



The State of School Food Programming in Canada 2023/24

Pre-National School Food Program Baseline

Amberley T. Ruetz & Kirsti Tasala



Executive Summary

Until 2024, Canada was one of a few affluent countries without a national school food program (SFP) or policy, relying instead on a fragmented patchwork of municipal, provincial/territorial, and NGO-led initiatives. In April 2024, the Government of Canada announced it would create a National School Food Program. With an investment of \$1 billion over five years in Budget 2024, the Program aims to provide meals to 400,000 additional children each year, expanding beyond those already served by existing SFPs. Canada's new National School Food Program is also supported by the 2024 National School Food Policy and a \$20.2-million federal School Food Infrastructure Fund.

This report establishes a baseline of School Food Program (SFP) operations for the 2023/24 school year, the year prior to the introduction of new federal funding and the launch of Canada's National School Food Program. It serves as a reference point for measuring progress as the national program is implemented and evolves.

To assess the state of school food programming in Canada for 2023/24, this report follows the methodology used in Ruetz and McKenna's 2018/19 Canadian School Food Program Survey: Canada's first comprehensive survey of SFPs. The Canadian School Food Program Survey collects voluntary, self-reported data from provincial and territorial governments about the SFPs they partially fund alongside NGOs. In 2023/24, SFPs were most commonly funded by provincial Ministries of Education, followed by Health, Social Services, and provincial Indigenous-related ministries, and by 2024/25, every Ministry of Education contributed funding to SFPs—except Ontario.

In 2023/24, provincial and territorial governments collectively contributed over \$234 million, partially funding a minimum of 62% of JK-12 schools, partially funding the operation of 10,554 SFPs (free meals and snacks or pay-what-you-can lunches) serving at least 26% of elementary and secondary students (>1.3 million students) in Canada (limited data from some jurisdictions; student participation data unavailable from NB, NU, SK, YK and NWT and First Nation student participation data in ON). Nearly two-thirds (62%) of schools offered at least one food program in 2023/24, up from one-third (at least 35%) of schools in 2018/19 (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021). The number of students participating grew more gradually, rising from roughly 1 in 5 students (>21%) in 2018/19 to 1 in 4 students (>26%) in 2023/24, equating to an additional 293,690 students.

In 2023/24, breakfast or mid-morning meals were the most commonly offered at no cost to students, followed by lunch and then snacks. Two provinces—Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island—operated 'pay-what-you-can' lunch programs, a model that has been growing in prevalence across the country with a concentration in Eastern Canada. Some noteworthy provincial/territorial SFP practices include a designated SFP infrastructure fund in British Columbia, increased availability of country foods in Nunavut, and the creation of a cross-sector School Food Working Group in the Yukon.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
INTRODUCTION	4
Figure 1: National School Food Program \$1 billion investment in April 2024	4
Canada's National School Food Program in Budget 2024	4
Implementing Canada's National School Food Program	5
METHODS	6
Glossary	7
DISCUSSION	9
Program Types and Payment Models	9
Program Prevalence	9
School Participation	10
Figure 2: Percentage of schools with SFPs in 2023/24	10
Figure 3: School Food Programs in 2023/24	11
Student Participation	12
Figure 4: Percentage of Student Participation in SFPs in 2023/24	12
SFP Government Funding	13
Figure 5: Total P/T Government Funding supporting SFPs in 2023/24: >\$234 Million	13
SFP Governance	14
Table 1: 2023/24 Key SFP Implementation Features by province and territory	15
Table 2: 2023/24 Government Funding supporting SFPs, highest to lowest	18
Monitoring Practices	19
Alberta	20
British Columbia	22
Manitoba	26
New Brunswick	30
Newfoundland and Labrador	32
Nova Scotia	36
Nunavut	40
Northwest Territories	42
Ontario	44
Prince Edward Island	48
Quebec	50
Saskatchewan	54
Yukon	56
Appendix A: School Food Policies, Guidelines and other Guidance Documents	59

Citation: Ruetz, A.T. & Tasala, K. (2025, May). The State of School Food Programming in Canada 2023/24: Pre-National School Food Program Baseline. A Report Prepared by Ruetz Consulting for the Government of Canada, funded by the Arrell Family Foundation.

INTRODUCTION

Until 2024, Canada was one of the few affluent countries without a national school food program (SFP) or policy, relying instead on a fragmented patchwork of municipal, provincial/territorial, and NGO-led initiatives. Inequitable and overall low levels of government funding coupled with reliance on volunteer labour to purchase, prepare, and serve food and sometimes deliver other program components, has posed significant challenges to sustaining SFPs over the years ([Ruetz and McKenna, 2021](#)).

On April 1, 2024, the Government of Canada announced it would create a National School Food Program in partnership with the provinces, territories and Indigenous peoples. The Program's goal is "that all children and youth in Canada have access to nutritious food at school, in an inclusive, non-stigmatizing environment that fosters healthy practices, while strengthening connections with local food systems, the environment and culture" ([ESDC, 2024](#)).

Figure 1: National School Food Program \$1 billion investment in April 2024



Canada's National School Food Program in Budget 2024

Canada's National School Food Program aims to provide meals to 400,000 additional children each year, expanding beyond those already served by existing school food programs. As noted in the Federal Budget, "Budget 2024 announces the creation of a National School Food Program, which will provide \$1 billion over five years to Employment and Social Development Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Indigenous Services Canada, starting in 2024-25, to work with provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners to expand access to school food programs. This includes investments for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities as well as Self-Governing and Modern Treaty Partners, many of whom have some of the highest rates of food insecurity in Canada" ([Budget 2024, p. 111](#)).

The Program's 5-year Budget is outlined per fiscal year (April-March), allocating \$79 million in the 2024-25 fiscal year, \$201 million in 2025-26, \$218 million in 2026-27, \$241 million in 2027-28 and \$261 million in 2028-29 ([Budget 2024, p. 134](#)).

In addition, up to \$20.2-million is being allocated to a federal [School Food Infrastructure Fund](#): "as part of the government's work to end food insecurity, Budget 2024 proposes to provide \$62.9 million over three years, starting in 2024-25, to renew and expand the Local Food Infrastructure Fund to support community organizations across Canada to invest in local food infrastructure, with priority to be given to Indigenous and Black communities, along with other equity-deserving groups. Part of the expansion will support community organizations to improve infrastructure for school food programs as a complement to the National School Food Program ([Budget 2024, p. 141](#)).

Implementing Canada's National School Food Program

The Program announcement was followed by the release of Canada's first [National School Food Policy](#) in June 2024. The Policy's Principles align with the Coalition's [8 Guiding Principles](#) and recommendations, which were developed based on research and best practices from Canada and around the world:

- **Accessible:** Children and youth can participate in school food programs without stigma or barriers.
- **Health promoting:** Food served is consistent with healthy eating recommendations in Canada's Food Guide, and children and youth are supported in developing healthful food-related behaviours and attitudes, as well as food and nutrition knowledge and skills.
- **Inclusive:** Children and youth have access to culturally appropriate, relevant and inclusive school food programs that engage students and the broader community.
- **Flexible:** Food is locally sourced where possible and reflective of local and regional circumstances.
- **Sustainable:** Programs are designed to be environmentally sustainable, and adequately resourced.
- **Accountable:** Consistent and transparent monitoring and evaluation to ensure that programs are achieving policy objectives.

In the fall of 2024, four provinces - [Newfoundland and Labrador \(NL\)](#), [Manitoba \(MB\)](#), [Ontario \(ON\)](#) and [Prince Edward Island \(PEI\)](#) signed 3-year agreements with the federal government to expand and enhance school food programming in their provinces.¹ By March 10, 2025, all the remaining agreements were signed with [New Brunswick \(NB\)](#), [Nova Scotia \(NS\)](#), [Nunavut \(NU\)](#), the [Northwest Territories \(NWT\)](#) and [Quebec \(QC\)](#), [British Columbia \(BC\)](#), [Yukon \(YK\)](#), [Saskatchewan \(SK\)](#) and [Alberta \(AB\)](#).

¹ "In Budget 2024, the government proposes to provide a statutory appropriation authority in the Budget Implementation Act that would enable the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to sign bilateral agreements and transfer funding to provinces and territories to support National School Food programming for the 2024-2025 school year." This means that the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development will be able to quickly move forward with negotiating agreements with the Provinces and Territories, similar to the Early Learning and Child Care Agreements ([Budget 2024, p. 405](#)).

METHODS

The purpose of this report is to establish a baseline of School Food Program (SFP) operations for the 2023/24 school year, prior to the introduction of new federal funding and the launch of Canada's National School Food Program. This report serves as a reference point for measuring progress as the national program is implemented and evolves.

