



Presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance  
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Thank you for the invitation to appear before the Finance Committee today on behalf of Food Secure Canada. We are a national membership-based organization that focuses on three overarching goals: zero hunger; safe and healthy food; and a sustainable food system. Our vision for the future of food in this country is encapsulated in [Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada](#).

It is a great honour to have this opportunity to speak to elected representatives about some of the work we are doing in our network, and how it could be greatly enhanced by a relatively modest sum from the federal government.

A few weeks ago we concluded our biennial National Assembly, held in Edmonton. More than 300 people attended -- community workers, dietitians, educators, farmers, charitable organizations, food banks, businesses, trade unions, Indigenous and Northern people's organizations, and many others.

Food Secure Canada's agenda for reforming Canada's food system is broad and deep. It will require the development of a national food policy, an idea that was endorsed by all five political parties in the last federal election. And as shown by our [electronic submission to the Finance Committee](#) this summer, that would entail many budgetary measures. However, let us at least begin with children and youth because there are great gains to be made with quite small amounts of money.

We propose that the federal government join community partners across Canada to inaugurate a visionary cost-shared national student nutrition program. We are asking that the federal government join parents, community associations and schools, municipal and provincial/territorial governments, and the private sector to ensure that as many kids as possible get the nutrition they need at school. There is no reason for Canada to remain one of very few wealthy countries to not have such a program.

Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, stated that "When children go to school hungry or poorly nourished, their energy levels, memory, problem-solving skills, creativity, concentration and behaviour are all negatively impacted."<sup>1</sup> This statement

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<sup>1</sup> David Butler-Jones, *The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2009*, (Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2009) at 31.

is particularly disturbing in light of the fact that “31% of elementary students and 62% of secondary school students do not eat a nutritious breakfast before school”<sup>2</sup>.

Numerous studies have proven the value of school nutrition programs.<sup>3</sup>  
Put simply, they:

- Help foster long-term healthy eating habits among children and youth.
- Reduce obesity (and other eating disorders) and associated chronic illnesses (cardiovascular disease, diabetes, etc.).
- Improve educational performance and school attendance.
- Foster greater awareness of food issues and stronger communities.

The best illustration of this success is the growth of student nutrition programs over the past decade. If we look just at Ontario, with steady stewardship by the NDP, Conservative and Liberal governments, these programs have grown from budgets of under \$1,000,000 when started in the early nineties to \$17.1 million annually today. Toronto’s initial investment of \$180,000 has now grown to an annual commitment of \$3.8 million. BC’s Fruit and Vegetable snack program (now in its 5th year) provides a serving of fresh BC fruits and vegetables once per week for 13 weeks to every elementary school aged student in more than 14000 public and aboriginal schools.

These are partnership programs at their very core. They are diverse because they have been built from the bottom up, by hundreds of grass roots initiatives across the country responding to local needs. FoodShare Toronto, an FSC member and Toronto’s largest community food security organization, helps to facilitate 700 student nutrition programs in which 141,000 meals are served daily to students of all ages daily through the Toronto Partners for Student Nutrition made up of public health, school boards, foundations, parents and many others throughout the city. Similar partnerships exist across Canada in every region.

The pie chart in Annex 1 illustrates the basic cost-sharing model that Food Secure Canada is advocating. In many jurisdictions, the bulk of the funding is already in place. Cities and provinces are active, parents and voluntary organizations are at the table, and the private sector is supportive. An urgent and significant exception to this rule is Canada’s Northern and remote communities.

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<sup>2</sup> David Butler-Jones, *The Chief Public Health Officer’s Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2008*, (Ottawa: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2008) at 41.

