
2010 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

Student Nutrition Programs in Toronto

Issue:

This briefing note highlights the benefits of student nutrition programs to the children of Toronto and provides a high level overview of the history of the Student Nutrition Program in Toronto.

Key Points & Benefits:

Adequate core government funding is essential to developing high quality programs that meet nutrition standards and is critical for program stability.

Canada is one of the few western, industrialized countries that does not have a national policy or program on student nutrition (see Appendix A):

- The United States and the United Kingdom have nationally funded programs.
- Italy, Japan, France, and Finland have national requirements for student nutrition programs that are funded fully or partially at the municipal level.
- A study from 2008 showed that student participation rates were 95% in Finland, 85% in Sweden and Japan, and ranged from 9.1% to 17.5% in Canada.

Student Nutrition Programs benefit students, families, the school and the broader community in the following ways:

- Creating healthier eating habits and preventing obesity and the early onset of chronic diseases
- Alleviating short term hunger resulting from food insecurity
- Providing a positive setting for children to meet and socialize
- Increasing community safety and reducing violence
- Providing opportunities for food skills training and social connections for parents and volunteers in the community
- Providing students with the nutrients and energy they need to be ready to learn

All of these benefits strengthen our local communities and better prepare our children to succeed and lead healthier lives. City supported student nutrition programs are an excellent example of success in making Toronto a healthier, more equitable city.

History of Student Nutrition Programs in Toronto:

- Student nutrition programs have existed in Toronto since 1991. By 1998, in response to growing public concern about children who were not adequately nourished, there were more than 200 programs reaching 35,000 school children. Municipal funding covered 24% of program costs. The Province of Ontario also recognized the need for student nutrition programs and by 1998 contributed 21.5% of program costs through a grants program.
- In 1998, Toronto Partners for Child Nutrition identified the need for core funding given the accelerated growth of the programs. They recommended funding be provided by the municipality, the province, local and corporate fundraising, and parental contributions. Municipal financial contributions signaled endorsement by the city and made donors more confident to give financial and in kind support.
- Student participation in Toronto has more than tripled since 1998 to approximately 130,000 children and youth and by 2009 municipal funding had increased to \$3,255,327. However, with increased food costs and increased participation, the portion of municipal funding has decreased to 10.7% of program costs.
- In 2008, as part of its poverty reduction strategy, the Province increased funding significantly and in 2009/10 provided \$5,334,508 to fund programs in the City of Toronto. Provincial funds cannot cover more than 15% of program costs and must be used to fund provincially designated school communities.
- In June 2009, the Board of Health recommended a five-year plan to extend municipal funding incrementally to all provincially designated school communities in the City of Toronto by 2014 since these are low income communities where children and youth are at nutritional risk.
- The 2010 municipal budget enhancement request of **\$541,249** is the first step in implementing this five-year plan and will help offset increased food costs for existing programs and allow 30 of the 146 school communities that have not been eligible for municipal funding due to budget constraints. This will benefit approximately 10,478 additional students in these low income communities.

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Appendix A: Program Description by Country

FINLAND	
Program highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Nationally, free school lunches to primary, elementary, and secondary students are offered (since 1948). ○ Federal law (1943) passed requiring municipalities to arrange a free lunch for all students at elementary schools (1948), with the extension over time of this law to primary and secondary schools. ○ Government recommendations for school meal services require that the school meal should cover 1/3 of the nutrient requirements of the students.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Social Institution of Finland compensates universities EUR€0.67 (CDN\$0.93) per day per student's meal. ○ Municipalities fund the lunches for primary, elementary, and secondary students.
FRANCE	
<p>The French education system places a priority on school lunch and its role in the school day. Multi-course lunches are served to students, in a calm environment, with ample time to slowly eat their meal.</p>	
Program highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Serve about 6 million children annually ○ The Ministry of Education establishes nutrition guidelines/criteria for school meals/catering, including recommendations about food safety (2001) ○ Local schools and school boards plan and prepare multi-course lunch meals.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ City governments subsidize meals for those who cannot pay the full price. ○ Price per meal is capped by law and may not be more than the cost of producing the meal. ○ The price of a meal is based on family income; families with multiple children and those in financial difficulties pay a reduced price; students typically pay less than half the cost of the lunch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ e.g., in Paris, a meal costs about EUR€6.17 (CDN\$8.67) to produce, and students in the highest income bracket pay only EUR€3.30 (CDN\$5.30). The rest of the funding cost is from the City of Paris.
GERMANY	
Program highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No national lunch program; no laws regarding school lunches ○ In most parts of Germany, the school day ends around noon. Children go home to eat lunch with their families. ○ The federal government is encouraging German states to introduce full-time schools. Since 2003, nearly one fifth of Germany's 40,000 schools have phased in afternoon programs. ○ The local school administrations have opened school cafes, where students can eat at their own cost or at the cost of the school.
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No information