To assess the state of school food programming in 2023/24, this report follows the methodology used in Ruetz and McKenna's 2018/19 Canadian School Food Program Survey: Canada's first comprehensive survey of SFPs (see [Ruetz and McKenna, 2021](#) for details). The Canadian School Food Program Survey collects voluntary, self-reported data from provincial and territorial governments about the SFPs they partially fund alongside NGOs. The Canadian School Food Program Survey reports data to the Government of Canada and international organizations including the Global Child Nutrition Program, the World Food Programme and the School Meals Coalition (see Canada's country reports for [2018/19](#) and [2022/23](#) on the Global Child Nutrition Foundation's website).

Survey data was collected March–November 2024 from 20 unique provincial/territorial (P/T) government ministries and departments overseeing SFPs across Canada. Government survey respondents reviewed their submitted data and respective P/T profile for accuracy. The Alberta (AB) and Quebec (QC) provincial governments declined to participate in the 2023/24 Canadian School Food Program Survey. Data from publicly available reports was used in place of AB's survey response. For QC, data was collected and analyzed by The Collectif Québécois (the QC Chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food) and reflects a tally of schools with one or more SFPs. Yukon data was obtained from the two territory-wide SFPs who administer territorial funding and government press releases ([Yukon Government, 2024](#)).

MB and YK data includes First Nation (FN) students and schools, ON includes FN schools but FN student participation was unavailable, and Indigenous student and school participation in BC is unavailable as Indigenous Services Canada did not participate in the survey due to limited data availability. Where available, Indigenous student and school participation data from Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC) was added to offer insight but was not tallied into provincial/territorial totals as the Canadian School Food Program Survey is a survey of government funders, and had the potential to double count schools and students.

The Canadian School Food Program Survey and this report is guided by the following Glossary.



Oakridge Public School,
Mississauga, ON

Glossary

Average Daily Participation: Not defined consistently or at all in some jurisdictions in Canada; however, the clearest definition is from Ontario: “The number of meals served per month divided by the number of program operating days per month” ([Ontario Student Nutrition Program Guidelines, 2018: 21](#)). Future work should consult provinces and territories to establish and utilize a common definition and tracking tools.

Designated SFP Funding: Funding specifically designated to be used for the operation of school food programs (see definition below), excluding standalone food literacy programming.

Indigenous: Persons of First Nations, Inuit and/or Métis origin. Indigenous SFP participation data in this report reflects First Nations and/or Inuit populations, on- and off-reserve.

Non-designated SFP funding: Funding not designated for the operation of school food programs (see definition above). This may include general health or education funding that schools/school boards/communities decide to allocate towards SFPs.

Number of school food PROGRAMS: the total number of individual school-based food programs across all schools in a province or territory. This is the tally of all breakfast, snack, and/or lunch programs that operate in schools during the school day, even if multiple programs operated in a single school (e.g., a breakfast and snack program at 1 school would be counted as 2 programs).

Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC): A school food program (SFP) payment model where caregivers/students can choose the amount they pay but families are encouraged to pay if they are able to help those who can not. For some programs, one can select to pay the full meal cost, a portion of their choice, or nothing, while others require a minimum payment (e.g., \$1), in La Cantine pour tous in Quebec for example. The amount paid is kept confidential from school and lunch program staff; there is no need to explain why the amount chosen was selected. Some programs utilize an online system to order meals in advance, while others are trialing at-till payment options for students. This model, unique to Canada, originated in Newfoundland in 1989 with the founding of the School Lunch Association.

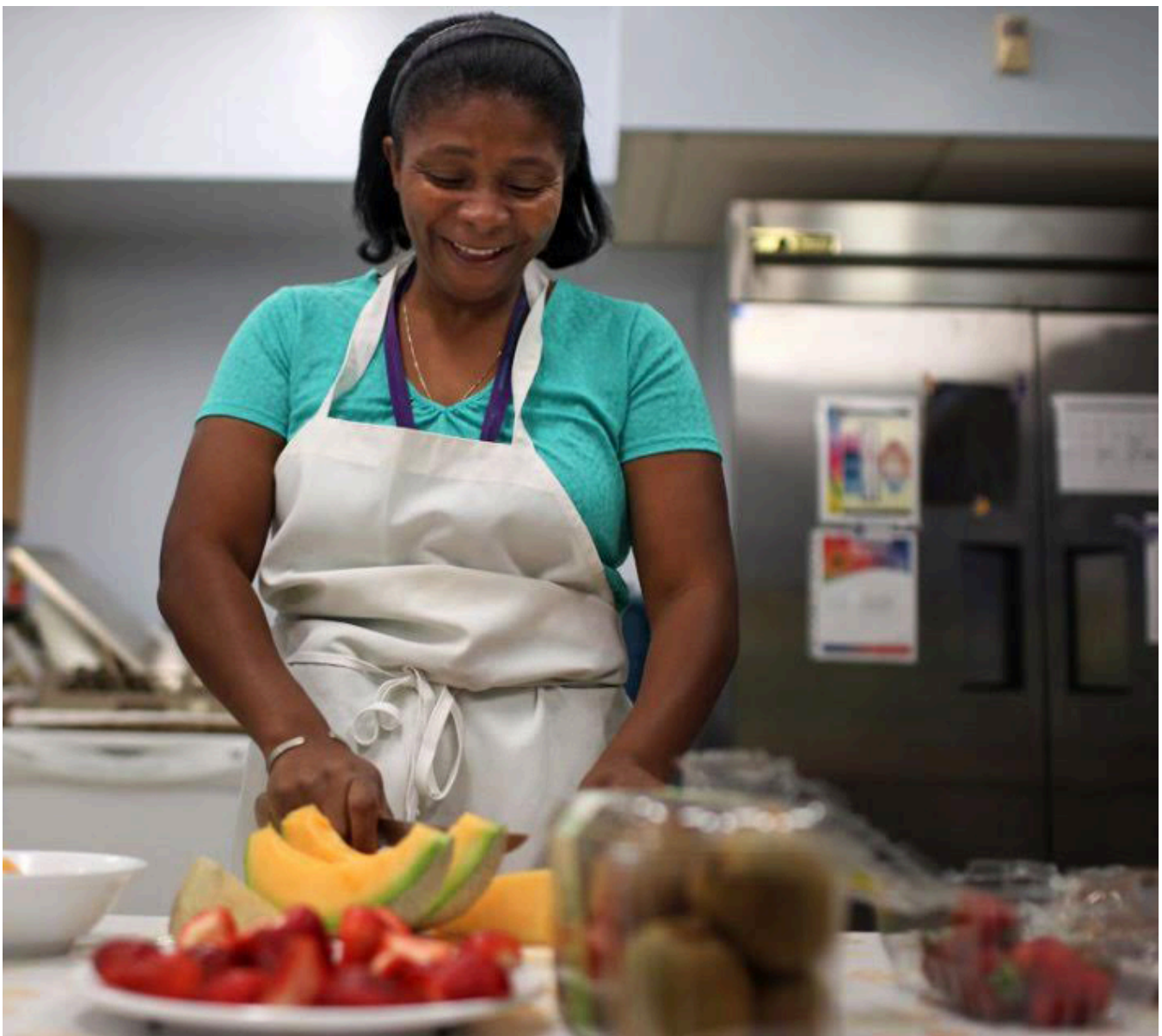
School food program (SFP): a school food program is (1) school-based breakfasts, mid-morning meals, snacks, and/or lunches offered; (2) at no- or minimal cost; (3) to JK -12 students; (4) during or just prior to the school day; (5) consistently over the majority of the school year. SFPs do not include full cost cafeteria programs; stand-alone food literacy programs (e.g., cooking or gardening programs); school fundraisers (e.g., pizza days; bake sales); after school food programs; or food programs serving pre-primary/preschool children (e.g., daycares and early years centres) (definition expanded from [Ruetz and McKenna, 2021](#)).

SCHOOL sites: the total number of publicly-funded schools that operate one or more school food programs. The number of school sites is usually less than the number of school food PROGRAMS as there are often multiple programs at a single school site. This excludes daycare and community site locations.

Unique STUDENTS participating: The total number of students that participated in school food programs in a given school year. The number of students participating does NOT equate to the number of students that had access to the program (i.e. the whole school population).

Universal access: “‘universally accessible programs’ means that all children and youth are eligible to participate... [but it] does not mean that every child or youth enrolled in a school is served by the SNP [student nutrition program]” (Government of Ontario, 2018, p. 5). See [Ruetz & McKenna, 2021](#) page 93-94 for further discussion of different understandings of ‘universal.’

