The Honourable Jane Philpott, MD, PC, MP
Minister of Health
House of Commons, Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario  K1A 0A9
By email to: Minister_Ministre@hc-sc.gc.ca and Jane.Philpott@parl.gc.ca

Re: Emphasis of a national universal healthy school food program in the Speech from the Throne and
the agenda of the January Federal/Provincial/Territorial meeting of Ministers of Health

Dear Minister Philpott:

Congratulations on your success in the recent federal election and appointment as Minister of Health. The appointment of someone so vocally committed to health promotion is a harbinger of a new government approach to improving the health of Canadians, especially children and youth. In addition, we are encouraged by your government’s commitment to improving its relationship with the Indigenous peoples of Canada and to correcting some of the inequities related to healthcare and food insecurity. Furthermore, we applaud the inclusion of a national food policy in the mandate letter from the Prime Minister to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Poor diet is the leading risk factor for disease and death in Canada and globally. We urge you to advocate including in the Speech from the Throne a national universal healthy school food program as part of a broader national food policy. Doing so will help your government to foster real change and fulfill its election platform commitments to help Canadians live healthier lives and to ensure that children have more equal access to opportunities early in life.

A national universal healthy school food program will help redress both ill health and inequity by ensuring that children can choose nutritious foods in schools, rather than being sold food that does not meet minimal nutrition standards. Indeed, research demonstrates that school food programs increase children’s consumption of healthy foods, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and improve mental health. School food programs also improve educational outcomes and increase graduation rates by reducing hunger in classrooms, a known barrier to concentration and learning. Furthermore, school food programs have the potential to create thousands of new jobs and to grow local economies by investing in local agriculture and food businesses.

Historically, the federal government has provided little or no funding for school food programs, even for federally funded schools in First Nations communities. However, several of your cabinet colleagues, including Ministers Bennett, Duncan, and Goodale, have been vocal proponents of a national healthy school food program. We see leadership emerging on healthy school food programs from the Governments of Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the City of Toronto, and sincerely hope that federal government will lead a

The Coalition for Healthy School Food is a pan-Canadian coalition seeking government support for a national school food program. The Coalition comprises 31 organizations representing millions of Canadians.
more collaborative approach to this issue with provincial, territorial, municipal and Indigenous
governments.

We urge you to help ensure that the Speech from the Throne and the agenda for the upcoming
Federal/Provincial/Territorial meeting of Ministers of Health both reflect a commitment to
explore ways to implement a national universal healthy school food program in the context of a
broader national food policy aiming to make our food system more healthy, more equitable and
more sustainable.

We wish you all the best in your new challenges. Our members are committed to supporting
your efforts as we work towards our goal of healthy, well-fed children in Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Black, Vice President,
Development
Canadian Feed the Children

Karen Robinson
Canadians for a Safe Learning
Environment

Bill Jeffery, LLB, National
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Viola Prowse, Former Executive
Director
Child Nutrition Council of
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Marie Tellier, Coordonnatrice
Collectif de la table des écoliers

Christine Gascon, Éducatrice
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Dr. Sara FL Kirk, Canada
Research Chair in Health Services
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Annette Woudstra, Director of Nutrition and Community Services E4C

Yvette Laforêt-Fliesser, Public Health Consultant Edellys Training Corp.

Karen Campbell, Farm School Director Everdale

Roxana Atkinson, National Farm to School Liaison Farm to Cafeteria Canada

Suman Roy, Chair of the Board FoodShare Toronto

Diana Bronson, Executive Director Food Secure Canada

Marc Schutzbank, Co-Executive Director Fresh Roots Urban Farm Society

Sunday Harrison, Executive Director Green Thumbs Growing Kids

Mary Lewis, Vice-President, Research, Advocacy and Health Promotion Heart & Stroke Foundation

Dr. Victoria Crosbie Pediatric Specialist, Janeway Children's Hospital
Laura Kalina, Co-Chair
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Margo Riebe-Butt, Executive Director
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Christine Preece, Co-Chair
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Anita Verlangen, Health Promotion Schools Coordinator
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Brenda Green, Superintendent of Education
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Kristy Taylor, Executive Director
Show Kids You Care

Philip Groff, Executive Director
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Dr. Mary McKenna, RD, Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Acting Assistant Dean, School of Graduate Studies
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Chris Wilson, Senior Research Fellow
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Jillian McCallum, Regional Manager
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