



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming Federal Budget

August 5, 2025





Recommendations

- 1 That the Government of Canada embed the National School Food Program into legislation to secure sustainable, long-term funding and stability for students, regardless of changes in political leadership or fiscal cycles.
- 2 That the Government of Canada move forward with its platform commitment to invest in Canadian-made food in the school food program, as well as maintain and expand the School Food Infrastructure Fund as a dedicated, long-term funding stream to support the infrastructure needs of school food programs across the country.
- 3 That the Government of Canada leverage Breakfast Club of Canada's unique and proven expertise and allocate \$50 million per year, for a total of \$200 million over four years, to enhance existing underfunded breakfast programs and meet priority gaps.
- 4 That the Government of Canada invest in the National School Food Program Research Partnership to assess the implementation and early impacts of Canada's first National School Food Program and Policy.

Breakfast Club of Canada

In Canada, food insecurity affects millions of children daily, hindering their ability to learn and thrive. In collaboration with hundreds of school community partners across the country, Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC) is dedicated to ensuring children have an equal chance to succeed by providing access to nutritious breakfasts in a safe and supportive environment.

With 30 years of experience, BCC has become a cornerstone in the fight against school food hunger, supporting with its community partners over 3,800 programs, reaching more than 1 million students and delivering approximately 655,000 breakfasts daily from coast to coast to coast.



Context: No Child Should go Hungry in Canada

Efforts to address child food insecurity have gained momentum in recent years, driven by record inflation, growing economic pressures on families, and a deeper understanding of the essential role school food programs play in supporting children's health, learning and development. The federal government's signing of bilateral agreements for the National School Food Program (NSFP), alongside the launch of the School Food Infrastructure Fund (SFIF), mark significant progress.

Yet, despite these advances, the on-the-ground needs remain urgent – and unmet in too many communities. Canada faces escalating food insecurity, as confirmed by the Second Harvest report The Cost of Conflict: Tariffs and Food Insecurity, which warns of rising job losses and inflation-related shocks, including tariffs, that continue to drive up the cost of food. For many families, this means growing hardship and increased reliance on school nutrition programs.

These programs help bring down costs for Canadians and help them get ahead—one of the federal government's most pressing priorities. Still, existing public investments, while vital, fall short of the scale required to ensure no child is left behind. To close this gap, greater coordination and sustained investment are needed.

Research such as The State of School Food in Canada calls for sustained public investment and policy commitment to achieve a universal school food program and expand the number of meals served. Similarly, UNICEF Report Card 19 highlights that while policies like school food programs are in place in Canada, they still require broader reach and greater investment to make a meaningful impact on child outcomes. UNICEF specifically calls on all levels of government to ensure every child has access to healthy food at school, every day.

The Liberal Party of Canada's 2025 platform pledge to make the NSFP permanent is a vital step. It identifies school food as a support for working families and a safeguard for children facing food insecurity. With proper funding and coordination, BCC is ready to help realize this shared ambition, ensuring that no child in Canada goes to school hungry.

Universal school food access is not just a response to rising costs and deepening inequality—it is a smart, long-term investment in health, educational outcomes, and the economic resilience of Canadian communities. It is a concrete way to reduce costs for families and help the next generation thrive.



Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada embed the NSFP into legislation to secure sustainable, long-term funding and stability for students, regardless of changes in political leadership or fiscal cycles.

Significant progress has been made toward developing a NSFP in Canada. The federal government's historic \$1 billion commitment over five years in Budget 2024 marked a critical milestone, signaling strong recognition of the role school food programs play in supporting children's health, academic success, and well-being, while also helping families manage rising food costs.

However, to ensure that this momentum leads to lasting change, the NSFP must be embedded in legislation to secure sustainable permanent funding and stability, protecting it from shifts in political leadership or fiscal cycles. It would also give provinces, territories, and Indigenous communities the confidence to make long-term investments in infrastructure, staffing, and food supply chains.

As seen in some jurisdictions, we recommend that Canada's new government establish a permanent, national-wide school food program bill, backed by strong safeguards. Countries like Brazil and Sweden have long enshrined school food in law, creating programs that are more resilient and adaptable to challenges.

Canada has already set a precedent with the Canada Early Learning and Child Care Act, which guarantees stable federal funding for early learning. Embedding the NSFP into legislation would mirror that commitment – ensuring predictable funding, promoting equitable access to nutritious food, and supporting the well-being and academic success of all children.





Recommendation 2: That the Government of Canada move forward with its platform commitment to invest in Canadian-made foods, as well as maintain and expand the SFIF as a dedicated, long-term funding stream to support the infrastructure needs of school food programs across the country.

The Liberal Party of Canada's platform includes a \$20 million investment specifically dedicated to purchasing Canadian-made foods within school food programs. This reflects a clear priority to support local producers and promote fresh nutritious food in schools across Canada. The initiative is to be developed in consultation with key stakeholders to ensure it is responsive to regional realities and community needs.

