



Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

Sent by e-mail:

[Premier@ontario.ca](mailto:Premier@ontario.ca)

[Doug.Fordco@pc.ola.org](mailto:Doug.Fordco@pc.ola.org)

November 15, 2024

Dear Premier Ford:

The Ontario Home Economics Association (OHEA), the Ontario Family Studies Economics Educators' Association (OFSHEEA), and Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario were encouraged to hear of the federal government's commitment to a National School Food Program, an investment of \$1 billion over five years, on April 1st. We expect that the Government of Ontario shares our sentiments given its increased help for Ontario elementary students in the past year. Thank you for the 5 million dollars in additional funding for school food, announced in October 2023.

Only two provinces have since committed to the program, Manitoba and Newfoundland and Labrador. We ask the Ontario government to take action on the following:

1. Accept the available federal funding for a provincial school food program.
2. Sign an agreement with the federal government to secure funding for Ontario.

Connecting children and youth with healthy food through school meals has tremendous potential to improve the future of our province. As demonstrated in countries with established school food programs, these initiatives have an immediate and profound impact on students' behaviour, cognitive development, and mental and emotional well-being. Providing healthy, culturally appropriate, and safe food in schools can play a critical role in promoting overall health and reducing chronic disease. This directly impacts healthcare spending by alleviating the strain on the healthcare system, while also strengthening Ontario's economy and supporting the agri-food sector.

Studies show that children and youth learn better when they are well-nourished and not hungry. Achieving this leads to increased access to education for all students, thereby enhancing the quality of public education programming. This fosters learners who are not only successful academically but who are also equipped to make positive contributions to society.

School food initiatives create community connectedness. They bring together community members and partners including local food providers, educators, chefs, families, seniors, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, and socially excluded or vulnerable groups. Food connections create inter-generational relationships, build knowledge and skills, and support student and community health and well-being. This generates long-term impact on social cohesion, the labour market, and overall human progress.

Ontario public elementary school students make up for 40% of the national population, according to Statistics Canada and the Ontario Teachers' Federation. We urge you to prioritize the implementation of

a provincial school food program in collaboration with the federal government. Your leadership in championing this program will not only provide immediate benefits to students but will also lay the groundwork for a healthier, more equitable future for all children in Ontario. We eagerly look forward to working together to create a thriving educational environment that nurtures our youth's health and well-being.

Sincerely,  
Original Signed by:

*Peggy O'Neil*

Peggy O'Neil, President OHEA  
[info@ohea.on.ca](mailto:info@ohea.on.ca)

Peggy O'Neil, PhD.,P.H.Ec.,OCT.  
[poneil2@uwo.ca](mailto:poneil2@uwo.ca)

*Theresa Aqvi*

Theresa Aqvi, President OFSHEEA  
[president@ofsheea.ca](mailto:president@ofsheea.ca)

*Karen Brown*

Karen Brown, President ETFO  
[kbrown@etfo.org](mailto:kbrown@etfo.org)

CC. Lorne Coe and Mike Harris, Parliamentary Assistant to the Premier  
[Lorne.Coe@pc.ola.org](mailto:Lorne.Coe@pc.ola.org)  
[Mike.Harris@pc.ola.org](mailto:Mike.Harris@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health  
[Sylvia.Jones@pc.ola.org](mailto:Sylvia.Jones@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Jill Dunlop, Minister of Education  
[Jill.Dunlop@pc.ola.org](mailto:Jill.Dunlop@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
[Michael.Parsa@pc.ola.org](mailto:Michael.Parsa@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness  
[Rob.Flack@pc.ola.org](mailto:Rob.Flack@pc.ola.org)

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Rural Affairs  
[Lisa.Thompson@pc.ola.org](mailto:Lisa.Thompson@pc.ola.org)

Michael Foulds, President, Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF)  
[Mike.Foulds@otffeo.on.ca](mailto:Mike.Foulds@otffeo.on.ca)