

March 21, 2024

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH

Philip Lawrence, MP Northumberland-Peterborough South
Jamie Schmale, MP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
House of Commons Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Sent via email to: Philip.Lawrence@parl.gc.ca & Jamie.Schmale@parl.gc.ca

Dear MP Lawrence and MP Schmale

Re: Private Member's Bill C-322 – National Framework for a School Food Program Act

The Board of Health for the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit (HKPRDHU), is writing to you today in strong support of MP Serge Cormier's Private Member's Bill C-322, *National Framework for a School Food Program Act*. Specifically, we are requesting that you work with your caucus colleagues to seek unanimous consent of this Bill in support of children and youth across Canada. As the preamble to the Bill states, "almost one in five children reported to school or to bed hungry sometimes, often or always because there was not enough food at home." In a country as developed and wealthy as ours, this is simply unacceptable. In fact, Canada is currently the only country in the G7 that does not have a national school food program or national standards.

The Board of Health for the HKPRDHU fully supports the concept of a universal, non-stigmatizing national school food policy and program for all public schools. A growing body of research demonstrates that school food programs can benefit students' physical and mental health, improve food choices, and lead to student success (e.g. academic performance, student behaviour, and school attendance).¹ In Ontario, these programs help reduce the \$5.6 billion/year in costs due to nutrition-related chronic disease injuries. Well-designed and non-stigmatizing School Nutrition Programs (SNPs) also have broad, positive impacts on families, communities, and the economy by reducing household food costs, creating jobs, and strengthening the Agrifood sector.²

Given the widespread need across Ontario and Canada, and the inequities faced by schools in marginalized neighborhoods, there is a strong need for the federal government, in partnership with provincial ministries and school boards/districts, to commit to a National School Food Policy.

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A national policy would set a standard both for securing food for schools and ensuring it is delivered consistently, sustainably, and within a context of transformative action to improve students' health and achievement outcomes and build cultural and economic success.

The policy should be followed up by the rollout of a National School Nutritious Meal Program, and with it the \$200 million per year that the Government of Canada committed to in 2021. An investment in Budget 2024 in a national school food program will support both families and school food providers, who have been struggling due to the affordability crisis.

The Board of Health for the HKPRDHU looks forward to continued engagement on this critical issue for children and youth and encourage you to vote to pass Bill C-322 as soon as possible. For more information, please review the [Employment and Social Development Canada National School Food Policy Engagements – What We Heard Report](#).

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss the importance of this legislation.

Yours truly

BOARD OF HEALTH FOR THE HALIBURTON,
KAWARTHA, PINE RIDGE DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

David Marshall
Board of Health Chair
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

DM:kl

cc: Laurie Scott, MPP, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock
David Piccini, MPP, Northumberland-Peterborough South
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ontario Boards of Health

¹ [The case for a Canadian national school food program](#). Hernandez et al., 2018; [Nourishing Young Minds](#). Toronto Public Health, 2012; [The impact of Canadian School Food Programs on Children's Nutrition and Health](#). Colley et al., 2018; [Coalition for Healthy School Food](#)

² [The Burden of Chronic Disease in Ontario](#). CCO & PHO 2019