



CANADIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL TRUSTEES' ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES COMMISSAIRES D'ÉCOLES CATHOLIQUES

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August 17, 2023

The Honourable Mark Holland, M.P.
Minister of Health
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The Honourable Marci Ien, M.P.
Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth
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The Honourable Jenna Sudds, M.P.
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development
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House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Dear Ministers:

Re: National Nutrition Program

The Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association (CCSTA) is a national organization that promotes excellence in Catholic education. CCSTA represents seven provincial and territorial Catholic school trustee associations across Canada. In turn, these associations represent over 90 Catholic school boards that oversee the education of more than 850,000 students in approximately 2,000 schools.

At our 2023 AGM, held this past June in Saskatoon, the membership unanimously passed a resolution urging CCSTA to petition the Government of Canada to fund a National Nutrition Program.

Recent data shows that more than one-third of food bank clients are children and that these children represent 500,000 visits to food banks in Canada each month. This striking revelation is the reason for CCSTA advocating for a national program to address the root causes of childhood food insecurity in Canada.

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Enlivened by the Word of God and our tradition, we promote and protect the right to Catholic education in Canada.

We speak as one.

Animés par la Parole de Dieu et notre tradition, nous assurons la protection et la promotion du droit à une éducation catholique au Canada. Nous parlons d'une même voix.

A National Nutrition Program that provides access to nutritious food in schools will generate a variety of benefits for the students including:

- Improved learning outcomes;
- Higher levels of mental health and wellbeing;
- Reduce the gap in social determinants of health between privileged and marginalized communities; and
- Promotion of healthy eating habits and lifestyles.

A program such as this would also contribute to the development of locally sustainable food production systems by supporting and promoting local food producers and processors.

Program Design

CCSTA recommends that any federally supported program to provide food to students must have the following minimum requirements:

- Accessible to all students;
- Offered at no cost to the student, school, or school board;
- Offered in a manner that is stigma-free and accommodating of religious and cultural differences; and
- Supports and expands local initiatives already in place.

Next Steps

Given the urgency of implementing such a program across Canada, there is a strong need for the Federal Government, in partnership with provincial ministries and school boards, to commit to the creation of a National Nutrition Program.

A program of this nature would help to ensure the success of the Federal Government's current National Mental Health Initiative. Research data indicates that good nutrition is essential to physical and mental health.

We look forward to hearing back from you regarding this initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact our office at 613-224-4455 ext. 2521 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Teresita Chiarella
President

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