Universal participation: free meals for every student enrolled in school, irrespective of family income like in Sweden and Finland where universal participation is the norm (Patterson & Schäfer Elinder, 2015; Tikkanen, 2011). New York City and Chicago follow this approach, and now California is the first U.S. state to adopt free universal school meals (breakfast and lunch), made available without any paperwork or eligibility requirements (Bill 364: Free School Meals for All Act, 2021). See [Ruetz & McKenna, 2021](#) page 93-94 for further discussion of different understandings of ‘universal.’



Herma Brown, Price Edward Public School, Windsor, ON

DISCUSSION

Program Types and Payment Models

In 2023/24, breakfast or mid-morning meals were the most commonly offered at no cost to students, followed by lunch and then snacks. Breakfast was most common as the meal type in six provinces and territories (QC, NB, NL, NS, ON, NU), and in addition BC, PEI, YK and MB has multiple meal types as most common: in BC lunch and snack were the most common, in PEI breakfast and PWYC lunch was available in every school, in the YK's Indigenous-led SFP all schools equally offered breakfast, lunch and morning and afternoon snacks, and in MB breakfast and snacks were the most common (see Table 1; page 15-17). The YK's Indigenous-led school food program offers a unique wrap-around service model that integrates school meals with other food-related activities, education, and health and well-being services, resulting in a holistic, community-oriented approach to food.

PWYC lunch programs are growing in popularity in Canada, with concentration in the Atlantic provinces (e.g., PEI & NL) in addition to some representation in BC (e.g., [LunchLAB in Vancouver, see program case study for more information, Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 15-18](#)). In 2024/25, the Atlantic provinces (NS, NL, PEI) offered both province-wide breakfast programs at no cost in addition to PWYC lunch programs. PWYC funding varies from 80% of provincial funding and 20% parental contributions in PEI to 17% of provincial funding and 75% of parental contributions in NL in 2022/23² ([Ruetz et al., 2024. School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases](#)).

NB was the last jurisdiction in Canada to contribute provincial funding to long-standing SFPs in the province, which largely supported no-cost breakfast programs through centralized NGO food procurement and delivery, while other NGOs not funded by the government supported additional SFPs in 2023/24. New Brunswick is expected to be the next province to offer both PWYC Lunch in addition to a no-cost breakfast starting September 2025.

Program Prevalence

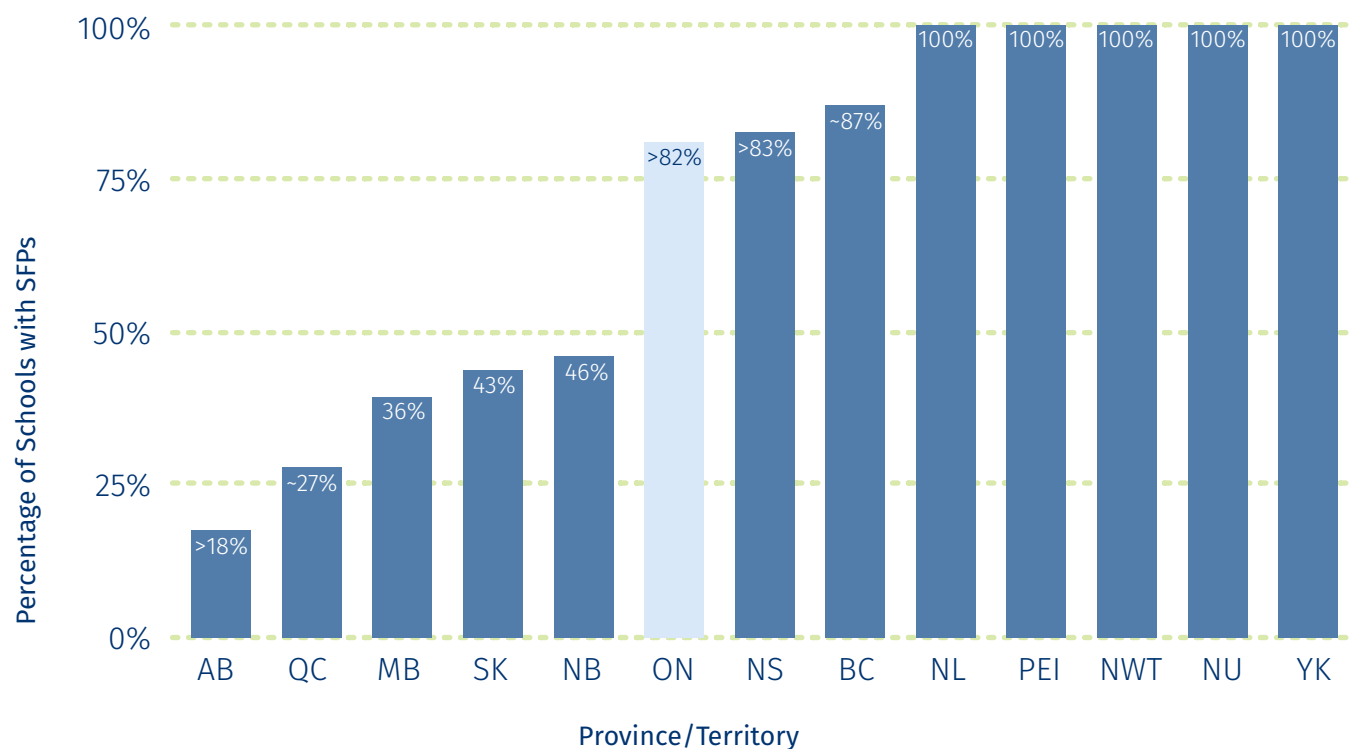
In 2023/24, there were at least 10,554 SFPs in Canada compared to 6,408 in 2018/19; a 65% increase in the total number of SFPs over 5 years. Notable expansions since 2018/19 include the establishment of a provincial SFP in NB, the creation of YK's territory-wide SFP serving multiple meal types, as well as BC's provincial data availability for the 2023/24 survey round helps account for this significant increase.

² In addition to 4% from fundraising and donations and 3% from a wage subsidy.

School Participation

At least 8,097 schools offered SFPs funded entirely or partially by P/T governments in 2023-24.³ This equates to at least >62% of schools in Canada offering one or more SFPs, a significant increase from >35% (5371 schools) in 2018/19 (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021). Within provinces and territories, the percentage of schools that have SFPs varies from 18% in Alberta to 100% of schools in all three of the territories as well as PEI and NL (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of schools with SFPs in 2023/24



LEGEND



All data available



Partial data available

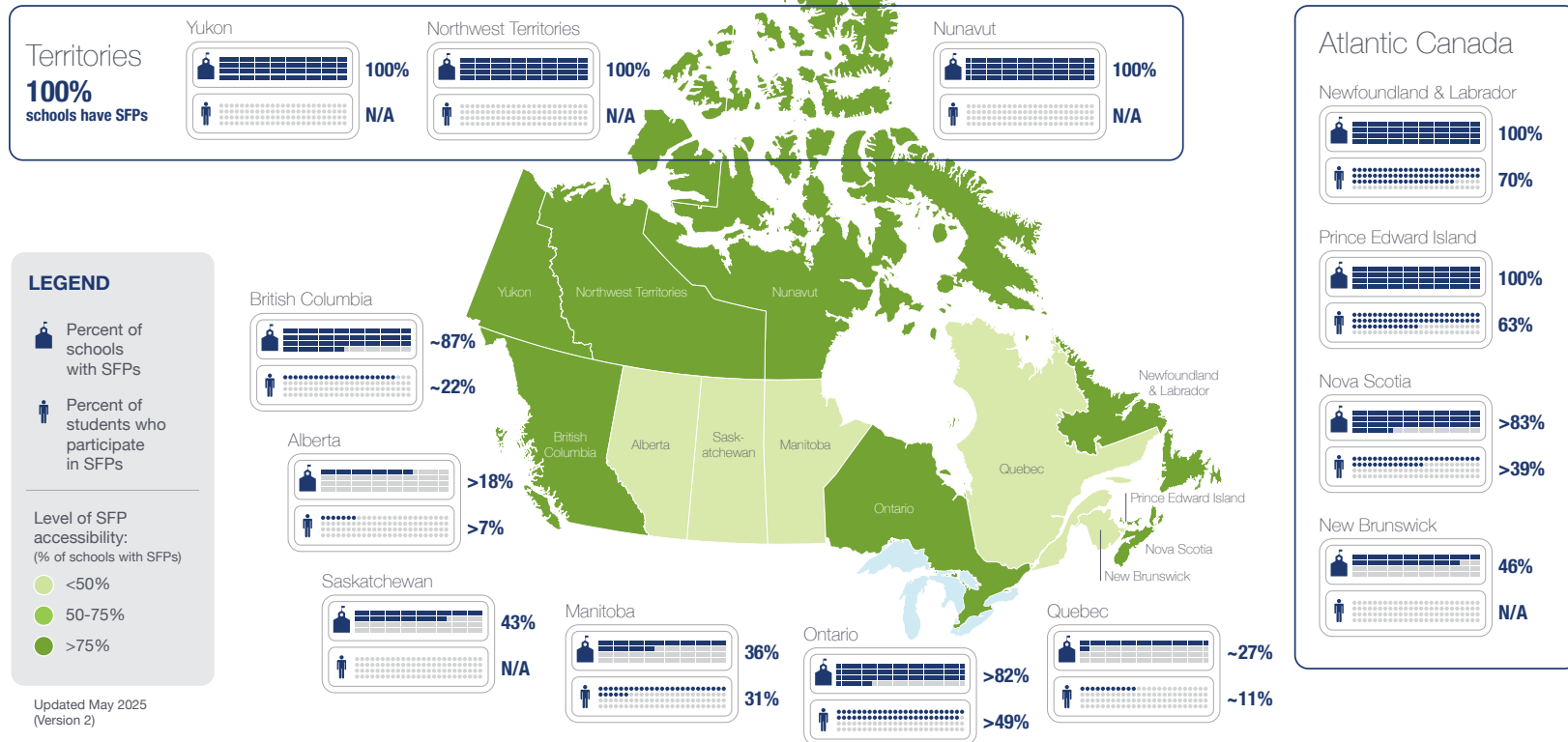
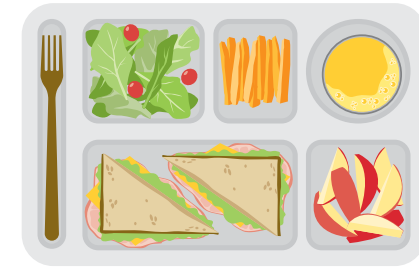
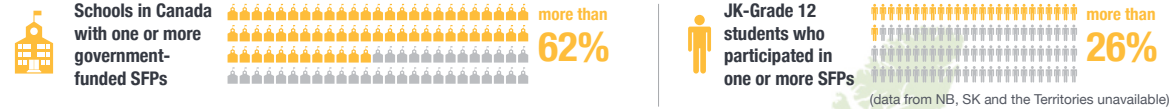
(see P/T profile for details)

