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NOVA SCOTIANS ARE SPEAKING UP FOR SCHOOL FOOD

K' JIPUKTUK (HALIFAX) – Canada is the only G7 country that doesn't have a national school food program. But, a new campaign is looking to change that.

#SpeakUp4SchoolFood is a Nova Scotia campaign building on a national initiative asking for a federal investment in healthy food in schools. A cost-shared, universal school food program could ensure all students in Canada have access to a healthy breakfast, snack, and/or lunch at school.

Satya Ramen, Senior Coordinator, Community Food at the Ecology Action Centre says it's a program we can't afford not to implement.

"When students have access to healthy food during the school day, it has a proven positive impact on academic achievement and class behavior," Ramen says, "And the return on investment for school food programs ranges from \$3 - \$10 for every dollar invested."

Margo Riebe-Butt, Executive Director of Nourish Nova Scotia, says that, approximately 25% of Nova Scotia's 118,000 students access breakfast programs on any given day. "Although all programs are universally accessible, the uptake varies from school to school," Riebe-Butt says.

Riebe-Butt also says that in most cases, only a breakfast program is offered. "Only a few schools have a free lunch program, and many more need help to offer healthy lunch and snack programs," she says.

Ramen says that funding is at the heart of the problem.

"Right now, these programs rely on patchwork funding, including support from the provincial government, charities, community groups, private or corporate donations, and a lot of parental and volunteer support," Ramen says. "A national School Food program could help ensure we provide good food to all kids consistently."

According to Riebe-Butt, there are many reasons students come to school hungry, including long commutes, early morning practices, not being hungry when they wake up, busy family routines, and household food insecurity.

"Students spend most of their day in school. Our schools provide a perfect opportunity to offer nourishment, and support healthy eating patterns, regardless of household income," Riebe-Butt says.

The #SpeakUp4SchoolFood campaign is an opportunity for parents, students, and other concerned citizens to add their voice to a Canada-wide movement for a national School Food Program. The



House of Commons e-petition has already garnered more than 2,600 signatures. More than 20 per cent of the signatures are from Nova Scotians.

Find a link to the petition, order postcards to send to your local representatives, and discover more ways to take action at nourishns.ca/speakup

The Ecology Action Centre is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia taking leadership on critical issues from biodiversity to climate change to environmental justice.

Nourish Nova Scotia is a registered charity and the provincial partner for school-based healthy eating programs—providing support, leadership, advocacy and education. Nourish receives core funding from the Province of NS along with private and corporate donations.

#SpeakUp4SchoolFood is part of the Canada-wide campaign, #NourishKidsNow. Nourish Kids Now is a grassroots campaign of the Coalition for Healthy School Food network that is calling on the federal government to make a cost-shared investment in healthy, universal school food programs, which would build on the investments of our provinces, municipalities and communities.

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