

February 11, 2019

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor  
Minister of Health, Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, On K1A 0A6

[Ginette.petitpastaylor@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Ginette.petitpastaylor@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Petitpas Taylor:

**Petition for an adequately-funded national cost-shared universal healthy school food program**

On behalf of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, we are writing to express our support for Toronto's Board of Health and Senator Art Eggleton's call for a federal universal health school program, passed at WECHU's September 2018 Board of Health meeting.

Student nutrition programs (SNPs) are community-based meal and snack programs that operate primarily in schools. School food programs are increasingly seen as vital contributors to students' physical and mental health, and academic achievement. A growing body of research demonstrates the potential of school food programs to improve food choices, prevent disease, and support academic success (including academic performance, reduced tardiness, and improved student behaviour) for all students.

In Windsor and Essex County, SNPs have been a driving force in ensuring children have access to healthy food and beverages throughout the school day. This is especially important because our region has low rates of vegetables and fruit consumption in children.

In Ontario, SNPs are run locally by students, parents and volunteers, and are funded through multiple sources including provincial funding, local community groups and organizations, grants, and local fundraising. For most programs, the current funding available does not cover the full cost to run the programs at full capacity. As well, many schools lack the infrastructure to support cooking healthy meals.

To deal with these funding shortfalls, programs resort to a variety of methods including reducing the number of meals served, offering fewer servings with smaller portions, relying on ready-made food more often, or decreasing the quality of food offered. These can significantly undermine the potential positive health effects that SNPs can have on Canadian children.

Given the documented benefits of SNPs, we urge the federal government to support an adequately-funded national cost-shared universal healthy school food program. Sustained federal investment, as proposed by Senate Motion no. 358, would leverage local efforts and allow SNPs to expand their impact and improve children's health and educational outcomes, while lowering future healthcare costs.

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Gary McNamara  
Chair, Board of Health



Theresa Marentette, RN, MSc  
Chief Executive Officer, Chief Nursing Officer

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.HL28.5>

<https://www.wechu.org/board-meetings/september-2018-board-meeting>

c: Cheryl Hardcastle, MP Windsor-Tecumseh  
Brian Masse, MP Windsor West  
Tracey Ramsey, MP Essex  
Dave Van Kesteren, MP Chatham Kent-Leamington  
Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier, Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care  
Ontario Boards of Health  
Windsor-Essex County Board of Health  
Association of Public Health Agencies (aPHa)  
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
Ontario Student Nutrition Program, Windsor-Essex Region  
WEC local school boards