



October 30, 2019

Dear MP Andrew Scheer,

On behalf of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and its 105 [members](#), we are writing to congratulate you and the Conservative Party on your success in the recent federal election.

The Coalition for Healthy School Food, a growing network of health, education, and environmental organizations and school food practitioners from every province and the North, is seeking federal investment in a cost-shared universal school food program that would see all children having daily access to healthy food at school. The Coalition is coordinated by Food Secure Canada.

We are writing to urge you to advocate for a School Food Program for Canada as we believe that this issue has support from across political parties and because the health of our children is relevant to all Canadians.

During the election period, we heard from Conservative candidates that they individually supported a national school food program. The NDP and Green Party included support for a national school food program in their election platform and many Liberal candidates pointed to the 2019 Budget commitment to consult with provinces and territories on a national school food program. 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's [website](#) for more details.)

We have written to Prime Minister Trudeau asking that the government continue to move this issue forward by including the development of a *Universal, Healthy School Food Program for Canada, aligned with the 2019 revision of Canada's Food Guide*, in the mandate letters of both the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and the 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.

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 our [Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2020 Budget](#) (also attached to this correspondence). 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 **School Food Program for Canada** we also asked 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's 2020 Pre-Budget Submission recommends a commitment of \$360 million annually towards a **School Food Program for Canada** 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 School Food Program for Canada 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 School Food Program for Canada, for instance through Health Canada or through PHAC as has been done with the successful Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) that has been funded since 1989.

We also recommend that Indigenous Food Sovereignty be a crucial component of any School Food Program for Canada, 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's activities, please contact me at schoolfood@foodsecurecanada.org, 416 537-6856.

Sincerely,



Debbie Field
Coordinator, Coalition for Healthy School Food

CC: Gisèle Yasmeeen, Executive Director, Food Secure Canada