

December 19, 2022

The Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
By email: Karina.Gould@parl.gc.ca

The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
By email: Marie-Claude.Bibeau@parl.gc.ca

Subject: Dietitian Involvement in pan-Canadian school food policy

Dear Minister Gould and Minister Bibeau,

We are writing to you as the leading voice of dietitians in Canada, representing a diverse and skilled community of regulated health professionals who are sought after for their expertise in supporting Canadians in connection to food, nutrition and health. Dietitians of Canada has had a long-standing collaborative partnership with the Federal Government, various Ministries, and Health Canada. We were grateful to see the inclusion of a pan-Canadian school food policy in the 2022 Federal budget and are reaching out in connection to ongoing consultation opportunities, in particular to identify opportunities and risks.

As the only regulated nutrition profession, dietitians are uniquely suited to understand the complexity of how to support Canadians, including children, to engage in long-term healthy eating practices. We agree that a pan-Canadian school food policy can support food literacy, diverse nutritional and educational needs, and nurture cultural connectedness, which can all have a lifelong positive impact on health and wellbeing. We appreciate that all these components were offered as potential benefits in the recent public consultation discussion paper and other materials.

That said, we see a high risk in conflating a pan-Canadian school food policy with a way to address food insecurity among children. Household food insecurity among families is an increasing problem that needs to be addressed. From 2021 national data, we can see that 15.6% of two-parent families and 38.1% of female lone-parent families were living in food insecure households¹, which is only exacerbated by recent food cost inflation. The evidence is clear that solving household food insecurity will require addressing low-income status, material deprivation, and other elements related to systemic inequities². As this important part of the National Food Policy work moves forward, we urge you to continue to elevate other important cross-ministry

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efforts towards income and inequity-focused solutions, that complement the school food policy and will ensure its long term success.

Moving forward on the pan-Canadian school food policy, we hope Dietitians of Canada and dietitians will continue to be an integral partner with the Ministry of Families, Children and Social Development and the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food. We welcome the opportunity to discuss how we can continue to be involved as you carry out these important federal commitments.

Thank you for your dedication towards supporting Canadians to be well.

Sincerely,



JP Cody-Cox
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Dietitians of Canada
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References:

1. Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>
2. Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>