



**THE COALITION**  
FOR HEALTHY SCHOOL FOOD



**firstcall** BC CHILD AND YOUTH  
ADVOCACY COALITION

November 28, 2019

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition and our [108 member organizations](#), we are writing to congratulate you and the Liberal Party on your success in the recent federal election.

First Call is a non-partisan coalition of 108 provincial and regional organizations who have united their voices to put children and youth first in BC through public education, community mobilization, and public policy advocacy.

We join the Coalition for Healthy School Food in supporting the government's March 2019 federal budget commitment to develop a National School Food Program. We are writing today to ask your government to continue to move this issue forward by **including the development of a school food program for Canada in the mandate letters of the next Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Minister of Health.**

First Call is joining the call for federal investment in a cost-shared universal school food program that would see all children having daily access to healthy food at school.

Adding to strong support from the Liberal Party and its candidates, a National School Food Program was included as a part of the 2019 NDP (p. 61) and Green Party (p. 38) election platforms. We also see that school food programs are being supported and expanded by Conservative provincial governments in Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and PEI. (See the Coalition for Healthy School Food's [website](#) for more details.) **Given that this issue has support from across political parties, we believe that it is one that your government could immediately advance.**

**We recommend that a *Universal, Healthy School Food Program for Canada that is aligned with the 2019 revision of Canada's Food Guide* be included in the mandate letters of both the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and Minister of Health.** We ask that the wording in the mandate letters include the term "universal", meaning that all children in a school where a program is offered would have access to that program. This is critical because Canadian research has confirmed that targeted programs with means-testing can create stigma, decrease participation rates and create expensive bureaucratic systems to monitor. We also ask that wording in the mandate letters include the term "healthy" and state that a program should be aligned with the 2019 revision of Canada's Food Guide to keep the program focused on improving the physical and mental health of our next generation.

### **Working with Other Ministries**

A federal investment should also aim to: enable children and youth to develop the skills and literacy needed for a lifetime of healthy eating and be ready to learn at school; support Canadian farmers and food producers; and work to address the climate emergency as noted in the Coalition for Healthy School Food's [written Submission to the Pre-Budget Consultations in advance of the 2020 Budget](#). A school food program would have a positive impact on all families, particularly women who invest a significant amount of time preparing food for school.

Given the wide range of policy priorities that could be addressed with a national school food program we ask that the mandate letters identify that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and Minister of Health should work with other Ministers relevant to this issue including the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, the Minister of International Development and Minister for Women and Gender Equality, and the Minister of Indigenous Services.

### **Other Recommendations**

The Coalition for Healthy School Food's 2020 Pre-Budget Submission recommends a commitment of \$360 million annually towards a national school food program that is universal, negotiated with the provinces/territories and Indigenous leaders, and that is designed to both set national standards and fill the gaps in terms of the programming that already exists on the ground. Building on current breakfast, lunch and snack programs, a national school food program could be implemented through an accord with the provinces and territories. There are also several more immediate mechanisms available to the government to implement a national school food program, for instance through Health Canada or through the Public Health Agency of Canada, as has been done with the successful Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program that has been funded since 1989.

We also recommend that Indigenous food sovereignty be a crucial component of any national school food program, and that all consultations and negotiations include principles of Indigenous control over school food programming for Indigenous students.

As noted in the EAT-Lancet report, "food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on Earth." We look forward to working with your Government, the provinces, territories, not-for-profit organizations, students, parents and Indigenous leaders to advance the health of future generations, the Canadian economy, and the health of our planet with the development of a school food program for Canada. A well-designed program will provide excellent return on investment.

If you would like more information about the Coalition for Healthy School Food's activities, please contact Debbie Field, Coordinator, at [schoolfood@foodsecurecanada.org](mailto:schoolfood@foodsecurecanada.org), 416 537-6856.

Sincerely,



**Adrienne Montani**

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