
September 23, 2024

The Honourable Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
MinisterMCCSS@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Parsa,

We are writing to you today to share our support for the National School Food Program and our hope for an Ontario agreement to be announced soon. We have been extremely supportive of this initiative and have been advocating for its successful implementation for quite some time. We were thrilled to see the recent announcement about the Newfoundland and Labrador agreement.

One of the OPSBA's key priorities is Student Success, Equity, and Well-Being – promoting and advancing high-quality, equitable, and inclusive learning environments to support student success and well-being. This includes ensuring that when our students attend school, they have the nourishment they need to learn and grow and improve their health and well-being.

As an endorser of the [Coalition for Healthy School Food](#), we fully support their advocacy work, which asks Ontario to accept and secure the federal funding and to grow the current investment for Student Nutrition Programs (SNP) in our province.

While we understand that the federal agreement will be connected to your ministry – and we thank you for leading these negotiations – we have and will continue to share information with the Ministry of Education so there is a collaborative effort to increase the access and capacity to these programs in our schools.

We have stated many times that when children and youth come to school hungry, it is difficult for them to focus on learning. This continues to be a reality for many students.

We believe that investing in school food programs is a cost-effective government action that will make life more affordable for families in Ontario. These programs can make a real difference by helping relieve pressures on household budgets and freeing up time for busy parents, especially working mothers who tend to do most of the food shopping and meal preparation.

Many provinces are keen to expand their school food programs to address affordability issues and support children and youth. Research* has shown that by implementing a universal free breakfast and lunch program, families can save between \$130 to \$190 per child per month, which is significant given the current cost of living pressures.



We eagerly await the good news of an Ontario agreement to support our students and families. OPSBA is ready to be a collaborative partner and help support a successful implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kathleen Woodcock'.

Kathleen Woodcock
OPSBA President

cc.

The Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Education

Claudine Munroe, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division
(Education)

Ana Sajfert, Director of Stakeholder Relations and Strategic Communications, Minister's Office
(Education)

Shaida Maleki, Director of Stakeholder Relations and Strategic Advisor, (MCCSS)

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association represents English public district school boards and public school authorities across Ontario, which together serve nearly 1.4 million public elementary and secondary students. The Association advocates on behalf of the best interests and needs of the public school system in Ontario.

[*The Economic Rationale for Investing in School Meal Programs for Canada: multi-sectoral impacts from comparable high-income countries \(amberleyruetz.ca\)](#)