



Alberta Budget Submission 2024

Breakfast Club of Canada | January 18, 2024

Overview

Canada is a privileged country, yet a significant percentage of children and youth are not able to access the healthy food items needed to thrive towards success. As children and youth consume a significant proportion of their daily energy intake while in school, schools provide the optimal environment for ensuring that children have access to healthy foods, as well as the promotion of good nutrition, that support optimal growth and development. Yet nearly two million Canadian children and youth – including an estimated 766,000 students in Alberta - or over one in three children - are at risk of going to school on an empty stomach.

According to the [2023 Vital Signs report](#) by Edmonton Community Foundation and Edmonton Social Planning Council, one in five Albertans don't have reliable access to affordable, nutritious food. Studies have revealed that – depending on age and gender – between 25 and 55 percent of students do not eat breakfast regularly. This figure is striking considering the evidence that children and youth who consume breakfast are more likely to have higher nutrient intakes, healthier and adequate diets, enhanced cognitive and academic performance, and improved psychosocial functioning.

Investing in school food programs offers long-term advantages for our society. By supporting the health of future generations, we will be contributing to a brighter and healthier future for the province. Evidence from high-income countries where these programs exist suggests a substantial return of up to seven times in improved human health and economic benefits. From a health standpoint, the [Rockefeller Foundation and the Center for Good Food Purchasing](#) reveal that school meal programs in the U.S. provide nearly \$40 billion in human health and economic benefits, when they only cost \$18.7 billion per year to run.

In [Sweden](#), a nine-year initiative of universal free school lunch in the 1960s resulted in substantial long-term benefits, positively influencing children's economic, educational and health outcomes. This initiative saw a 3% increase in lifetime earnings for participating students and was most significant for economically disadvantaged students. There was a 5.8% increase in lifetime earnings. The benefit-to-cost ratio of Sweden's universal free school lunch program is twice that of the Head Start program in the U.S., emphasizing the program's economic efficiency.

School breakfast programs can be a driver of local economic development as they can encourage the purchase and promotion of local products, provide tools to social economy to enable their growth, in a sustainable manner. Canadian research¹ on this matter estimates that purchasing local ingredients could result in a contribution of \$4.8 billion in domestic food purchases by 2029.

¹ Ruetz, A. T., & Fraser, E. D. G. (2019, March). National School Food Program a short-term opportunity for jobs creation and economic growth. Canadian Science Policy Centre. <https://sciencepolicy.ca/posts/national-school-food-program-a-short-term-opportunity-for-jobs-creation-and-economic-growth-2/>



For over 29 years, Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC) has been supporting the implementation and development of high-impact breakfast programs in schools from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Today, BCC and its school community partners support more than 3,100 school breakfast programs, reaching over 400,000 students every day in Canada, including an Indigenous population reach of 46,000 students. In Alberta, BCC has been delivering programs and providing nutritious food access to children and youth for 18 years. Today BCC reaches a total school population beyond 35,000 students among 295 schools in Alberta, including 12 First Nations schools.

However, the need is still great. Over the last 5 years, 150 AB schools have requested assistance and are waiting for BCC's support and countless more are unaware that such programs are possible.

Breakfast Club of Canada has demonstrated, through its partnership with other Provincial Governments and with the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, that it is uniquely positioned to support the government of Alberta and Ministry of Education in providing immediate assistance to key school communities. BCC has the operational and strategic capabilities to support your government with the development of a comprehensive provincial model. Breakfast Club of Canada is proud to bring:

- 29 years of experience and expertise in school food programming and implementation.
- Operational skills including food and equipment delivery, agent transfer, training and capacity building, youth engagement, evaluation, and reporting.
- A collaborative and flexible approach to student nutrition, helping to position each program to achieve its full potential, based on local community needs.
- Robust relationships with existing private, public, and community stakeholders to successfully raise awareness and education.
- Proven financial accountability and strong capacity to monitor and report results.
- Accreditation by Imagine Canada.

BCC wishes to contribute, at all levels, to increasing food sovereignty, while aiding local purchasing, sustainable development, and food literacy. It should be noted that BCC partners with various Indigenous communities to facilitate discussions around self-determined and culturally appropriate school breakfast programming. Our comprehensive capacity-building approach provides our school and community partners with personalized support to ensure that they have the tools to effectively operate. BCC can create a proactive, adaptive, and trust-based relationship with school communities; act as a supporter and an ally of school communities; and adapt support according to specific local needs.

