

**DATE:** April 9, 2024

**TO:** Board of Trustees

**FROM:** Board Chair Kusiek

**SUBJECT:** Revision to School Nutrition Framework Letter

**REFERENCE** [Education Act](#), Section 33

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## ISSUE

The Board Chair is requesting changes to the letter approved on March 19, 2024 in support of Bill C-322, *An Act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program*.

## BACKGROUND

Acadie-Bathurst MP Serge Cormier has introduced private member's bill C-322, *An Act to develop a national framework to establish a school food program*. At their March 19, 2024 meeting, the Board approved a letter to be sent to a variety of elected officials in support of the Bill and funding for a national school nutrition program. On April 1, the Prime Minister announced a new National School Food Program, along with an investment of \$1 billion over five years.

## RELATED FACTS

- The letter approved on March 19, 2024 contains the following paragraph: *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.*
  - a. In the funding announced along with the National School Food Program, the funds requested in this paragraph have already been committed. Therefore, inclusion of this paragraph no longer makes sense.
- At the March 19, 2024 Board meeting, Trustee Hole voiced concern over the following sentence: *Additionally, it can also contribute to the development of a more sustainable food system by supporting local and sustainable food production, and local economies through the creation of jobs.*
  - a. As other changes to the letter are also being made at this time, I am deleting this sentence as well given concerns from Trustee Hole and that it is not a critical piece of information in the letter.
- Given the April 1, 2024 announcement the letter has also been adjusted to reflect this investment. These areas are articulated in bold in the attachment.

## RECOMMENDATION

**That the following paragraph be deleted from the letter supporting a National Framework for a School Food Program Act:**

*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.*

**NEXT STEPS**

Upon approval, the letter will be updated and sent to the list of officials approved on March 19.

**ATTACHMENTS**

ATTACHMENT I Letter approved March 19, 2024 (paragraph recommended for deletion highlighted)

JK:km

Date

[Member of Parliament's Full Name (with honorifics as necessary)]

[Constituency Office Address]

[City, Province Postal Code]

Dear (MP's NAME),

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

We are 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.

**We are heartened to hear of the \$1 billion investment in a National School Food Program over five years which was announced on April 1. This is a step in the right direction, and we believe more can be done.** Our school board has been following the process of this Bill with great interest. It is heartening to see that the Bill has passed second reading and has been sent to committee. However, it will still need the support of those on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. We fully support the concept of a universal national school food policy and program for all public schools with certain requirements as described below. 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<sup>[1]</sup>.

This type of program could provide a variety of benefits for students, including:

- Improving access to nutritious food for students, allowing all students to focus on learning in school
- Addressing food insecurity and the resulting anxiety and mental health challenges that affect students
- Improving the social determinants of health for marginalized communities
- Promoting healthy eating habits, choices, and lifestyles
- Increasing food literacy
- Supporting local agriculture and traditions; and
- Supporting a healthier and more sustainable food system.

A national school food policy and program would also help ensure that all children have the nourishment they need to learn and grow and improve their health and well-being. **Additionally, it can also contribute**

to the development of a more sustainable food system by supporting local and sustainable food production, and local economies through the creation of jobs.

We suggest that any federally supported policy/program to provide food (breakfasts, meals, snacks) must meet the following minimum requirements:

- Be present at every publicly funded school and accessible at no cost to students or care providers, school or boards/districts/authorities
- Be offered in a manner that is stigma-free
- Support culturally appropriate local food producers
- Have no marketing to children and youth

Given the widespread need across Alberta and Canada, and the extraordinary diversity of approaches school divisions take in forming partnerships to support those in need, there is a strong need for the federal government, in partnership with provincial ministries and school boards, to commit to a National School Food Policy **that reaches every publicly funded school**. 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 end poverty, 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.

On behalf of Edmonton Public Schools, we look 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 directly by email at [trustee.julie.kusiek@epsb.ca](mailto:trustee.julie.kusiek@epsb.ca) or by phone at 780-429-8087 should you wish to discuss the importance of this [legislation](#).

Best Regards,

Julie Kusiek  
Chair

c: The Honourable Demetrios Nicolaidis, Minister of Education  
Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association  
Dennis MacNeil, President, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

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<sup>[1]</sup> According to [Breakfast Club of Canada](#), and as reported by [CBC](#) and the [Globe and Mail](#)