



Healthy meals for kids, savings for families in British Columbia

From: [Employment and Social Development Canada](#)

News release

The governments of Canada and British Columbia reach a bilateral agreement on school food

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Employment and Social Development Canada

School food programs make life easier. They provide healthy meals to kids throughout the school year. They save working families hundreds of dollars in grocery bills. They also support local economies, farmers and producers by sourcing food grown locally, whenever possible.

Today, the Honourable Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and the Honourable Lisa Beare, British Columbia's Minister of Education and Child Care, announced an agreement that will enable British Columbia to enhance school food programs for 90,000 kids in just over 1,000 schools across the province this school year. With this agreement, families in British Columbia with two children in school can save an estimated \$800 in grocery bills a year on average.

Our National School Food Program is a direct investment into the middle class—helping teachers and making mornings a little easier for working families. It is also a safety net for the kids who need this support the most. As part of this agreement, the Government of Canada will invest approximately \$39.4 million over the next three years to enhance school food programs in the province to feed more kids, including in rural and remote areas. This investment will mean important improvements to school food programs such as increasing the number students served, purchasing much-needed school kitchen equipment, and increasing the nutrition of school meals which will provide more inclusive menu options that take into account dietary restrictions and cultural preferences.

Now more than ever, families are choosing to eat local, and this is reflected in BC's school food programming, which aims to build strong community partnerships with local growers and food producers to see more BC food in schools, ultimately investing back in local economic growth, where possible.

Building a national school food program is part of the federal government's commitment to help make life more affordable for families across the country. We're creating more middle-class jobs, building more homes, expanding affordable dental care and creating more affordable child care spaces—so they can buy the things they need and save for the things they want.

Quotes

“When kids are hungry, they can’t focus—it’s that simple. That’s why we’re making sure more kids in BC get healthy meals at school, with food grown right here in Canada whenever possible. It helps parents save hundreds on groceries, aims to support local farmers and local economies, and most importantly, makes sure kids have the fuel they need to learn—because no child should have to get through the school day on an empty stomach.”

– The Honourable Jenna Sudds, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development

“This is a big step forward in making sure kids right across the country have the food they need to succeed in school. Through this partnership with the Government of British Columbia, we’re investing in our children’s future—serving up healthy, local meals so they can learn and grow.”

– The Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food

“Health and nutrition are key building blocks for our kids to succeed in school. Today’s announcement at David Thompson Secondary, demonstrates that partnership at the Federal and Provincial level can ensure children across Vancouver South and BC can have access to nutritious food, easing cost burdens for families and helping create an environment where our kids have equitable access to healthy meals while in school.”

– The Honourable Harjit S. Sajjan, President of the King’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Emergency Preparedness and Minister responsible for the Pacific Economic Development Agency of Canada

“Every child deserves healthy food to learn and grow and we are ensuring that more students have access to nutritious food at school. This investment supports families, strengthens communities and helps kids succeed. With programs like Feeding Futures and the National School Food Program, we are building a brighter, healthier future for students across the province.”

– The Honourable Lisa Beare, British Columbia’s Minister of Education and Child Care

“We all want people to have the supports they need to build better lives, and for children to have the best start possible. Leading work on food security is an important part of my mandate. That’s why we’re taking action to bring down costs for families; and programs like the National School Food Program are helping us provide nutritious food to support the health and success of our children.”

– The Honourable Sheila Malcolmson, British Columbia’s Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction

“Kids need to fuel their minds and bodies during the school day to support their learning and growing, and this program is another opportunity for BC producers to expand their sales. By enhancing BC’s school food programs through the National School Food Program, more children across the province will have access to healthy, nutritious food at lunch to help them succeed, in and out of the classroom.”

– The Honourable Lana Popham, British Columbia’s Minister of Agriculture and Food

“Our federal government is making sure that every child has the best start in life. Today British Columbia joins our efforts in implementing the National School Food Program nationwide. Together, we are providing nutritious meals for children at school, cutting grocery costs and expanding our social safety net for families in Richmond and across the province.”

– Wilson Miao, Member of Parliament for Richmond Centre

“The BCSTA extends our gratitude to the governments of Canada and British Columbia for their commitment to the health and well-being of students through the signing of this agreement. We know that full bellies feed hungry minds, and healthy meals, accessible at school, are fundamental to our students’ academic success. By investing in these school food programs, governments today are investing in tomorrow, our future—our children.”

– Carolyn Broady, President, BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA)

“The Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC) has served as the secretariat for the BC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food for the past five years. PHABC is encouraged by this commitment on behalf of the federal and provincial government’s dedication to support school meal programs. Every aspect of childhood development is impacted by the food they eat and the environment in which they’re supported. This announcement demonstrates a meaningful shift forward for children in the province. Thank you to our federal and provincial governments for their incredible leadership on this significant public health strategy.”

– Dr. Shannon Turner, Ph.D., Executive Director, Public Health Association of BC

Quick facts

- Following the recently announced agreements with [Newfoundland and Labrador](#), [Manitoba](#), [Ontario](#), [Prince Edward Island](#), [New Brunswick](#), [Nova Scotia](#), [Nunavut](#), the [Northwest Territories](#) and [Quebec](#), British Columbia is the latest to join forces with the Government of Canada to ensure children have access to nutritious school meals. We will continue working with all provinces, territories, Indigenous partners and stakeholders to ensure every child in Canada has the food they need to reach their full potential.
- Budget 2024’s investment of \$1 billion over five years includes distinctions-based funding for First Nations on reserves as well as Inuit, Métis and modern treaty and self-government agreement holders. We are working directly with Indigenous partners on the rollout of that funding, with more information to come.
- In addition to the National School Food Program, the federal government launched the new School Food Infrastructure Fund in September. The Fund will deliver over \$20 million to help not-for-profit organizations invest in infrastructure and equipment to support school food programming across Canada.
- In 2023, the Ministry of Education and Child Care of British Columbia allocated \$71.5 million annually in dedicated, multi-year funding to school districts to create and expand school food programs in schools.
- This initiative, known as Feeding Futures, aims to provide students with stigma-free access to nutritious, locally sourced food, enhancing their learning outcomes and fostering stronger connections with their school communities.

Associated links

- [Feeding the future today: Canada’s National School Food Program](#)

- [National School Food Policy](#)
- [What We Heard Report](#)
- [Budget 2024: Fairness for every generation](#)
- [Feeding Futures program – British Columbia](#)

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