



# Civil Society Input to a Renewed Food Policy for Canada

## Brief School Food

### What is said in the [Food Policy for Canada](#)

#### Action area (2019-2024) Help Canadian communities access healthy food

“Community-based initiatives will invest in projects that increase access to food, with the potential to provide social, health, environmental, and economic benefits in support of vibrant communities across Canada. The Government of Canada will also engage with provinces, territories, and key stakeholder groups to work toward the creation of a National School Food Program.”

### Federal budget lines directly associated with the Food Policy (2019-2024)

#### What was included in [Federal budget, March 2019](#)

“Critically important for a child’s education is ensuring that they have healthy meals before and after school. Canada has a mix of different school breakfast and lunch programs but much more could be done. Budget 2019 announces the Government’s intention to work with provinces and territories towards the creation of a National School Food Program.”

**The 2019 budget’s National School Food Program** was embedded in the Canada Food Policy. However, unlike the Local Food Infrastructure Fund, Buy Canadian Promotion Campaign and Tackling Food Fraud action, the School Food Program did not include any allocation of funds.

### Federal government policy progress since 2019

In September, during the federal election campaign, the [Liberal Party’s platform commitment](#) under School Nutrition and Healthy Eating included to: “Work with our provincial, territorial, municipal, Indigenous partners, and stakeholders to develop a National School Food Policy and work towards a national school nutritious meal program with a \$1 billion dollar investment over five years”, “to help children grow and learn”.

This platform commitment joined the New Democratic Party’s [commitment and promise](#) of \$1 billion over four years in their [fiscal plan](#). And the Bloc Québécois [also supported school food](#) in their responses to the [Stop Marketing to Kids Coalition](#) and the [Quebec Chapter’s](#) respective letters, with a focus on seeking federal transfer payments to provinces and territories.

December 16, 2021 was a historic moment for school food in Canada as the federal government released the mandate [letters](#) to members of the cabinet, marking the first-ever inclusion of a commitment "to develop a National School Food Policy and work towards a national school nutritious meal program."

- Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Marie-Claude Bibeau's mandate [letter](#) included: “In support of *A Food Policy for Canada*, continue to strengthen Canada's food system by: Working with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development and with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and stakeholders to develop a National School Food Policy and to work toward a national school nutritious meal program.
- Minister of Families, Children and Social Development's Karina Gould mandate [letter](#) included: Work with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners and stakeholders to develop a National School Food Policy and work toward a national school nutritious meal program.”

[Budget 2022](#) (Chapter 8, page 190) included a statement about school food: Over the next year, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development will work with provinces, territories, municipalities, Indigenous partners, and stakeholders to develop a National School Food Policy and to explore how more Canadian children can receive nutritious food at school.

## FSC and/or food movement recommendations and analysis

The Coalition for Healthy School Food has prepared “[Proposals for a National School Nutritious Meal Program](#)”.

The recommendation is for the Government of Canada to work in partnership with provinces and territories, Indigenous peoples and non-profit organizations to develop and implement a National School Nutritious Meal Program and related School Food Policy, in support of and in line with the evolving Food Policy for Canada. Implementation should proceed as follows:

- **Investment:** Allocate \$1 billion over five years in the Winter Budget Update or in Budget 2024, with \$200 million per year to contribute to provinces, territories and First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners to fund their school food programs that: serve food based on the 2019 Canada’s Food Guide; are universal; do not market to kids; and provide effective monitoring, accountability and reporting that will support future evidence-based decisions on a comprehensive permanent Canada-wide Program.
- **Cost-Sharing:** Negotiate cost-sharing funding agreements with P/Ts that are willing and ready to co-invest in, and implement, school meal programs in line with the proposed Guiding Principles set out below.
- **Indigenous-led programs:** Enter into immediate discussions with Indigenous leaders to negotiate agreement for the creation and/or enhancement of independent distinctions-based First Nation, Métis and Inuit school meal programs, with long-term and sustainable funding.
- **Global School Meals Coalition:** Actively participate as a member of the global School Meals Coalition to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive a healthy, nutritious meal in school by 2030.
- **School Food Policy:** Proceed with the development of a more comprehensive National School Food Policy: a) addressing such factors as food literacy, local production and supply, and best practices and standards; b) aligned with the Coalition’s eight Guiding Principles; and c) supportive of the further development of the Food Policy for Canada and deliberations of the Canadian Food Policy Advisory Council’s School Nutrition Working Group.
- **Equipment and infrastructure:** Create an additional dedicated school food infrastructure fund to enhance kitchen, food service, and other production and preparation equipment and facilities so that they can reliably and efficiently serve healthy food in adequate volumes. This approach to Program design and implementation will enable immediate action and progress on a consistent Canada-wide approach to school meal programming, while: a) recognizing the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous peoples and the need for much more substantial and dedicated funding for their school meal programs; b) ensuring

consideration of needs and opportunities for a more comprehensive permanent Canada-wide Program; and  
c) addressing critical needs for investments in local capacity.