³ 13,037 schools tallied across provinces and territories in Canada based on school data received from Ministries of Education. Be advised that this denominator of total schools is lower than the total number of schools used in Ruetz & McKenna, 2021: 15,500 JK-12 schools in Canada (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2019). A 2023/24 figure for schools in Canada was not available from the Council of Ministers of Education Canada.

Figure 3:

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMS IN 2023/24

School food programs (SFPs) have operated for decades in Canada, but access varies across the country. In April 2024, the Government of Canada announced a National School Food Program, with a \$1 billion investment over five years to provide meals to an additional 400,000 children annually. Although this falls short of program for all JK–Grade 12 students, the federal and new provincial and territorial investments move Canada closer to achieving a universal program.



THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION

WHAT'S NEXT?

The Government of Canada aims to finalize agreements with all provinces and territories by the end of the first year of the program in 2024-25. Agriculture and Agrifood Canada is also supporting not-for-profit organizations to invest in infrastructure and equipment to support SFPs through the \$20.2 million School Food Infrastructure Fund. Going forward, sustained long-term commitments are needed to achieve a universal SFP for all students, and expand the number of meals served.

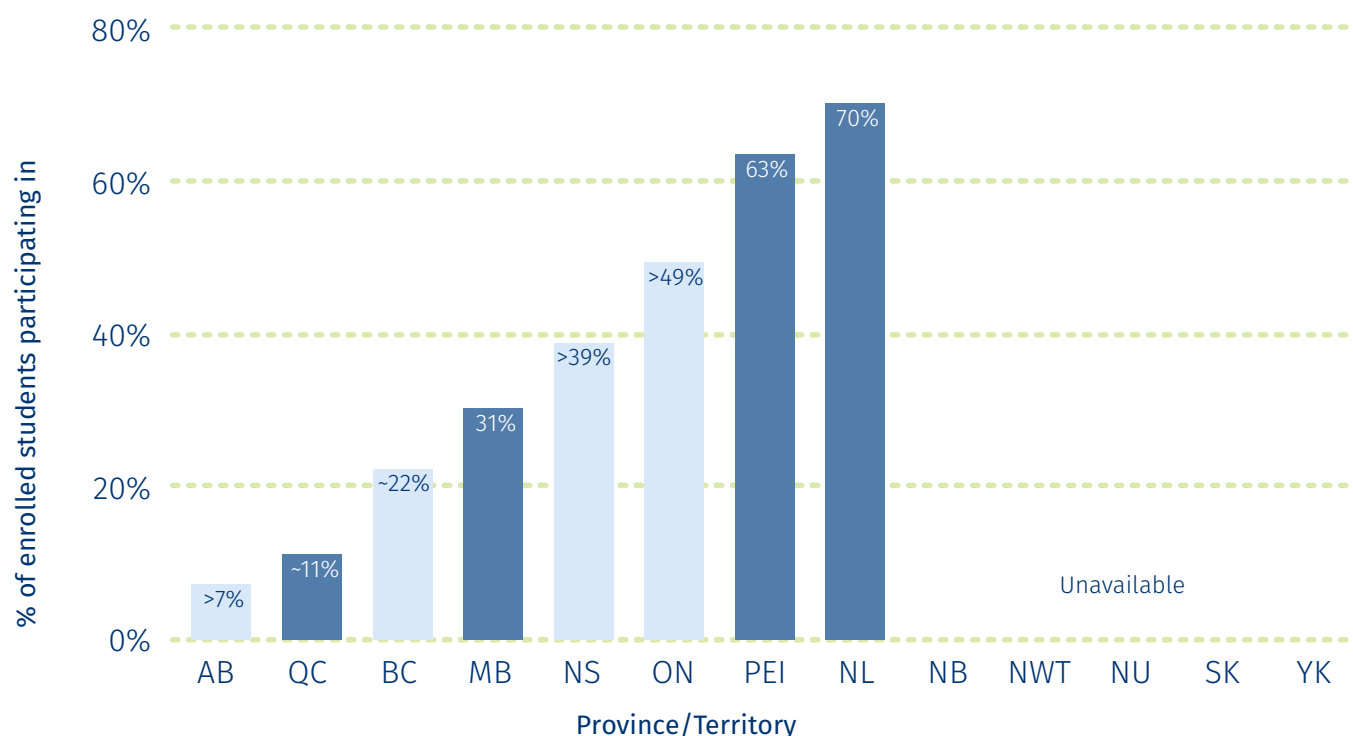
Source: Ruetz, Amberley T. (2025). The 2023/24 Canadian School Food Program Survey. Funded by the Arrell Family Foundation.

Student Participation

At least 26% of students (>1,312,013 students) in Canada participated in one or more SFPs in 2023/24 (student participation data from NB, NU, SK, YK and NWT was not available and First Nation student participation data in ON was not available).⁴ This is an increase from 2018/19 (Ruetz & McKenna, 2021), when at least >21% of students (1,018,323 students⁵) participated in a SFP in Canada; an increase of reaching an additional 293,690 students over the last 5 years.

When each province and territory is considered individually, the participation of JK-12 students SFPs range from 7% in AB to 70% in NL⁶ (see Figure 4). The participation rates in Figure 4 below reflect students participating in one or more SFPs. As student participation is highest in breakfast programs, the rates primarily reflect breakfast program participation to avoid double-counting students.

Figure 4: Percentage of Student Participation in SFPs in 2023/24



LEGEND

- All data available
- Partial data available
(see P/T profile for details)

⁴ Calculated based on 5,055,255 students enrolled in K-12 schools in 2022/23 (2023/24 unavailable at time of publication). This figure includes students enrolled in regular programs for youth in publicly funded elementary and secondary schools operated by school boards or the province/territory (Statistics Canada, 2022/23).

⁵ 2018/19 student participation: data from SK, BC and NT was not available and only partial data from QC and ON was available.

