



**Ontario supports kids and families
by signing on to Canada's national school food program**

TORONTO - November 22, 2024 - The Ontario Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, a network of over 95 organizations from across the province and part of Canada's largest school food network with more than 500 organizational members and endorsers, applauds the Government of Ontario for negotiating a national school food program agreement with Canada.

Ontario will receive \$108.5 million over 3 years from the federal government to support the Ontario Student Nutrition Program and First Nations Student Nutrition Program, supporting an additional 160,000 students with over 9.8 million meals.

This agreement comes at an important time for Ontario student nutrition programs, which have been under significant strain due to increased food costs and growing demand for programs in recent years. This deal shows Ontario's commitment to strengthening the provincial student nutrition program, which provides nutritious food in schools and supports students and families across the province.

"This program will be transformative, breaking down barriers to learning by ensuring every student has access to the nutritious food they need to focus and thrive," shares Kathleen Woodcock, President of the Ontario Public School Boards Association. "At a time when many Ontario families are navigating rising living costs, this funding will provide critical support, strengthening school communities and easing financial pressures on households."

This additional investment will add to existing community and provincial funding, making it so that more programs will be able to run at full capacity, 5 days/week with sufficient health-promoting food to support the hundreds of thousands of children and youth who access them each day.

"Ontario Student Nutrition Programs have already made a profound impact on children's health and academic success, and the announcement of federal funding will amplify those efforts", says Tyler Arsenault, co-chair of Student Nutrition Ontario. "By progressing toward stable, sustainable funding, schools will be able to reach even more students, and provide access to food more frequently throughout the school year. This is a victory for students, families, and communities across Ontario, and we look forward to the positive outcomes this program will bring."

"We're thrilled that Ontario is now the third province to sign a federal agreement", says Sarah Keyes, Provincial Lead for the Ontario Coalition Chapter. "Ontario has a real opportunity to build on this federal investment and we are looking forward to seeing continued leadership from the province on school food. Federal funding means programs in Ontario will be able to begin to stabilize, and with more funding programs will be able to grow. This will help families cope with the cost of living and will

improve children’s lives, which is one reason we’ve seen so many other provinces across the country investing in school food.”

Universal, stigma-free school food programs reduce children’s hunger during school hours while improving their diets across socio-economic backgrounds. This results in short-term benefits of improved learning, behaviour, and health and well-being, and supports students in the long-term as well. These programs also help level the playing field and give all students a more equal opportunity to succeed.

“School food programs are also excellent social and economic policy, with a great return on investment,” shares Keyes. “They have been shown to help strengthen communities, support the economy, and transform food systems. These are really important outcomes that Ontario will benefit from as the provincial program grows.”

About the Ontario Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food (ON-CHSF)

The **Ontario Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food** (ON-CHSF) is a provincial chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, administered by Sustain Ontario. The ON-CHSF is a growing network of over 95 non-profit and community-driven organizations from across the province. Our members, endorsers and supporters include student nutrition and food literacy providers, professionals from education, health, agriculture and food sectors, academia, as well as school boards, local governments, and stakeholder associations.

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