<sup>3</sup> See Toronto Public Health, International Literature Review of Student Nutrition Programs, January 10, 2011-April 1, 2011 ; Toronto District School Board, Feeding our Future : The First and Second Year Evaluation, 2006 available at [http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about\\_us/external\\_research\\_application/docs/EvaluationFOFProgram19Mar12.pdf](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/about_us/external_research_application/docs/EvaluationFOFProgram19Mar12.pdf)

But in order for these programs to reach even greater numbers of kids, with better, more *nutritious* and more *local* foods, we need the federal government make healthy kids a priority. We are convinced that this wise investment in healthy childhood eating habits not only delivers nutritious snacks to hungry and malnourished kids today, it will save money over the long term, preventing obesity-related chronic diseases such as diabetes. The savings to our over-burdened health care system will register for years to come.

So, what will it cost?

Our preliminary figures<sup>4</sup> are based on the actual costs of a mid-morning snacks currently being delivered. We have scaled up those numbers to cover the cost of giving every primary and secondary student in the country a healthy mid-morning snack,<sup>5</sup> with the federal government contributing 20% of the total cost. If we add some modest resources for staff, supplies and community development as well as a premium for remote and Northern communities, we estimate a total annual cost of just under \$550 million.

Our suggestion is to phase the program in over 3-5 years, building on existing community initiatives and working towards universal coverage. We must begin where there is strong need and strong capacity, collaborating with other levels of government to maximize the use of precious public dollars. Investment in and implementation of such a program would signal a government strongly invested in the healthy future of its citizens.

We believe a new national student nutrition program could and should be funded from general revenues. But that's not to say that there aren't also creative financial solutions in this tight fiscal climate. To mention but one, advanced by a Food Secure Canada member, the Weight Coalition,<sup>6</sup> an excise tax could be placed on sugar-sweetened beverages. Canadians consume over 3.5 billion litres of sugar-sweetened beverages per year. A nickel tax on each litre sold would easily pay for almost a third the cost of the program (or the entire first year of a three-year phase in) – not to mention discourage the consumption of unhealthy beverages that are much more costly in human and financial terms down the line. See annex 2.

This is a great opportunity for the Government of Canada to be smart about the way it spends its money: investing in a national student nutrition program is an investment in health, education, young people, and communities with incalculable returns.

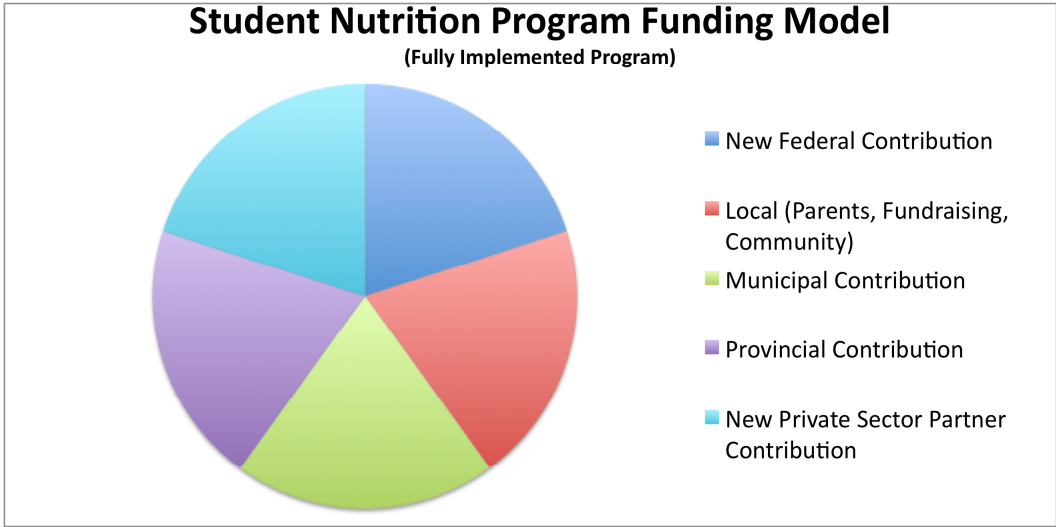
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<sup>4</sup> See Annex 2

<sup>5</sup> Toronto Public Health International Literature Review of Student Nutrition Programs A Synthesis of the Data on Administration and Funding Models and Impacts on Health and Educational Outcomes

<sup>6</sup> Coalition Poids, *Miser sur la prévention en créant de la richesse : un geste significatif pour une société plus en santé*, décembre 2011.