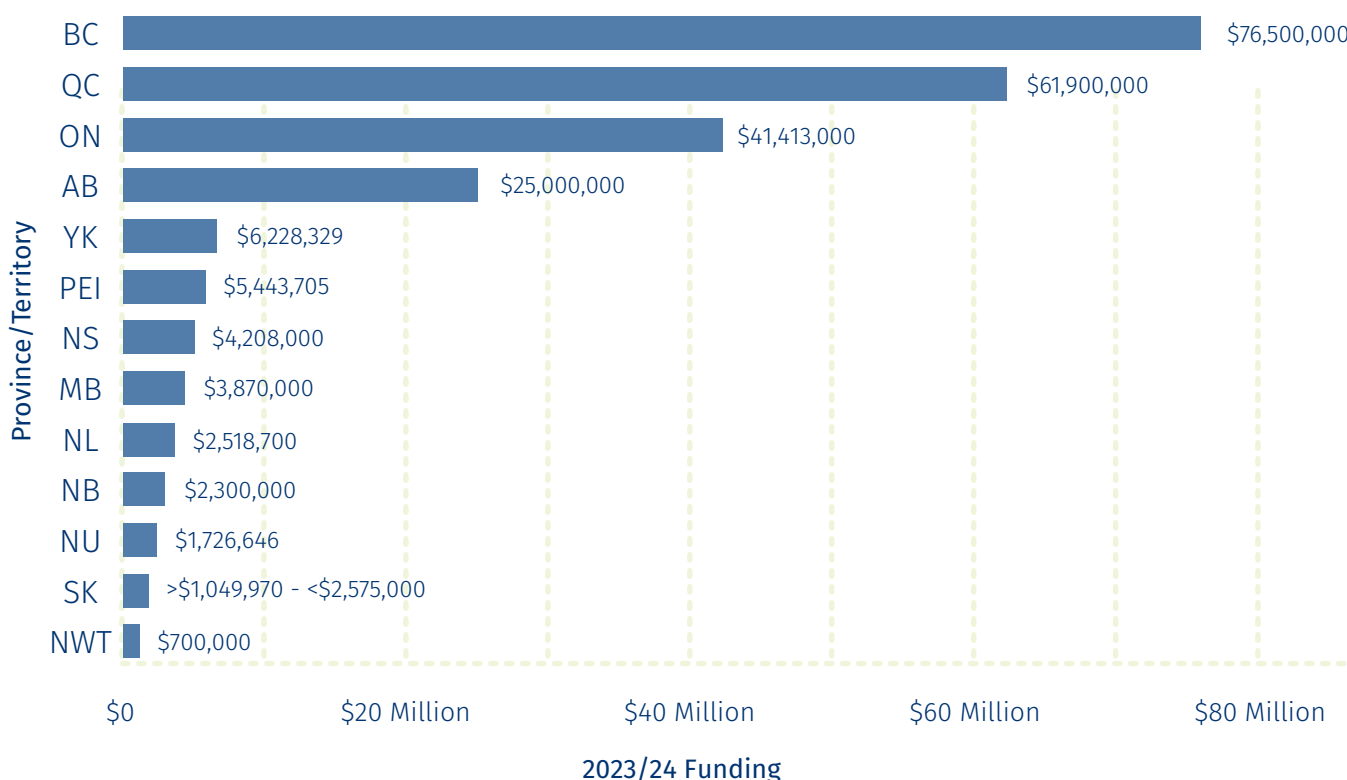
⁶ To avoid double counting of students participating in SFPs, NL's SFP participation rate is reflective of student participation in the province-wide breakfast program, which is the largest program in the province overlapping in schools that also participate in the PWYC lunch program concentrated in the St. John area.

SFP Government Funding

In 2023/24, all provincial and territorial governments contributed some level of funding to SFPs, with additional support raised by numerous NGOs, charities, and schools. However, varying levels of government funding has resulted in unequal access to SFPs across Canada. As a result, many programs remain heavily reliant on external funding and volunteer labour.

Despite these disparities, overall provincial and territorial funding for SFPs more than doubled over the past five years—rising 151% from \$93 million in 2018/19 to over \$234 million in 2023/24 (see Figure 5).⁷

Figure 5: Total P/T Government Funding supporting SFPs in 2023/24: >\$234 Million



In some provinces, government funding was restricted to food purchases (e.g., ON, MB, PEI Breakfast, NL Breakfast). BC has a designated fund for SFP infrastructure, NWT and YK have designated funds for SFP staff, while other P/T government funders allow a portion of SFP funds to be used for SFP staff (e.g., BC, NL, NS, NU). Despite these supports, most SFPs across Canada continued to rely heavily on volunteer labour for food procurement, preparation, and service in 2023/24.

Some government funders provided additional funding for school-based literacy activities but these were not included in the totals above because as standalone programs they did not meet the definition of a SFP (e.g., BC, NU, NWT, QC)—see P/T summaries for more detail.

⁷ In the Yukon, the YFNED's Nutrition program receives funding from the federal department of Indigenous Services Canada via Jordan's Principle, and has been included in this report due to its unique territory-wide program.

SFP Governance:

SFP funding and oversight responsibilities are distributed across different P/T departments across the country. In 2023/24, SFPs were most commonly funded by provincial Ministries of Education (9 P/Ts), followed by Health (7 P/Ts), Social Services (2 P/Ts: PEI and ON), and provincial Indigenous-related ministries (2 P/Ts: MB & QC), see Table 1.⁸

In 2024/25, three provinces transferred primary funding and administrative responsibility to Ministries of Education for a total of 12 Ministries of Education funding SFPs, either as the primary funder or supporting funder sharing allocations with other ministries.⁹

- Nova Scotia transferred responsibility for SFP funding from Health to Education.
- Manitoba transferred responsibility for SFP funding from Health (and Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations) to Education (and Municipal and Northern Relations) in 2024/25.
- Newfoundland restructured their provincial SFP in April 2024, transferring it from the Health and Community Services to Education.

Ontario was the only province without dedicated funding for SFPs coming from the Department of Education. Instead, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health fund SFPs in the province via NGOs. Like ON, several P/Ts multiple departments are responsible for funding and coordinating one or more SFP (e.g., ON, PEI, YK, NU, NWT), while in other P/Ts a single department is funding one or more SFPs (e.g., AB, NB, NL, SK). These differences raise several questions: How do different governance structures impact the delivery and reach of SFPs within P/Ts? How will the various departments (education, health, social services, etc.) coordinate nationally, considering potential differences in their priorities and objectives. For example, some departments may prioritize poverty alleviation, while others focus on nutrition. **A national coordinating mechanism - like a National School Food Advisory Council or National Research Centre - may help align and achieve common program objectives.**

In 2023/24, no provincial ministries of agriculture directly funded SFPs; however, QC and BC did indirectly fund complementary initiatives that support the SFPs, such as food literacy programming and access to commercial kitchen space at provincial food hubs respectively.¹⁰ The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food is also supporting school districts to work towards purchasing 30% BC-grown food, connect with BC food producers and processors, and enhance local food literacy via the Feed BC program ([FeedBC, 2024](#)).

Collaborations with agricultural organizations are also a notable feature in some provinces which other jurisdictions could adopt to support their SFPs. Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association receives funding from the Ministry of Health to deliver produce to schools in Northern Ontario which includes approximately 60% of produce grown in the province. School milk programs, while not covered in the scope of this research as single commodity initiatives, are also running across the country; however, it is unclear what

⁸ These tallies represent unique provincial/territorial departments/ministries even if one ministry funds multiple SFPs and excludes tallying Indigenous Services Canada as a federal agency. In 2023/24, there were 20 unique provincial/territorial departments/ministries funding SFPs in addition to Indigenous Services Canada funded programs in the territories (funding included in this report) and BC (funding not included in report; did not participate).

⁹ In NU, Health is the main funder and Education is a minor funder. In YK, Indigenous Services Canada is the main funder and Education is a minor funder.

¹⁰ The Ministry of Agriculture and Food also funds 14 regional NGO food hubs (BCFood Hub Network, n.d.). These food hubs can indirectly support SFPs by offering commercial kitchen space, equipment, storage, and distribution, with food sourced externally and staffing provided by the school district.

integration, if any, there is with SFPs. **Exploring potential collaborations between dairy farmers supplying provincial school milk programs and SFPs could be a valuable next step.**

How SFP funding is administered to schools also varies across Canada (see Table 1). Program implementation partners flowing government funding for SFPs are most often NGOs (e.g., NB, NL, NWT, MB, ON, PEI, SK, QC, YK), followed by school districts (e.g., AB, BC, NS, NWT, SK, QC), Indigenous organizations (e.g., NWT, ON, YK), individual schools (e.g., NWT, PEI), other organizations such as municipalities and agricultural organizations respectively (e.g., NU, ON), while some jurisdictions use a combination (e.g., MB, SK, PEI, NWT). Some jurisdictions utilize notable governance structures to guide decision making and improve coordination: in ON, Student Nutrition Ontario, a provincial NGO, supports the delivery of SFPs in the province in a variety of ways including knowledge sharing and coordination of large-scale partnerships for example; in YK, a cross-sector School Food Working Group brings together representatives from government and non-governmental organizations.

Table 1 below provides an overview of Key SFP Implementation features across the provinces and territories, including government funders, annual funding, funding distribution model, key implementation partners, and program types.

