



October 19, 2023

The Honourable Stephen Lecce
Ministry of Education
438 University Ave., 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Dear Minister Lecce,

Re: Toronto Youth Cabinet's request for a universal free school breakfast and lunch program

On May 24th, 2023, the Toronto Youth Cabinet, supported and endorsed by 13 other provincial organizations, shared a letter with Minister Lecce which called on the Province of Ontario to provide a universal free school breakfast and lunch program to all Ontario students. This includes providing the sufficient infrastructure, resources and funding to hire and train staff who will be responsible for preparing these nutritious meals.

The considerations shared by this group, have been detailed, highlighting crucial well-research statistics including the following:

- According to a 2022 report by Feed Ontario, 30 percent of food bank clients are children and youth under the age of 18.
- A study by the University of Toronto on food insecurity found that 1 in 5 children are food insecure in Canada. In Toronto according to the Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank, 1 in 4 of their users were children in March. The first time in 25 years.
- In Ontario the base funding of \$28 million for student nutrition programs has remained consistent since 2014, despite the cost of food having increased dramatically over the last decade.

At our October 4th meeting the following motion was passed:

Be it resolved that the Chair write a letter to the Minister of Education in support of Toronto Youth Cabinet's Food Insecurity Initiative

Although Student Trustees do not have the authority to move and second motions, our board recognizes the importance of hearing their voices in matters concerning student health and well being.

Halton District School Board's (HDSB) Student Trustee Sultan Alimzhanov and Student Trustee Shrena Sribalan expressed complete support for the Chair writing a letter to the Minister of Education in support of Toronto Youth Cabinet's Food Insecurity Initiative to provide a universal free school breakfast and lunch program to all Ontario students.

HDSB student trustees recognize the vital work of the Toronto Youth Cabinet. The suggestions outlined in this letter regarding breakfast and lunch programs would better the overall quality of life of all students across the province, especially those most marginalized and affected by rising youth food insecurity in Toronto and beyond. The HDSB Student Trustees have heard similar asks and concerns from students through what our senators hear from the students they serve, the stories told to us on social media and in conversations in our provincial advocacy work with other Public Student Trustees through OSTA-AECO . Food insecurity is a prominent issue students feel strongly about across the province and this letter serves as an accurate representation of the youth perspective and the need for breakfast and lunch programs in our province."

We encourage the Ministry to consider the voice of the HDSB students in recognizing the presence of food disparity within the student population and taking necessary steps to address this issue through the implementation of the said program.

Sincerely,

Margo Shuttleworth
Chair

Joanna Oliver
Trustee, Oakville Ward 4
Student Trustee Mentor

Sultan Alimzhanov
Student Trustee

Shrena Sribalan
Student Trustee

CC: Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford
Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services,
Logan Kanapathi
Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Education, Patrice Barnes
Leader, Official Opposition, Marit Stiles
Children, Community and Social Services Critic, Monique Taylor
Education Critic, Chandra Pasma