## Annex One: Student Nutrition Program Funding Model



City of Toronto. (7 Sept 2012) *Student Nutrition Program 2012 Operating Budget Request and Proposed Five Year Plan.*

**Annex 2  
Federal Student Nutrition Program Costing Estimate**

Prov/Terr	Year	Elementary	Secondary	Total	Food Costs Only	Food+Staff+	Comm. Dev. +	Total Annual	Annual
					@ 20%	supplies Costs	Admin		
					(\$247.00/yr x 20% = ~\$50.00)	(\$353.40/yr x 20% = ~\$71.00)	\$9.00/yr (*2x for Territories)		Allocation for First Three Years
Alberta	2010/11	393,682	196,195	589,877	\$ 29,493,850	\$ 41,881,267	\$ 5,308,893	\$ 47,190,160	\$ 589,877
British Columbia	2010/11	348,000	301,389	649,389	\$ 32,469,450	\$ 46,106,619	\$ 5,844,501	\$ 51,951,120	\$ 649,389
Manitoba	2010/11	126,369	67,463	193,832	\$ 9,691,600	\$ 13,762,072	\$ 1,744,488	\$ 15,506,560	\$ 193,832
New Brunswick	2010/11	67,813	36,608	104,421	\$ 5,221,050	\$ 7,413,891	\$ 939,789	\$ 8,353,680	\$ 104,421
Newfoundland & Labrador	2010/11	45,381	23,348	68,729	\$ 3,436,450	\$ 4,879,759	\$ 618,561	\$ 5,498,320	\$ 68,729
Northwest Territory	2010/11	5,222	3,354	8,576	\$ 428,800	\$ 608,896	\$ 154,368	\$ 763,264	\$ 8,576
Nova Scotia	2010/11	93,630	34,501	128,131	\$ 6,406,550	\$ 9,097,301	\$ 1,153,179	\$ 10,250,480	\$ 128,131
Nunavut	2010/11	6,000	2,525	8,525	\$ 426,250	\$ 605,275	\$ 153,450	\$ 758,725	\$ 8,525
Ontario	2010/11	1,340,520	711,345	2,051,865	\$ 102,593,250	\$ 145,682,415	\$ 18,466,785	\$ 164,149,200	\$ 2,051,865
Prince Edward Island	2009/10	12,329	7,819	20,148	\$ 1,007,400	\$ 1,430,508	\$ 181,332	\$ 1,611,840	\$ 20,148
Quebec	2009/10	554,659	459,574	1,014,233	\$ 50,711,650	\$ 72,010,543	\$ 9,128,097	\$ 81,138,640	\$ 1,014,233
Saskatchewan	2010/11			165,541	\$ 8,277,050	\$ 11,753,411	\$ 1,489,869	\$ 13,243,280	\$ 165,541
Yukon Territory	2010/11	2,957	2,140	5,097	\$ 254,850	\$ 361,887	\$ 91,746	\$ 453,633	\$ 5,097
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,996,562</b>	<b>1,846,261</b>	<b>5,008,364</b>	<b>\$ 250,418,200</b>	<b>\$ 355,593,844</b>	<b>\$ 45,275,058</b>	<b>\$ 400,868,902</b>	<b>\$ 5,008,364</b>

\*using 2x southern costs for staff and supplies

**Assumptions:**

Based on Toronto's MM program elementary/secondary (3/2 - 1.04/1.63 = \$1.30/meal)  
 Based on Toronto maximum 30% total cost for staffing, plus supplies, etc. = \$1.86/student/day  
 Based on Toronto provincial community dev. Plus admin \$\$ = \$8.79 (~2.5%/student/yr)