<p>ITALY The philosophy of the Italian student nutrition model is that school meals are recognized as a key component of people’s right to education and to health.</p>	
<p>Program highlights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State schools have ‘canteen committees’ which act as an independent supervisory body to ensure the maintenance of hygiene and food quality standards. ○ Administered by the local authority, parent committees or outside caterers. ○ Menus designed in cooperation with dietitian, canteen chefs, and local producers. ○ 140,000 meals served every school day to children in Rome. ○ Federal Finance Law 488 (1999) was enacted to encourage, require or subsidize the use of organic and ‘quality’ ingredients in public sector canteens, including schools, following the recommendations of the National Institute of Nutrition. ○ Local health authorities have also developed health and safety courses to enable parents to manage school kitchens.
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local governments in Italy have passed resolutions and provide funding to subsidize the costs of using organic, locally grown products in school meal systems ○ Parents pay an annual fee, which has been subsidized by the local government. The average meal may cost (EUR€3.12 or CDN\$4.35). Reduced rates exist for low income families and families with multiple children. Fees are waived for families with an annual income below a certain level.
<p>JAPAN “Lunch in Japanese schools is part of the curriculum just like math or science. The midday meal is meant to improve student health and to foster correct eating habits and good human relations” (Ministry of Education and Technology).</p>	
<p>Program highlights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 11 million school-aged children served in 35,000 schools (2007), which includes 7 million primary and 7 million secondary students, 90,000 special education students, 61,000 students attending evening classes ○ The Ministry of Education and Technology (MEXT) sets nutrition and program standards ○ Local school authorities provide the infrastructure to support the school lunch program
<p>Funding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No free meals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is the School Lunch Law (1954) that parents/guardians cover the daily cost of ingredients (today about 250 JPN yen or CDN\$2.85) and the school bodies cover the cost of buildings, equipment, salaries, etc. ▪ The individual local authority sends grants directly to the parents in low income areas and not the school, which are designed to be used to the benefit of their children.

UNITED KINGDOM	
The UK standards are some of the most detailed and comprehensive in the world. Food-based standards have been recently reintroduced and nutrient-based standards are being developed.	
Program highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National nutrition standards ○ Free school meals for eligible low income families. ○ Funded by the Department of Children, Schools and Families ○ Department for Education and Skills – design guidance on kitchens/dining areas 2007 ○ Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs – help increase capacity of local producers to bid successfully to supply fruit, vegetable, dairy, meat ○ School Food Trust established to advise and support the implementation of better school food (2005)
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National ○ £240m (\$371.8m CDN) subsidy until 2011 ○ £2m (\$3.1m CDN) to establish a network of regional training kitchens; separate a fund for building new kitchens in schools with the most need for new kitchens (from 2006)
UNITED STATES	
Program highlights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Federally assisted meal programs ○ School breakfast program (2007 served 10.1 million children in over 87,000 schools and child care institutions) ○ National school lunch program (2008 served 30.5 million children in over 101,000 schools and child care institutions) ○ Congress expanded the National School Lunch Program to include reimbursement for snacks served to children in after school educational and enrichment programs to include children through 18 years of age ○ National summer meal program provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to children in low-income areas throughout the summer months and when they are out of school (2005 served almost 2 million children in 31,000 sites) ○ National nutrition standards, based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans ○ Nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals ○ Funded by the US Department of Agriculture ○ Federally administered by the Food and Nutrition Service ○ At the State level administered by State education agencies, which operate the program through agreements with school food authorities ○ The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies updated the nutrition standards and meal requirements for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs (<i>School Meals: Building Blocks For Healthy Children, 2010</i>)
Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ National ○ National Breakfast Program: US\$2.4b (CDN\$2.5b); 2008 ○ National Lunch Program, including after school snacks: US\$9.3b (CDN\$9.6b); 2008 ○ Summer Food Program: US\$327.4m (CDN\$337m); 2008