



# SUSTAIN

Alliance for healthy, just and sustainable food & farming  
Working across Indigenous Territories / Ontario

## Strengthen Community-based School Food and Education Programs

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- Ontario families are struggling with food inflation pressures and food affordability
- Most children and youth do not receive adequate nutrition, impacting their academic success, mental well-being, and overall growth and development, causing increased rates of costly diet-related illnesses over time.
- Ontario Student Nutrition Programs (SNPs) support students with nourishing food in 80% of schools across the province. SNPs must contend with record-high food costs coupled with increased participation rates, and are struggling to feed the children and youth who access their programs.
- Ontario currently invests \$37.6M in school food programs, providing 10¢ per student per day. The median [national/provincial/territorial](#) contribution is nearly four times higher at 39¢/student/day.
- School gardens are of high interest to schools and organizations but are difficult to maintain given the lack of systemic support and labour requirements during the summer months.

### Recommendations:

- **Increase Ontario's investment in Ontario Student Nutrition Program and the First Nation Student Nutrition Program** to leverage the recent \$108.5M in federal funding in order to stabilize and grow programs, reach more children and youth, take pressure off household budgets, and improve the learning, behaviour, health and wellbeing of children.
- Add more provincial funding to build on the national program, match investments from external funders, and **raise Ontario's per capita contribution** to align with the national [provincial/territorial median investment](#) of 39¢/student/day.
- **Ensure that by 2030, all children and youth in Ontario** will be able to access a nutritious and culturally relevant meal, in a non-stigmatizing manner, at school each day by committing to a universal school food program.
- **Work with the Ministry of Education to implement a review of facilities and equipment** required to support food preparation and gardens in schools, including low-cost and innovative options (e.g., portable kitchen units) for schools without full kitchens.
- **Collaborate with the Ministry of Education, to support community-based food literacy** to be present alongside the current School Nutrition Program models in schools.
- **Develop hands-on food learning, including cooking and gardening**, as a specific stream of professional development for existing in-service teachers, and add a summer intensive to respond to interest by current teachers for doing this work.
- **Review and map existing school food assets (including gardens, kitchens greenhouse, food forests, etc.)** and assess resources required to support increased use of these school facilities.

These policies have been created with the input of 90+ Ontario organizations collaborating over 4 months and have been vetted by the Sustain Board as of February 4, 2025. For more information, please go to:

<https://sustainontario.com/vote2025/>