

April 22, 2024

Randy Boissonnault
Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Official Languages of Canada
202-10235 124 St NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5N 1P9

Dear Minister Boissonnault:

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 were 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^[1].

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.

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

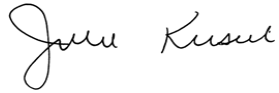
- Be present at every publicly funded school and accessible at no cost to students or care providers, school or boards/districts/authorities
- Be offered in a manner that is stigma-free
- Support culturally appropriate local food producers
- Have no marketing to children and youth

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.

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 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 Nicolaides, Minister of Education
Marilyn Dennis, President, Alberta School Boards Association
Dennis MacNeil, President, Public School Boards' Association of Alberta

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

