

School Food Programs & Student Nutrition



WHAT IS THE ISSUE AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SASKATCHEWAN?

We believe in the critical importance of stigma-free school food programs to support families, reduce household food expenses, improve student learning, and help ensure children are not worrying about their next meal. Saskatchewan has the lowest per student funding for school food programs in Canada and has had a record increase in food insecurity (20.3% in 2022 to 28% in 2023), leaving over 1 in 4 people and 1 in 3 children food insecure.

Our association adopted a resolution in 2023 to advocate provincially and nationally with the Canadian School Boards Association for the development of a healthy, universal, cost-shared school food program funded by the federal and provincial governments in consultation with all school boards. We conducted recent surveys with our member school boards to better understand school food programs, including the challenges and opportunities for Saskatchewan.

SOLUTIONS:

- **Demonstrated commitment** to school food and student nutrition through increased funding and resources from both federal and provincial governments – working with boards of education who are uniquely positioned to expand, innovate, and implement locally designed food programs that meet the unique needs of our school communities.
- **Reduce the barriers to school food program expansion** – new funding to support food sourcing/purchasing and paid school food staff.
- **School food infrastructure upgrades and expansion** – additional funding to upgrade food preparation spaces, storage, equipment, transportation/delivery, and eating areas.
- **Community by community approach** – continue to leverage and build upon the many existing partnerships to expand local sourcing and local expertise, along with the ability to offer culturally appropriate and Indigenous foods through local Saskatchewan growers, producers, and hunters/trappers/gatherers.

“As local public education advocates, we see the increasing struggles that our children, families, and communities are facing. When children and youth come to school hungry, it is difficult for them to focus and face their learning day. This is an unfortunate reality for far too many students in our schools. The goal is to reduce known barriers to learning, attendance and school success by supporting school food programs.”

BENEFITS OF SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS:



Better student mood, concentration and learning.



Stronger community connections and relationships.



Increased intake of nutritious food.



Curriculum connections and life skills learning opportunities.



Support for local businesses and expertise.