Equipment based on one-time first year allocation as per Toronto MCYS funding \$100K/141,000 students = \$1.00 (because many new programs will need equipment to begin their programs)

Proposed 3 yr phase in: 35:35:30  
 Proposed 5 yr phase in: 30:20:20:20:10

Annex 2  
**Federal Student Nutrition Program Costing Estimate**

**Revised Figures Using an Average Northern and Remote Food Cost Allowance**

	Total students	Food Costs Only @ 20%	Food+Staff+supplies Costs	Comm. Dev. + Admin	Total Annual Costs	Annual Equipment Allocation for First Three Years
		(\$247.00/yr x 20% = ~\$50.00)	(\$353.40/yr x 20% = ~\$71.00)	\$9.00/yr (*2x for Territories)		unchanged
<b>Students in Urban areas</b>	4,181,984	\$209,099,200	\$296,920,864			
		~\$200.00/yr for NFCA	~\$242.00/yr* for NFCA			
<b>Students with NFCA</b>	826,380	\$165,276,000	\$199,983,960			
<b>Total Students</b>	<b>5,008,364</b>	<b>\$374,375,200</b>	<b>\$496,904,824</b>	<b>\$45,275,058</b>	<b>\$ 542,179,882</b>	<b>\$ 5,008,364</b>

\*NFCA: Northern Food Cost Allowance derived by Food Secure Canada with Heart & Stroke Foundation data.

\*using 2x southern costs for staff and supplies

**NOTES:**

Assume 15-18%(av 16.5%) Canada's students live in communities that can be classified as remote, far-north or fly-in = average of 826,380 (range: 751,255 - 901,505)

Northern food costs: 3 to 5 times average southern costs for produce

Northern food costs: 2.5 to 3.5 times average southern costs for dairy

Northern food costs: 4.5 to 5 times average southern food costs for whole grains

Northern food costs overall: 3.9 to 4 times average southern food costs

Using 16.5% student population needing Northern Food Cost Allowance{NFCA} = (4x southern food costs)

**Proposed financing: tax on sugary drinks\***

Value of the excise tax (per litre)	Litres (Billions)**	Annual revenue
\$ 0.01	3.58	\$ 35,800,000
\$ 0.05	3.58	\$ 179,000,000
\$ 0.10	3.58	\$ 358,000,000

\* Not adjusted for diminished consumption

\*\*Canadians consume 3.58 billions of litres/yr of sugary drinks

## About Food Secure Canada

### Vision

Food Secure Canada is based on three commitments:

**Zero Hunger:** All people at all times must be able to acquire, in a dignified manner, adequate quantity and quality of culturally and personally acceptable food. This is essential to the health of our population and requires cooperation among many different sectors, including housing, social policy, transportation, agriculture, education, and community, cultural, voluntary and charitable groups, and businesses.

**A Sustainable Food System:** Food in Canada must be produced, harvested (including fishing and other wild food harvest), processed, distributed and consumed in a manner which maintains and enhances the quality of land, air and water for future generations, and in which people are able to earn a living wage in a safe and healthy working environment by harvesting, growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food.

**Healthy and Safe Food:** Safe and nourishing foods must be readily at hand (and less nourishing ones restricted); food (including wild foods) must not be contaminated with pathogens or industrial chemicals; and no novel food can be allowed to enter the environment or food chain without rigorous independent testing and must be subject to an on-going tracking and surveillance system in order to ensure its safety for human consumption.

### Mission

Food Secure Canada is a Canada-wide alliance of civil society organizations and individuals collaborating to advance dialogue, cooperation, policies and programs that improve food security in Canada and globally.

FSC aims to unite people and organizations working for food security nationally and globally. FSC is a registered non-profit society with a wide membership that includes both organizations and individuals. It works for its members, facilitating collaborative activities to advance food security. It has several active networks: children and food; Northern and Indigenous Issues; provincial food networks and local and sustainable food