

**Ontario Supports Children and Youth during COVID-19***Additional funding will provide food and snacks while schools are closed*

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TORONTO — The Ontario government is investing \$1 million to improve access to healthy meals and snacks for school-age children and youth during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result of the province-wide school closures, the Student Nutrition Program has had to find new ways to support families experiencing increased food insecurity.

"The well-being of children and families is a top priority for our government," said Todd Smith, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. "Proper nutrition is a foundation for success and we need to do everything we can to ensure students get access to healthy food. I want to thank our many community partners and volunteers working with us to provide students with nutritious meals and snacks during this difficult period."

The Student Nutrition Program is delivered in partnership with local agencies, school boards and community partner organizations and supported by countless volunteers. Over the past few months, the program has been adapted to include new local approaches to meal delivery, including distributing grocery gift cards or farm vouchers, delivering food boxes, meal kits or frozen meals and supporting food banks to provide nutritious items to families with school-age children.

"We said we would do whatever it takes to keep our students safe and healthy as we respond to this unprecedented challenge," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "This investment will ensure students continue to have access to nutritious food to keep them healthy and academically stimulated."

"Student Nutrition Ontario is committed to providing every child in Ontario with an equal opportunity to eat, learn and succeed. We thank the Ontario government for this funding support so that thousands of meals can be delivered while schools are closed now and throughout the summer," said Catherine Parsonage, Chair, Student Nutrition Ontario. "Working together with the province, local partners, donors and volunteers, we are finding new ways to get healthy meals to children in our communities so they can thrive and succeed. The need has never been greater."

## QUICK FACTS

- [Ontario's Student Nutrition Program](#) provides breakfast, snack and lunch programs in schools and other community locations across the province. The program supports learning and healthy development in children and youth by offering nutritious foods and teaching healthy eating habits.
- During the school year, over 800,000 children and youth participate in the 4,500 Student Nutrition Programs that operate in nearly 75 per cent of provincially-funded schools, 80 per cent of which are elementary schools.
- The Student Nutrition Program is delivered by 14 lead agencies. The government provides \$28 million in funding covering a portion of program costs, with additional funding coming from municipalities, corporate donations, industry associations, charities and other local fundraising endeavours.

## LEARN MORE

- [COVID-19 Action Plan for Vulnerable People](#)
- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19

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