Priorities for 2024 – 2027

Recommendation 1 – Alleviate need in Breakfast Club of Canada’s current network in Alberta with an investment of \$30.3 million over three years to provide 38,000 students with access to nutritious foods.

Breakfast Club of Canada is currently able to invest an average of \$0.32 cents per breakfast, an annual total of \$2.1M into the existing 295 programs² in the province.

According to our 2023 national school network survey, in Alberta, 57% of respondents expressed concerns about facing a funding shortfall in the upcoming school year.

We recommend that Alberta supports bridging the gap to leverage this investment and ensure all youth are properly fed for learning by:

- Helping BCC increase the support provided to the 295 schools communities currently supported and expand the daily support to cover the total program costs across a full 180-day school year.
- Strengthening BCC’s capacity to offer a comprehensive school nutrition experience allowing schools and communities to access support for infrastructure upgrades, a dedicated Club coordinator to support the growth and development of school nutrition programs, a regional community of practice supported by open houses and in-person seminars, and support for inclusive programming including support for cultural food practices.

Recommendation 2 – Support to new schools with an investment of \$10.3 million over three years to ultimately reach 18,500 new students with access to nutritious breakfasts.

- Help BCC provide guidance and resources to support 90 additional schools with the implementation of quality sustainable school food programs over 3 years.
- Facilitate the development of a community of practice across the entire province to support the development of common strategies and foster a stronger relationship between communities for improved knowledge sharing. Connecting community leaders, nutrition experts, and program stakeholders increases the sustainability of student nutrition programs and helps develop programs that better suit the specific needs of Alberta communities.

² A list of supported schools is available upon request.

Financial Projections

Projected operating costs (in thousands of dollars)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	Total 3 years
Support costs - current programs	11,812	12,767	13,736	38,315
Contributions from BCC donors	(2,556)	(2,684)	(2,791)	(8,031)
	9,256	10,083	10,945	30,284
New openings - 30 programs	1,020	2,142	2,228	10,275
New openings - 30 programs	-	1,071	2,228	
New openings - 30 programs	-	-	1,114	
Equipment for new openings	150	158	164	
Net Alberta Contribution	10,426	13,454	16,679	40,559

Assumptions

- BCC current financial support amounts to approximately \$0.32 per student per day on average.
- As the average value of a breakfast for a student in Alberta is not yet confirmed, for calculation purposes, a theoretical average amount of nearly \$2 per day was estimated.
- Additional support costs were estimated at \$1.68 per student per day on average.
- 180 school days.
- Average 3% growth in breakfast attendance (contingent of various socio-economic fluctuations).
- Average attendance of 200 students per new school with estimate attendance of 52% of school population.
- Degressive inflation factor (from 5% to 4%).
- An amount of \$5,000 per new school onboarded for equipment purposes.
- Onboarding new schools at a pace of 30 schools per year.



Disclaimers

- BCC did not conduct a full review of specific needs and gaps in current supported schools. Some schools may already receive additional contributions from other sources. This may impact these preliminary projections.
- BCC list of schools to be onboarded is continuously under review and address only the schools who reached out to BCC. We would like to work on onboarding more schools across the province if funds are secured in that sense.
- The model assumed that the type of support provided to schools would be through “financial support”. Should a “food procurement support” approach be used, program cost projections would be different and could be beneficial to schools and communities.
- A coordinated annual assessment is required to ensure that BCC’s contribution remains accurate based on program needs and economic fluctuations. BCC’s strong capacity to monitor and report results will help optimize the impact of each dollar invested by the Ministry. Any under-utilization of funds, if identified as permanent after annual reviews, could be used by the Ministry to meet any gaps identified by the communities and the stakeholders during the project.

Conclusion

There has never been a more critical time in Canadian history to invest in the health, well-being and learning of our children and youth. With the current affordability and food insecurity crisis, we must ensure that all children and youth have access to the nutritious food they need to thrive, especially the most vulnerable ones.

Leveraging the Club’s expertise in this realm as a trusted partner will allow the Ministry of Education to quickly and efficiently support priority needs while working on the development and implementation of a sustainable provincial program.

We thank the Government of Alberta for their consideration of our proposal and invite you to reach out to discuss our submission in greater detail.

Contact

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