January 31, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

The Honourable Patti Hajdu
Minister of Health
Government of Canada
Tunney’s Pasture
Ottawa, ON K1A0K9

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Minister of Health
Government of Ontario
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3

Dear Ministers:

Re: Fully Funded Universal Healthy School Food Program

At its meeting on January 16, 2020, the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts carried the following resolution #02-20:

WHEREAS a universal publicly funded healthy school food program in Canada enables all students to have the opportunity to eat healthy meals at school every day, and no child is left out due to their family’s ability to pay, fundraise, or volunteer with the program; and

WHEREAS only 19% of Sudbury & District youth (ages 12-19) reported meeting the recommended intake of fruit and vegetables, an indicator of nutrition status and a risk factor for the development of nutrition-related chronic diseases;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT That the Board of Health for Public Health Sudbury & Districts support resolutions by Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and Boards of Health for Grey Bruce Health Unit, Toronto Public Health, Peterborough Public Health and Windsor-Essex County Health Unit for a universal publicly funded healthy school food program.
FURTHER THAT the Board calls on federal and provincial Ministers of Health to work in consultation with all provinces, territories, Indigenous leadership, and other interest groups to collaboratively develop a universal publicly funded school food program that is aligned with Canada’s Dietary Guidelines.

In Ontario, the school or student nutrition program aims to support students’ learning and healthy development through additional nourishment. The current model of the school nutrition programming includes contributions from the province, community groups, organizations, grants, food donations, and fundraising efforts. The patchwork funding model threatens the quantity and quality of food served to children. The lack of sustainable funding also impacts the availability of infrastructure and human resources to effectively run the program.

A publicly fully-funded universal school food program model can positively impact students’ nourishment, health and well-being, behaviours and attitudes, school connectedness, and academic success. This proposed universal program model with leadership by Canada and Ontario’s Ministers of Health would enable all students to have the equal opportunity to eat healthy meals at school every day, and that no child is left out due to their family’s ability to pay, fundraise, or volunteer with the program.

Further, this motion is in support of Senator Art Eggleton’s motion (#358, 2015) that urges an adequately funded national cost-shared universal nutrition program. Given the impact of nutrition related chronic diseases, we trust you will advance this work quickly and so that no child is left out.

Sincerely,

Penny Sutcliffe, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer

cc: Paul Lefebvre, Member of Parliament for Sudbury
     Marc Serré, Member of Parliament for Nickel Belt
     Carol Hughes, Member of Parliament for Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing
     Hon. Todd Smith, Ontario Minister of Children, Communities, and Social Services
Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Federation of Canadian Municipalities
Ontario Boards of Health