighbours Community Homes
New Toronto Street Food Bank
Oasis Dufferin Community Centre
Parkdale Community Food Bank
Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre



PWA (Toronto People with AIDS Foundation)
 Red Door Family Shelter
 Reverend Canon Maggie Helwig, Church of St Stephen-in-the-Fields
 RFRO
 Scarborough Center For Healthy Communities
 Sistering
 Social Planning Toronto
 Sojourn House
 Spadina-Fort York Community Care
 St James Food Basket
 St. Ann's Foodbank
 St. Michael's Homes
 Student Assoc. of George Brown Coll. SNAP
 The 519
 The Neighbourhood Group
 The Parkdale Activity – Recreation Centre
 The Stop Community Food Centre
 TNG Community Services
 TNO Food Bank
 Toronto Council Fire Native Cultural Centre
 Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
 Toronto West SDA Food Bank
 Ve'ahavta
 Volunteer Toronto
 Warden Woods Community Centre
 Working Women Community Centre

ⁱ Since 1983, Daily Bread Food Bank has worked to meet emergency needs while advocating for long-term solutions to end poverty with over 200 programs across Toronto.

ⁱⁱ Daily Bread Food Bank & North York Harvest. (2024). *Who's Hungry 2024*. Available at <https://www.dailybread.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/DB-Whos-Hungry-Report-2024-Digital.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Social Planning Toronto. (2024). Fighting for our future: Child and family poverty report card, Toronto 2024. Available at <https://www.socialplanningtoronto.org/childpoverty2024>

^{iv} PROOF. (2025). How many Canadians are affected by household food insecurity. Available at <https://proof.utoronto.ca/food-insecurity/how-many-canadians-are-affected-by-household-food-insecurity/>

^v Statistics Canada. Consumer Price Index, April 2025. Available at <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/250520/dq250520a-eng.htm>

^{vi} The Coalition of Healthy School Food. Benefits of school food programs. Available at https://www.healthyschoolfood.ca/files/ugd/e7a651_659b6c971fff44e399747263e1c61269.pdf?index=true; Butikofer, A, Molland, E and Salvanes, K.G., Childhood nutrition and labour market outcomes: Evidence from a school breakfast program, *NHH Dept. of Economics Discussion Paper No. 15/2016*, August 18, 2016, , Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2879304> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2879304>; Petter, L., Dan-Olof, R., Jesper A-P, Long-term effects of childhood nutrition: Evidence from a school lunch reform, *The Review of Economic Studies*, Volume 89, Issue 2, March 2022, Pages 876–908, <https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdab028>; Cohen, J. F. W., Hecht, A. A., McLoughlin, G. M., Turner, L., & Schwartz, M. B. (2021). Universal school meals and associations with student participation, attendance, academic performance, diet quality, food security, and body mass index: A systematic review. *Nutrients*, 13(3), 911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13030911>

^{vii} Toronto District School Board. (1 1 / 1 2 - 0 6). *Feeding our future: The first and second year evaluation*. Available at <https://tfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/EvaluationFOFProgram-min.pdf>