

**Written Submission for the Pre-Budget
Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget**





List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada create a National Child Breakfast Program, in partnership with Breakfast Club of Canada, using a cost-sharing model that includes all sectors of Canadian society.

Recommendation 2: That the federal government invest \$250 million for the creation of the National Child Breakfast Program.

Recommendation 3: That the federal government launch a National Movement on Child Nutrition, in partnership with Breakfast Club of Canada.



Introduction

Canada is a privileged country, yet a significant percentage of children and youth are living with food insecurity and are failing to thrive. In fact, over one million Canadian children, or 1 in 5, live in poverty. According to Statistics Canada, there are 5,032,183 children enrolled in public, elementary and secondary schools in Canada which equates to over 1M children at risk of going to school hungry. In urban centres, such as Toronto, as many as 1 in 3 children live in poverty and approximately 40% arrive at school each day without breakfast. This figure can reach as high as 58% in some communities. In indigenous communities, this number can be higher.

In fact, a unique lens needs to be applied to indigenous children as the statistics are even more shocking. One in two indigenous children live in poverty and risk hunger every day. With a population growth rate of 20.1%, which is significantly higher than the 5.2% of the wider population, and an unemployment rate of 22% on reserve, which is three times higher than the rest of the country, indigenous children are even more vulnerable and less likely to thrive than non-indigenous children.

Poor nutrition has a significant impact on a child's health and their ability to learn and function. National and international studies have proven that children with poor nutrition are sick more often, have more behavioral problems and struggle in school. According to the Ending Childhood Hunger Report, a Social Impact Analysis, prepared by Deloitte, "Hungry children are sick more often and are 31% more likely to be hospitalized, at an average cost of approximately \$12,000 per pediatric hospitalization". Food insecure children are 3.4 times more likely to be overweight or obese. Currently, Canada is facing an epidemic of child obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Studies have shown that a healthy breakfast does make a positive difference. Well-nourished children grow up to have lower rates of diabetes, depression, obesity and heart disease. They achieve higher scores than their under nourished classmates, are more likely to graduate from high school and attend college or university. If a child



cannot take advantage of their education, they are less likely to reach their full potential in life which will have both short and long-term effects on the individual child, families, communities and ultimately on national economic development.

Simply put, it starts with food. Investing in various programs to equalize opportunities for "at risk" children is benign if a child is undernourished and doesn't have the energy to participate. The best teacher in the most well-equipped classroom has difficulty teaching a hungry child. If we are going to create a level the playing field for all children, then we must ensure that our most vulnerable begin their school day well nourished.



Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada create National Child Breakfast Program, in partnership with Breakfast Club of Canada, using a cost-sharing model that includes all sectors of Canadian society.

While nourishing children is imperative, the economic benefits go far beyond breakfast programs and these programs are providing more than a simple meal. We need a youth population that is thriving. Youth that thrive are less dependent on welfare, social housing, and on social services. They are less dependent on healthcare, less of a burden on the criminal justice system and more likely to be independent economic actors. Well-nourished children and youth who are able to graduate from high school earn more money, spend more money and pay more taxes. That's what a national nutrition strategy would give us. That's why it is good for the economy.

Anecdotal information shows that one of the best ways to integrate new Canadians into communities is to provide breakfast programs where all children sit down and share a meal together. The act of eating together transcends cultures and nationalities. Surely the societal benefits of this are incalculable.

In terms of healthcare, the Nourishing Young Minds report by Toronto Public Health states that:

- Eating habits established in childhood and adolescence continue into adulthood;
- Obesity contributes to chronic disease such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease;
- Child obesity is increasing;
- Members of low income families are more likely to be overweight; and
- Routinely eating breakfast improves weight control.

There are billions of dollars to be saved and great economic stimulus to be achieved. Many economists now believe that a national nutrition strategy will be a crucial part of our economic stimulus going forward.



A national child breakfast program has significant benefits related to health, education, societal wellbeing and economic development. When countries invest in vehicles, such as meal programs, to support under nourished children they receive a return on their investment with higher graduation rates, lower health costs and higher contributions to the economy.

Potential benefits of child breakfast programs:

Higher achievement and graduation rates: In the U.S., students who attend a breakfast program scored higher on math tests. According to the Toronto District School Board, there was a 17% improvement in graduation rates among students who regularly ate breakfast compared to those who did not.

Lower burden on our healthcare system: Hungry children are sick more often and are 31% more likely to be hospitalized, at an average cost of approximately \$12,000 per pediatric hospitalization.

A healthier population: Food insecure children are 3.4 times more likely to be overweight or obese. Studies by the American Food Research and Action Center have found that school breakfast programs positively impact children's mental health, including reductions in behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression.

According to the Government of Canada, the annual economic burden of obesity in Canada increased by \$735 M from \$3.9 billion to \$4.6 billion between 2000 and 2008. The Childhood Obesity Foundation states that 59% of adult Canadians are either overweight or obese. Further, 1 in 11 children are considered obese and most adolescents do not outgrow this problem. In fact, if current trends continue, up to 70% of adults aged 40 will be either overweight or obese by 2040. A report entitled *Obesity in Canada*, released in 2017 by the Canadian Institute for Health Information and the Public Health Agency of Canada, notes that obesity costs the Canadian economy between \$4.6 billion and \$7.1 billion per year, split evenly between health care and indirect expenses such as lost productivity.



Criminal Justice: Studies show that child nutrition has a huge impact on graduation rates. "A life of crime is much more likely for high school drop-outs than for those who finish high school. While they account for only 15% of the Canadian population, 80% of federal inmates are dropouts. Of 40,000 drop-outs each year, 300 will go to federal prison – 7 times the normal rate, costing \$65 million. This annual cost is understated since it does not include provincial prison costs".

