

## Coalition celebrates BC Budget 2023's historic commitment to healthy school food programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Summary

- The BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food ("the Coalition") applauds BC Budget 2023's inclusion of \$214 million over three years to expand existing school food programs and increase capacity to address student hunger in all districts.
- The Coalition urges the Province to provide flexible and supportive direction in conjunction with the funding, to ensure school districts are empowered to implement successful programs that meet [key guiding principles](#) based on best practices.
- As the single largest investment in school food in Canadian history, this budget commitment establishes BC as a leader in supporting school food programs. We hope that this investment inspires additional support from provincial, territorial, and federal governments in upcoming 2023 budgets.

**Victoria, B.C., March 6, 2023** – After years of advocacy for dedicated school food funding, the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and our 56 members applaud Budget 2023's inclusion of dedicated new funding to support sustainable school food programs across British Columbia. **This is the single largest investment in school food in Canadian history, and is a critical and exciting first step towards a universal school food program for all BC students.**

"We are grateful to the BC government for listening to the voices of hundreds of advocates across BC, and providing dedicated and stable funding for school food programs," said Samantha Gambling, BC Chapter Coordinator of the Coalition. "The relief and excitement from the community is palpable. But we know that the hard work begins now, with school communities, government and NGOs working together to determine implementation steps."

As they work towards developing sustained, continuous and equitable community-supported school food programs, the Coalition is asking the Province to ensure funding directives are flexible and allow for a variety of costs including staffing within schools and districts, infrastructure, and operational expenses.

In addition, the Coalition urges the Province to provide ongoing support to ensure school communities can build comprehensive programs that align with best practices, such as



providing universal access to reduce stigma and incorporating hands-on food literacy education.

"We look forward to seeing how these programs will continue to strive towards health promotion in how they are implemented, and how they will be supported to bring in local BC grown foods, including Indigenous traditional foods," said Sue-Anne Banks, Indigenous Lead of the BC Chapter. "We ask the province to honour their 2022 commitment to advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples by prioritizing Indigenous food sovereignty in these programs, as well as supporting the federal government in negotiating agreements for independent distinctions-based school meal programs with Indigenous leaders."

This historic investment puts BC as a leader of school food commitments across the country. The national Coalition is calling on the Federal government to act on their existing commitments and invest \$1 billion over five years in Budget 2023 to support school food programming across Canada.

"This level of dedicated school food investment is the first of its kind in Canada and we hope that this success will continue on a federal level," said Debbie Field, National Coordinator of the Coalition for Healthy School Food.

For more information, please contact:

**Selenna Ho**

Communications Director

Public Health Association of BC

[communications@phabc.org](mailto:communications@phabc.org)

778-836-1001

*The BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food is administered by the Public Health Association of BC (PHABC). The Coalition and PHABC acknowledge that our work goes beyond the places we live and impacts the lives of nations across British Columbia and Turtle Island.*