

Mr. Gerald Soroka, MP
Member of Parliament for Yellowhead
119-50th Street
Edson, AB
T7E 1V9

March 1st, 2024

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

Dear Mr. Soroka;

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.

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 standards¹.

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

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

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;
- offered in a manner that is stigma-free;
- support culturally appropriate local food producers;
- no marketing to children and youth.

Given the widespread challenges across Alberta, and indeed Canada, and the extraordinary diversity of approaches school boards/districts take in forming partnerships to support children, there is a strong need for the federal government, in partnership with provincial ministries and school boards/districts, to commit to a National School Food Policy. 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 the Board of Trustees for Grande Yellowhead Public School Division, 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, or our staff, directly should you wish to discuss the importance of this [legislation](#).

Best Regards,

Dale Karpluk

[Dale Karpluk \(Mar 1, 2024 09:45 MST\)](#)

Dale Karpluk

Board Chair

Grande Yellowhead Public School Division

Cc: Board of Trustees
Dr. Lewis, Superintendent of Schools
Alberta School Boards' Association
Public School Boards Association of Alberta