Agriculture: A national child breakfast program will stimulate Canada's Agriculture and Agri-Food System (AAFS). By nourishing children, who otherwise would not eat breakfast, local service suppliers, primary producers, food and beverage processors, food retailers and wholesalers would benefit. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada cite that the Canadian AAFS generated 6.6% of Canada's GDP in 2014 and provided 1 in 8 jobs in Canada.

Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women: School based breakfast programs are often managed and run by female community members, many of which are unpaid. By empowering female staff, volunteers and program participants through workshops and job training programs, many women are able to gain the valuable skills necessary to enter the workforce, support their families and become active members of society.

As an equal opportunity employer, Breakfast Club of Canada does not allow discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, gender, age or physical or mental disability. The Club follows and applies these principles to its hiring and promotion procedures.

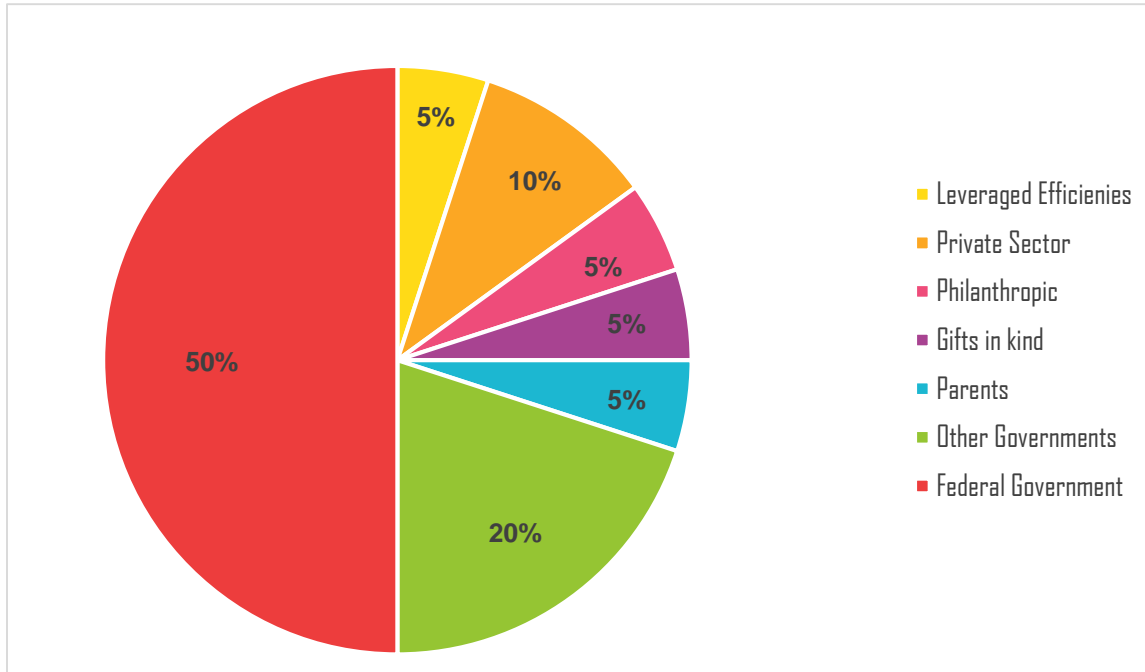


Recommendation 2: That the federal government invest \$250 million for the creation of the National Child Breakfast Program.

Through the guidance of a National Multi-Sectorial Advisory Board, Breakfast Club of Canada and the Federal Government would work collaboratively with corporations, subject matter experts and community leaders to create the foundation for a national child breakfast program, the first of its kind in Canada.

Breakfast Club of Canada would build community capacity in collaboration with its regional partners and create a digital marketing strategy to engage the Canadian public and increase public awareness. An investment of \$250M would provide one million Canadian children with a healthy breakfast during the 200 in-session school days at an average cost of \$1.00, per child, per day and help build capacity across Canada. The details regarding an allocation and distribution schedule to be determined at a future date. For every dollar invested by the Federal Government, another dollar would be matched through contributions from provincial governments, municipalities, the private sector, philanthropic giving, parents, local fundraising and leveraged efficiencies created by in-kind donations, coupons, etc.

Cost Sharing Model: Funding a National Food Program





Recommendation 3: That the federal government launch a National Movement on Child Nutrition, in partnership with Breakfast Club of Canada.

Together, with the Federal Government of Canada, community partners and the private sector, we propose the launch of a national movement on child nutrition, the first of its kind in Canada. This would bring awareness to the ways in which Canada is uplifting the leaders of tomorrow, and ensuring this young generation has the foundation needed to make a lasting mark in our country's future.

Appointing a national and respected spokesperson who would tour schools across the country with a series of celebrity chefs, would shine a light on the power of breakfast and contribute to Canada's lasting legacy.



Conclusion

As we strive to lift children out of poverty, we must also work to alleviate food insecurity for our children here at home. Across our country, thousands of people are struggling to ensure that no child begins their day hungry. They need our help.

The evidence is compelling. Breakfast programs for children and youth help to reduce obesity, improve health and academic outcomes, can contribute to lower incarceration rates and stimulate economic activity in the agriculture and agri-food sectors. The economic case for a National Child Breakfast Program is clear. Healthy children are our future and we have a responsibility to support their development.

Contact Information

Daniel Germain, Founding President

Breakfast Club of Canada

Email: daniel@pourlesenfants.ca | daniel@forthechildren.ca

Telephone: (514) 896-3603 | 1-888-442-1217 #3302

Fax: (450) 641-7841

135-G, boul. De Mortagne Blvd, Boucherville, Québec J4B 6G4