At the same time, the current political and economic context remains unstable and challenging for families as well as not-for-profit organizations (NPOs). Organizations delivering school food programs are already feeling the impact of these uncertainties and require sustained federal support to continue providing a vital social safety net for vulnerable families and children.

In this environment, the continued investment and expansion of the SFIF is critical. Introduced with an initial investment of \$20 million in Budget 2024, the SFIF serves as a long-term funding stream to support infrastructure needs – such as kitchens, storage and equipment – that enable effective delivery of school food programs nationwide supported by NPOs. Maintaining and growing this fund will strengthen the capacity to meet rising demand and adapt to evolving challenges, ensuring children receive fresh, nutritious, and Canadian-made foods.

Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that community infrastructure dedicated to school food remains a priority across all provinces and territories. Despite the current investment in the SFIF, there are still pressing infrastructure gaps across the country, as shown in our [infrastructure overview of needs](#) (February 2024).

Moving forward with its platform commitment and sustaining the SFIF, will provide essential, predictable support that enhances food security, strengthens local food systems, and helps vulnerable children thrive in schools.



Recommendation 3: That the Government of Canada leverage BCC's unique and proven expertise and allocate \$50 million per year, for a total of \$200 million over four years, to enhance existing underfunded breakfast programs and meet priority gaps.

BCC is requesting a sum of \$50 million per year to meet the growing needs of current programs in collaboration with multiple partners. This amount will enable BCC to continue collaborating with school community partners, to offset the costs associated with rising food and transportation expenses, school equipment, and the growing number of students who need these programs. The increased investment would allow BCC to expand program capacity while ensuring that no student is turned away due to lack of resources, offer a greater variety of menus aligned with Canada's Food Guide, and work on local food access projects.

The previously mentioned report by Second Harvest, *The Cost of Conflict: Tariffs and Food Insecurity*, also highlights the growing pressures on food charities, broken down by provincial contexts. The report also warns that philanthropic giving could decline by up to \$100 million in 2026 compared to pre-tariff projections. This reduction threatens to lower the social return on investment generated by non-profit activities just as demand for services – including school food programs – is expected to increase. As witnessed in the past 30 years by BCC and other stakeholders, private and philanthropic donations are often seen as a great lever to expand impacts of public expenses.

A PwC report further underscores these challenges and the urgent need for stable funding to support the non-profit sector amid ongoing economic pressures and trade uncertainties.

This proposal directly supports the government's mandate priority of "cutting costs for families and helping them get ahead." School food programs reduce out-of-pocket costs for families, free up household budgets, and improve children's health, attendance, and learning outcomes.

In the context of unprecedented global market instability – driven in part by rising and unpredictable supply chain conditions – organizations like BCC are facing increased operational pressure while trying to respond to growing community needs. This exceptional situation calls for an equally exceptional intervention to stabilize and support the school food ecosystem that continues to serve those most at risk.

As shown with the Emergency Food Security Fund, BCC is uniquely positioned to support the government in providing immediate assistance to vulnerable Canadian communities.



Recommendation 4: That the Government of Canada invest in the National School Food Program Research Partnership to assess the implementation and early impacts of Canada's first National School Food Program and Policy.

As Canada launches its first NSFP, now is a critical time to invest in research work to track the Program's development and impacts. Internationally, school food programs (SFPs) are among the most effective tools for improving student well-being, supporting academic success, reducing poverty, and strengthening local food systems. However, despite these demonstrated benefits, Canada has never had a formal, transdisciplinary research partnership focused on school food.

A key objective of the research work led by ESDC is to build evidence base on school food under the NSFP. This includes identifying knowledge gaps and research priorities to guide future policy. To build on this, we recommend investing in the National School Food Program Research Partnership to assess its implementation and early impacts. Importantly, this investment would be matched by non-governmental funders, maximizing impact. With program funding beginning to flow, this pan-Canadian group of 30+ academics, policy makers, school food practitioners, and community experts are ready to study the NSFP's development and impacts.

This partnership suggests examining governance, equity, Indigenous food sovereignty, food systems impacts, and outcomes related to well-being, education, and sustainability during the NSFP's first three years.

An investment of this magnitude requires in-depth examination of the program's development over time to identify both its successes and gaps to inform its continuous improvement as well as to ensure the best possible outcomes for generations of children.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, far too many children are still going to school hungry, and the consequences are immediate and long-lasting. NSFP is a direct investment in the middle class, making life a little easier for working families especially as they try to keep up with inflation. It is also a safety net for children who don't always have enough to eat at home.

With these recommendations, the federal government can deliver a transformational shift in child health, education, and equity across Canada. These actions will not only meet the urgent needs of today but will also lay the foundation for a universal, resilient, and sustainable school food system for generations to come.

Now is the time for bold leadership. Now is the time to act.

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