



February 20, 2025

The Honourable David Eby
Premier of British Columbia
Office of the Premier
Via email: premier@gov.bc.ca

Re: The urgent need for a BC agreement with the National School Food Program funding

Dear Premier Eby,

First Call Child and Youth Advocacy Society is a member of the [BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food](#) (BC-CHSF). The BC-CHSF is a provincial chapter of the national CHSF and is administered by the [Public Health Association of BC](#). The BC Chapter provides a united voice for organizations across British Columbia to advocate and work collectively towards the development, expansion and enrichment of School Food Programs (SFPs) that address the diverse needs of the province's school communities.

We are pleased your government was elected on a commitment to continue to improve education and health outcomes for all BC students by sustaining SFPs through the Feeding Futures program in partnership with school districts. Additionally, we are also pleased to see the integration of FeedBC and the intention to include locally grown food in these programs. We recognize that BC has been a leader in SFP advocacy in Canada, with the Feeding Futures program being the largest investment in SFPs in the province's history so far.

We are further encouraged that the provincial and federal governments are working together to sustain and expand SFPs in BC. Signing an agreement with the federal government under the National School Food Policy solidifies Budget 2024's allocation of \$79 million, the first-year investment of the National School Food Program, and supports BC students within this school year through the existing Feeding Futures Program. **An agreement in place by the end of March will ensure millions of dollars are directly helping feed children and youth in BC.**

In your election platform, you prioritized the creation of a universal SFP to ensure all students have access to healthy meals that meet comprehensive nutritional guidelines to support children's health and development. You also pledged to partner with schools, local farmers, and community organizations to promote sustainable food practices and increase food literacy by educating students about healthy eating. These are two essential tenets of a successful, beneficial SFP in BC, and must be implemented in a holistic way, where government, school districts, and civil society work together towards a common good.

We are concerned, however, about the omission of this priority from the cabinet mandate letters. SFPs are essential to the province's stated priorities:

- to grow the economy by supporting the agricultural sector and strengthening local food systems;

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- to ensure positive health outcomes for all by ensuring all students are nourished and ready to learn; and,
- to help families with rising costs of living and groceries through providing meals in schools.

SFPs can provide significant value and take pressure off household budgets, with evidence showing a return of 2.5 to 7 times the investment through improved human health and economic benefits.

Effective learning is only possible when students are well-fed and free from food insecurity and poverty. These challenges, if left unaddressed, impact future employment opportunities, lead to lower educational outcomes and an increased risk of crime involvement and further marginalization for vulnerable students.

With 90% of Indigenous children and youth in BC attending public schools, expanding and sustaining SFPs is also essential for advancing reconciliation and improving the quality of life for Indigenous peoples. This aligns directly with the priorities outlined in Minister Boyle's mandate letter.

We urge your government to sign a five-year agreement with the federal government under the National School Food Policy by March 31st of this year to ensure additional funds come to BC to support the creation of a universal School Food Program in our province.

Sincerely,



Executive Director

Copy: The Honourable Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care (ecc.minister@gov.bc.ca)

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