Table 1: 2023/24 Key SFP Implementation Features by Province and Territory

Province / Territory	Funding Ministry/ Department (primary funder bolded) [Program]	2023/24 SFP Funding	Funding Distribution and Key Implementation Partners	Types of SFPs, by prevalence, bolded most common (payment model)
NL	Health and Community Services [Breakfast]	\$1,393,700	Kids Eat Smart (province-wide NGO)	Breakfast (no cost)
	Health and Community Services [Lunch]	\$1,125,000	School Lunch Association (regional NGO)	Lunch (PWYC)
PEI	Education and Early Years [Breakfast & Snacks]	\$325,000	Funding distributed directly to schools	Breakfast (no cost)
	Social Development and Seniors [Lunch]	\$5,118,705	PEI School Food Inc (province-wide NGO)	Lunch (PWYC)
NS	Health [School Healthy Eating Program]	\$4,208,000	Funding distributed to school districts (SDs)	Breakfast (no cost) 2024/25: Lunch (PWYC)
NB	Education and Early Childhood Development [SFPs]	\$2,300,000	Food Depot Alimentaire (province-wide NGO)	Breakfast , snack, lunch

Province / Territory	Funding Ministry/ Department (primary funder bolded) [Program]	2023/24 SFP Funding	Funding Distribution and Key Implementation Partners	Types of SFPs, by prevalence, bolded most common (payment model)
QC	Education [Breakfast]	\$15,000,000	Breakfast Club of Canada (National NGO)	Breakfast (no cost)
	Education [Lunch]	\$5,400,000	La Cantine pour tous (regional NGO)	Lunch (PWYC)
	Education [Measure 15012: Food Aid]	\$40,500,000	Funding provided to school districts (SDs)	unknown
	First Nations and Inuit Relations Secretariat; Indigenous Services Canada; First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Quebec region; Cree School Board; Cree Health Board [First Nation & Inuit SFPs]	\$1,000,000	Breakfast Club of Canada (National NGO) to support First Nation & Inuit SFPs	Breakfast (no cost)
ON	Children, Community & Social Services, Child Development Unit [Ontario Student Nutrition Program]	\$32,800,000	14 regional Lead Agencies (regional NGOs)	Breakfast, snack, lunch (no cost)
	Children, Community & Social Services, Child Welfare and Protection Division [First Nations Student Nutrition Program]	\$5,200,000	Indigenous: Funding distributed to Indigenous partner organizations	unknown
	Health [Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program]	\$3,413,100	Other: Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association	Fruit and vegetable snack (no cost)
MB	Mental Health and Community Wellness [SFPs]; Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations [First Nation SFPs]	\$3,870,000	Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (province-wide NGO)	Snack, breakfast; lunch (no cost)
SK	Education [Child Nutrition Program]	>\$1,049,970 - <\$2,575,000 ¹¹	School Districts (SDs) and regional NGOs	unknown
AB	Education [School Nutrition Program]	\$25,000,000	Funding distributed directly to school districts (SDs)	unknown
BC	Education and Child Care [Feeding Futures]	\$76,500,000	Funding distributed directly to school districts (SDs)	Lunch, snack, breakfast (no cost with some PWYC lunch)

¹¹ Funding for SFPs in SK is a minimum of the lowest figure which is the amount allocated directly to school districts for SFPs but less than the total value of the CNP which is a combination of school districts and CBO-funded initiatives that support a combination of SFPs, gardens, and other community food security programs. The higher amount was used to tally the national total.

Province / Territory	Funding Ministry/ Department (primary funder bolded) [Program]	2023/24 SFP Funding	Funding Distribution and Key Implementation Partners	Types of SFPs, by prevalence, bolded most common (payment model)
YK	Indigenous Services Canada, Jordan's Principle [Yukon First Nation Education Directorate's Nutrition Programs]	\$5,641,329	Indigenous Organization: Yukon First Nation Education Directorate	Breakfast, lunch, morning snack, afternoon snack (no cost)
	Education [SFPs]; Health and Social Services [SFPs]	\$587,000	Yukon Food For Learning Association (territory-wide NGO)	
NWT	Education, Culture and Employment [Healthy Food for Learning]	\$650,000	Funding is distributed directly to every school in NWT	unknown
	Health and Social Services [SFPs]	\$50,000	Food First Foundation (NGO)	
	Indigenous Services Canada [Inuvialuit Settlement Region's SFPs]	unknown	Indigenous Organization: Inuvialuit Regional Corporation	
NU	Health [SFPs]	\$1,726,646	Other: Funds administered by sponsoring agencies such as hamlets or district education authorities via Community Wellness Plans	Breakfast, morning snack, afternoon snack, lunch (no cost)
	Education [SFPs]	unknown	unknown	
	Indigenous Services Canada [SFPs]	unknown	unknown	
Total	20 unique P/T Ministries or Departments: Education: 9 Health: 7 Social/Community Services: 2 Indigenous: 2	\$234,383,480	11 NGOs; 5 school districts; 2 directly to schools; 3 Indigenous Organizations; 2 Other	Breakfast, Lunch, Snacks

As shown in Table 2, based on student participation rates, provincial/territorial funding ranged from \$0.12/student/school day for breakfast in PEI (only food costs) to \$16.00/student/school day in YK (inclusive of all costs for breakfast, lunch and snacks); an average of \$0.94/participating student/school day in 2023/24. If every student in the province/territory (universal participation), P/T contributions drop from \$0.03 in SK to \$5.58 in YK; an average of \$0.24/student in the province or territory per school day (if universal participation).

Table 2: 2023/24 Government Funding supporting SFPs, highest to lowest

Province / Territory (Program)	Funding Ministry/Department (primary funder bolded)	\$/participating student/year	\$/participating student/day (190 days)	Funding per student per day (if universal participation)
YK	Indigenous Services Canada; Education; Health and Social Services	unavailable	\$16 (YFNED program only)	\$5.58
PEI (Lunch)	Social Development and Seniors	\$924.62	\$4.87	\$1.24
NU	Health; Education; Indigenous Services Canada	unavailable	unavailable	\$0.84
BC	Education and Child Care	\$550.00	\$3.00	\$0.67
NWT	Education, Culture and Employment; Health and Social Services; Indigenous Services Canada	unavailable	unavailable	\$0.42
QC	Education	\$546.20	\$2.87	\$0.33
AB	Education	\$344.83	\$1.81	\$0.16
NS	Health	\$82.15	\$0.43	\$0.17
MB	Mental Health and Community Wellness; Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations	\$70.36	\$0.37	\$0.11
NL (Breakfast)	Health and Community Services	\$30.28	\$0.16	\$0.11
ON (OSNP)	Children, Community & Social Services	\$39.04	\$0.21	\$0.10
NB	Education and Early Childhood Development	unavailable	unavailable	\$0.11
NL (Lunch)	Health and Community Services	\$183.08	\$0.96	\$0.09
PEI (Breakfast)	Education and Early Years	\$23.59	\$0.12	\$0.08
SK	Education	unavailable	unavailable	\$0.03-0.07
Total	20 unique P/T Ministries or Departments: Education: 9 Social/Community Health: 7 Services: 2 Indigenous: 2	\$178.64 average¹²	\$0.12 for breakfast in PEI to \$16.00 for breakfast, lunch and snacks in YK (\$0.94 average)¹³	\$0.03 in SK to \$5.58 in YK (\$0.24 average)¹⁴

Monitoring Practices

In 2023/24, monitoring of SFPs in Canada by P/Ts has improved but continues to be limited, as it was in 2018/19 (Ruetz and McKenna, 2021). The lack of comprehensive program tracking has been acknowledged and several P/Ts are taking steps to improve their data collection. For instance, the number of students served was not tracked by territorial governments in 2023/24. Several challenges specific to the North contribute to collecting accurate student participation data, including fluctuating student attendance throughout the school year, seasonal family travel within and beyond territorial borders, and time spent on the land participating in traditional activities. YK has created a territorial SFP working group of government and NGO partners to consider how to best monitor student participation going forward. SK has typically only tracked the number of meals served; however, the provincial government plans to start tracking unique students participating in SFPs. BC and NS administer a voluntary SFP survey and are exploring how to increase survey response rates. Given the challenges of collective SFP data in Canada generally and the limitations of voluntary SFP surveys used by P/Ts to monitor SFPs specifically, Ruetz and McKenna (2021) suggested that P/Ts in collaboration with the federal government work with Statistics Canada to add questions to the Elementary and Secondary School Survey.

