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Health Products
and Food Branch

Direction générale des produits
de santé et des aliments

RECEIVED

November 22, 2023

REGION OF PEEL

OFFICE OF THE REGIONAL CLERK

November 22, 2023

nando.iannicca@peelregion.ca

Dear Nando Iannicca,

Thank you for your correspondence of November 15, 2023, to The Honourable Mark Holland, Minister of Health, regarding the National School Food Policy and regarding food security. It is my pleasure to respond on his behalf.

We agree that school food programs can have several benefits, including improving nutritional health and supporting healthy development, as well as academic achievement and overall well-being. Work on the National School Food Policy is being led by our colleagues at Employment & Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada. We continue to work closely with lead departments, ensuring that health considerations are included in this work and reflect the recommendations in [Canada's food guide](#). You may be interested to know that on October 31, 2023, ESDC released a [report](#) summarizing what they have heard in engagements on the Policy since 2022.

Health Canada recognizes that food security is often linked with a household's financial ability to access adequate food, and is being impacted by issues like rising food prices. This is why the cost of food is an important consideration in the development of food guide resources. Additionally, Health Canada developed the [National Nutritious Food Basket](#), which is a tool used by various levels of government and other stakeholders to monitor the cost and affordability of healthy eating across Canada, and to calculate the cost of the food component of the [Market Basket Measure](#), used by Statistics Canada to measure [Canada's Official Poverty Line](#).

Sincerely,

Alfred Aziz
Director General
Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion
Alfred.aziz@hc-sc.gc.ca

REFERRAL TO _____
RECOMMENDED _____
DIRECTION REQUIRED _____
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED _____

November 15, 2023

The Honourable Mark Holland, PC, MP
Minister of Health
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
hccminister.ministresc@hc-sc.gc.ca

Re: Support for National School Food Program

Dear Minister Holland,

I am writing to bring to your attention the pressing issue of food insecurity in Peel Region and communities across Canada. At its October 26th meeting, Regional Council passed a resolution urging the federal government to establish a National School Food Program and allocate appropriate funding in Budget 2024 to municipalities, provinces, and territories across Canada to implement such a program.

We believe this call for action is justified given that in the 2019 federal budget, the federal government committed to negotiating with the provinces and territories to create a National School Food Program. This commitment was reaffirmed in the 2022 federal budget. Additionally, the federal government's Canada Food Policy Action to Address Key Gaps (2019-2024) includes an action item to help Canadian communities access healthy food, with a focus on working toward the creation of a National School Food Program in collaboration with provinces, territories, and key stakeholder groups.

Our research has shown that in 2022, average inflation rose by 6.8%, while the average Canadian hourly wage rate increased by only 4.5%. This has led to individuals spending more to purchase the same basket of goods and services, with the cost of necessities rising faster than wages (Statistics Canada, 2022). Although school food programs exist in some form in all provinces, territories, and many Indigenous communities, they only reach around 21% of school-age children. Proper student nutrition is crucial for learning, health, and overall well-being, which underscores the importance of these programs.

This matter is particularly important in our communities. According to the 2021 Census Bulletin, Peel had the second highest prevalence of low-income earners (7.8%) among the GTA municipalities, with Peel residents under 6 years of age (10.4%) being the most likely to live in low-income households. Poverty in Peel Region continues to be a complex issue, with 7.8% of the population living in poverty, including 9.7% of children aged 0-17 years (Statistics Canada, 2021). Moreover, in 2021, 19.8% of Peel residents lived in households that were marginally, moderately, or severely food insecure (Canadian Income Survey, Statistics Canada, 2021).

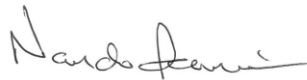
While we acknowledge that school food programs do not solve the problem of food insecurity, we believe that well-designed, consistent programs can significantly benefit children and their education in numerous ways. These programs support all school-aged children in our region and across Canada to have access to nutritious meals, contributing to better health and educational outcomes while addressing the pressing issues of poverty and food insecurity.

With this in mind, Peel Region encourages the Ministry of Health to implement a Canada-wide school food program. We believe that such a program is not only necessary but also a fundamental step toward addressing the critical challenges of food insecurity and poverty in our communities.

Nando Iannicca
Regional Chair & CEO

10 Peel Centre Dr.
Suite A, 5th Floor
Brampton, ON L6T 4B9
905-791-7800 ext. 4310

Kindest personal regards,



Nando Iannicca
Regional Chair & Chief Executive Officer
Region of Peel

Att: Motion Regarding a National School Food Program, dated October 26, 2023

**Resolution
Regional Council**

Agenda Number: 20.2.

Date: October 26, 2023

Moved by Councillor Reid

Seconded by Councillor Palleschi

1. That Peel Region calls on the federal government to establish a National School Food Program and dedicate appropriate funding in Budget 2024 to allocate to municipalities, provinces, and territories across Canada to implement a program this year; and
2. That the Regional Chair, on behalf of Regional Council, write to the federal Minister of Health in support of establishment of a universal national school nutrition program; and
3. That this request be included as a priority in Peel Region's submission into the federal 2024 pre-budget consultation process.

Regional Chair