

Date

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP
Minister of Finance
House of Commons, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Sent by email to: chrystia.freeland@fin.gc.ca

Invest in a Canada-wide school nutritious meal program as a critical element of a school food policy

Dear Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Freeland,

I am writing to you on behalf of [organization] a [non-profit/volunteer organization]. We are a [member / endorser / supporter] of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, the largest school food network in Canada. The Coalition is a Canada-wide, non-partisan network of more than 240 non-profit organizations advocating for public investment in a universal cost-shared nutritious school meal program with consistent standards. Our vision is that the five and a half million children aged 3-18 enrolled in elementary and secondary schools across Canada will have daily access to a healthy meal at school.

The Government of Canada has a real opportunity to advance the health and well being of all Canadian children and lay the basis for the long term health of all Canadians by including an investment in school food in Budget 2023. [Can adapt or expand on this paragraph if you have more to add]. We applaud the Government's commitments to healthy school food in the 2021 Liberal Party Platform and the 2022 Federal Budget, and urge you to take action on those commitments in Budget 2023.

Specifically, my organization is adding its voice to the Coalition for Healthy School Food to ask your government to:

- 1) Allocate \$1 billion over five years in Budget 2023 to establish a National School Nutritious Meal Program as a key element of the evolving Food Policy for Canada, with \$200 million per year to contribute to provinces, territories and First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners to fund their school food programs.

- 2) Enter into immediate discussions with Indigenous leaders to negotiate agreements for the creation and/or enhancement of permanent independent distinctions-based First Nation, Métis and Inuit school meal programs.
- 3) Create a dedicated school food infrastructure fund to enhance food production and preparation equipment and facilities so they can reliably and efficiently serve healthy food in adequate volumes

Research has long found school meals to be one of the most successful drivers of improved health, education, and well-being in children of all ages. School food programs have also been shown to have broad, positive impacts on families, communities, and the economy by reducing household food costs, creating jobs, and strengthening sustainable food systems.

[Please adapt to fit your own story and experience] Through [my / our] work supporting and facilitating local school food programs in [x region] we have seen first-hand the importance of school food to our students' health and wellbeing including their academic success and the development of lifelong eating habits. As rising costs of food stretch school food program budgets and leave many families in [x region] struggling to make ends meet, the importance of federal investments in student nutrition programming cannot be overstated.

We urge you to act now.

This is ultimately about our shared future, and the support we can provide so that every child, from coast to coast to coast, can learn and grow to their full potential.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

C.C.:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Canada
[Ideally cc your MP]