Adoption and utilization of common metrics and definitions for tracking student participation would also help. For example, PWYC programs in PEI and NL track the number of students registered to participate as well as the average participation¹⁵ as participation per day varies depending on the menu. Tracking unique students served is not the best way to understand participation rates in PWYC programs, resulting in different metrics currently being used across Canada. In 2017, ON stopped tracking unique students participation, instead opting for average daily participation: “The number of meals served per month divided by the number of program operating days per month” (Ontario Student Nutrition Program Guidelines, 2018: 21). This resulted in a significant drop in the number of students counted as served; however, the Ministry claims average daily participation is a more accurate representation of participation. P/Ts could also consider tracking the average daily participation according to ON’s definition. Kids Eat Smart in NL also tracks an average daily participation; however, it is unclear if they are using the same definition and formula as Ontario. See the Glossary of this report for the definitions that guide the Canadian School Food Program Survey.



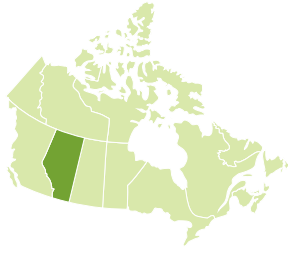
¹² Total Funding (\$234,383,480) / Total students participating (1,312,013) = \$178.64/participating student/year.

¹³ Total Funding (\$234,383,480) / Total students participating (1,312,013) / 190 school days = \$0.94/participating student/day.

¹⁴ Total Funding (\$234,383,480) / Total students in Canada (5,055,255 students enrolled in regular programs for youth in publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in 2022/23 (Statistics Canada, 2022/23) = \$0.24/student in Canada/day

¹⁵ NS and NL’s breakfast program follow a similar method of tracking the average daily participation; however, the exact method and definition is unclear.

Alberta



Alberta Education provides funding to school jurisdictions to create, continue, or enhance existing nutrition programs in identified schools through their provincial School Nutrition Program. Participating schools offer one nutritious meal per school day; schools determine what time to offer this meal. On March 10, 2025, Alberta signed a three-year National School Food Program agreement for \$42.2 million from the federal government.



>18%
>400 schools



>7%
>58,000 students



\$25 million
Education

Programs:

School Nutrition Program: For the 2023-24 school year, Alberta Education distributed a total of \$25 million directly to school authorities and school authorities can choose to begin or continue to partner with non-profit organizations for the delivery of their program. This marked a change in the province's school food administrative structure as in 2022/23 the province reintroduced a pilot program that provided \$3 million in grant funding to non-profit organizations to support school nutrition programs, in addition to the funding directly to school authorities. After carefully reviewing pilot data and stakeholder feedback, Alberta Education decided to conclude the pilot and return to providing all funding for the School Nutrition Program directly to school authorities. To learn more about the pilot, please see the 2022/23 program pilot summary report ([Government of Alberta, 2023](#)).

Indigenous SFPs in AB: Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 42 school nutrition programs that serve 5,416 Indigenous students in AB. These programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous ([BCC, 2023](#)). It is unclear if these programs overlap with the programs funded by Alberta Education so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.

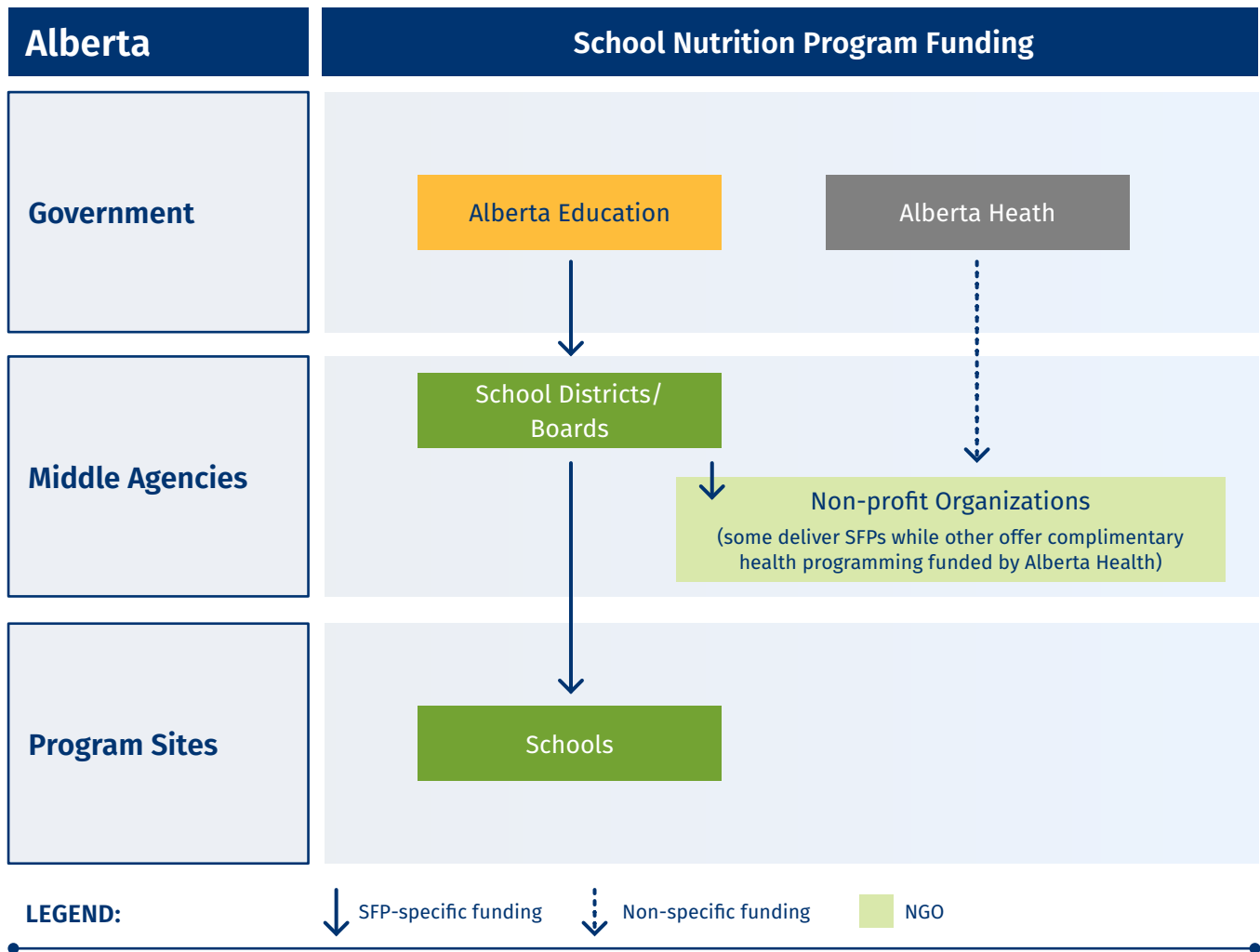
School and Student Participation:

The school nutrition program supported more than 58,000 students across Alberta to receive a daily nutritious meal and snacks during the 2023-24 school year. The program covered more than 400 programs across 400 schools throughout the province.

Provincial Funding:

\$25 million (Alberta Education)

Alberta Education distributed \$20 million directly to school authorities in 2023/24 in addition to a one-time \$5 million grant that was announced in February 2024 to expand the provincial program to reach more students with more well-rounded meals and snacks for the remainder of the 2023-24 school year ([Alberta Education 2024, pg. 60](#)).



To learn more about an exemplary Indigenous-led SFP in rural Alberta, read the case study on the Maskwacis Education Schools Commission's universal program in the [School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report](#) (Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 8-11).

British Columbia



In April 2023, British Columbia (BC) committed \$214 million over 3 years to expand access to school breakfasts, lunches and snacks through the *Feeding Futures* School Food Programs Fund (2023-2026). *Feeding Futures* is the largest single investment in school food programs from any province to date.



~87%
~1371 schools



~22%
~130,648 students



\$76.5 million
Education

Programs:

Feeding Futures: The *Feeding Futures* School Food Programs (SFP) Fund initiative aims to enhance student nutrition and learning outcomes by expanding or establishing SFPs across the province. Its goals include increasing access to healthy, local food; supporting local farmers and food producers; building student knowledge of local food systems; improving learning and well-being; offering nutritious meal options; and incorporating local, traditional, and cultural foods. The Ministry of Education and Child Care has primary responsibility for school SFPs in BC and flows these funds through *Feeding Futures* to the province's 60 school districts.

Complementary supporting resources - Ministry of Agriculture: The BC Ministry of Agriculture and Food is supporting school districts (SDs) to work towards purchasing 30% BC-grown food, connect with BC food producers and processors, and enhance local food literacy via the Feed BC program ([Feed BC, 2024](#)). The Ministry of Agriculture and Food also funds 14 regional NGO food hubs¹⁶ ([BC Food Hub Network, n.d.](#)). These food hubs can indirectly support SFPs by offering commercial kitchen space, equipment, storage, and distribution, with food sourced externally and staffing provided by the school district.

