



MAYOR KENNEDY STEWART

June 24, 2020

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: Taking Steps Toward a National Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program

I am writing to you on behalf of Vancouver City Council to encourage the Government of Canada to make the creation of a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program a top priority for the national agenda of the 43rd Parliament in 2020. City Council believes that the creation of a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program is consistent with the leadership already shown by the Government of Canada in its work to create a national food policy.

Vancouver City Council recognizes that access to nutritious and affordable food is fundamental to health and equity, and that children in particular require nutritious foods for normal growth and learning. Over the past five years the City of Vancouver has provided funding to support local programs, including \$1.6 million for the Vancouver School District's Food4School program, \$400,000 to support the Strathcona Community Centre Association's universal breakfast program, and \$118,000 to Fresh Roots and Growing Chefs to pilot a universal school meal program.

The City of Vancouver made a submission to the Federal Government's National Food Policy consultation process in September 2017, in which it was noted that staff are concerned about increasing levels of food and income insecurity among Vancouver residents. The submission highlighted that residents living with food insecurity reported having poorer physical and mental health, as well as having health care costs that were 76 per cent higher than people with access to nutritious foods. With the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic City staff are concerned that food prices will increase due to disruptions in the agricultural supply chain, further increasing the number of families experiencing food insecurity.

Members of Vancouver City Council are pleased that the federal government's Food Policy for Canada initiative includes engaging with provinces, territories, and key stakeholder groups to work toward the creation of a National School Food Program as one of its key actions. Canada is currently one of the only industrialized countries without a national school food program and Vancouver City Council sincerely hopes the Government of Canada will prioritize working with the provinces, territories, Indigenous communities, and non-profit groups to start one.

With income and food insecurity increasing among Canadians, a school food program on a national scale is essential to address inequality and ensure all Canadian children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy meals that support classroom learning. This type of program will also support Canada's national economic recovery from COVID-19 through the expansion of the agricultural sector, as well as increasing local food security and the resilience of local communities to respond to future emergencies.

Sincerely,



Kennedy Stewart
Mayor, City of Vancouver

Cc: The Honourable John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia
The Honourable Rob Fleming, Minister of Education for British Columbia
The Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health for British Columbia
The Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture for British Columbia

Appendix

COUNCIL MOTION - Taking Steps Toward a National Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program:

On March 11, 2020 - Vancouver City Council approved the motion below:

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct the Mayor, on behalf of Council, to write to the Prime Minister of Canada to encourage the Government of Canada to make the creation of a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program a top priority for the national agenda of the 43rd Parliament in 2020, consistent with the leadership already shown by the Government of Canada in working to create a national food policy, with copies of the letter sent to the Premier of British Columbia and the Provincial Ministers responsible for school food, namely the Ministers of Education Health and Agriculture;

FURTHER THAT Council's letter to the Prime Minister should reference the City and Council's strong support for the Federal Government to work with the Provinces, Territories, Indigenous communities, and non-profit groups to create a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program that ensures all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day to support classroom learning while also modelling healthy eating and teaching food skills.