Complementary initiatives supporting Feeding Futures - Ministry of Health: The Ministry of Health funds the Public Health Association of BC to administer [Farm to School BC](#), an NGO that provides grants and resources to schools. Farm to School BC largely promotes food literacy rather than providing regular school meals so it is not classified as an SFP. Previously, the Ministry funded the BC Agriculture in the Classroom to administer the [BC School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program \(SFVNP\)](#), which delivers BC grown fruits, vegetables, dairy and nutritious products directly to schools¹⁷. With all school food funding now managed by school districts through *Feeding Futures*, SFVNP is transitioning to a district-funded model in 2024-25. Districts can allocate *Feeding Futures* funding to continue SFVNP if desired.

¹⁶ Food hubs are commercial shared-use food and beverage processing facilities that provide access to commercial processing space, equipment, expertise, and resources to support business development and growth.

¹⁷ In previous years, the SFVNP provided 12 servings of fruit and vegetable snacks annually to participating schools.

Partner initiatives - Non-profit groups/organizations: Numerous NGOs offer SFPs across BC; however, they do not receive provincial funding. Nevertheless, school districts can opt to hire an NGO to deliver SFPs in their schools. For example, Nourish Cowichan and Flourish School Food Society are contracted by school districts to deliver SFPs using Feeding Futures funds.



Chef Scott Graham plating Flourish's Vegetarian Curry.

School and Student Participation:

The Ministry of Education and Child Care administers a School Food Survey to collect information about the delivery of SFPs.¹⁸ Based on survey results in winter 2024 (62% response rate), the Ministry estimates that 1371 schools (~87% of schools¹⁹) have a SFP and that approximately 130,648 students (~22%²⁰) accessed a SFP in 2023/24.²¹

Indigenous SFPs in BC:

Many Indigenous students in BC access SFPs at public schools. First Nation schools on reserve receive SFP funding through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) under the BC Tripartite Education Agreement. In 2023-24, ISC provided proportional SFP funding to First Nations schools, matching the funding BC public schools received for Feeding Futures. In 2023/24, ISC did not collect data on how SFP funds were used or student participation in SFPs. ISC did not participate in the survey; therefore, no FN-related data was available for inclusion in the BC data total. Breakfast Club of Canada, however, reported funding 66 programs that served 4,117 Indigenous students in BC. These programs were either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous (BCC, 2023). It is unclear if these programs overlap with the programs funded by the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care and/or ISC so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.

¹⁸ In 2024, the Ministry of Education's School Food Survey sample of 979 schools was deemed generally representative of all (1579) schools across the province (62% response rate), although it somewhat underrepresented rural schools.

¹⁹ BC Ministry of Education reported that there were 1,579 JK-12 publicly-funded schools in 2023/24.

²⁰ BC Ministry of Education reported that 604,728 JK-12 students were enrolled in 2023/24.

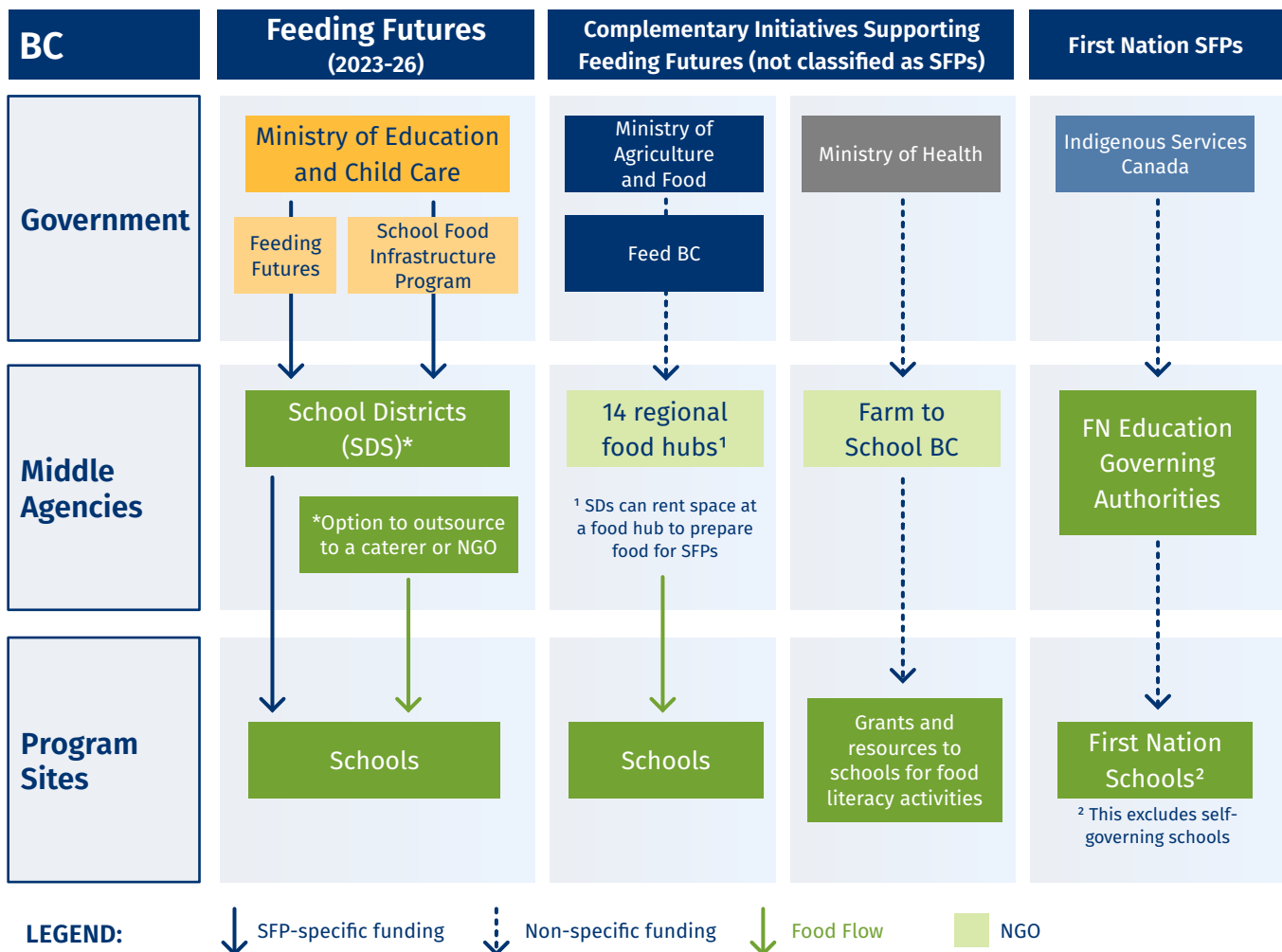
²¹ Taken as a representative sample, the ministry estimates that ~130,648 students (22% of total enrolment) accessed a SFP in 2023/24.

Government Funding:

\$76,500,000 (Education)

2023-24 marked the first year *Feeding Futures* funding was available, flowing from the Ministry of Education and Child Care to BC's 60 school districts. School districts have the flexibility to allocate funding to the individual schools in their district based on local needs, so programming varies from district to district and from school to school. For example, this could include: distributing funds directly to schools, centralizing food services within the district, or outsourcing food services to a third-party. The *Feeding Futures* funds can be used for the following: food costs, some staffing costs, off-site food preparation, food delivery and transportation costs, and some equipment required for the delivery of SFPs. The following uses are impermissible: large capital investments and nutrition or food literacy education.

In addition to the \$71.5 million *Feeding Futures* funding in 2023/24, the Ministry of Education and Child Care administers the School Food Infrastructure Fund. This fund is \$5 million annually to improve or expand infrastructure required to deliver SFPs, such as food-delivery vans and kitchen upgrades, including electrical upgrades and the purchase of commercial-kitchen equipment ([Ministry of Education, 2024](#)).



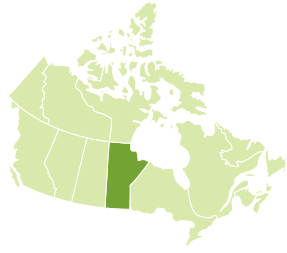


Huband Park Elementary, Courtenay, BC



Skaadgaa Naay Elementary, BC - Sian Nalleweg

Manitoba



Since 2001, the non-profit **Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM)** has been supporting school and summer food programs across the province. As a long-standing partner of the Manitoba government, CNCM distributes both government and internally raised funds to help schools and community organizations operate programs, partially covering the cost of food for school food programs (SFPs).

In January 2024, the Manitoba government increased its funding for CNCM from \$2.5 million to \$3.87 million for the 2023-24 school year. Additionally, the government announced a \$30 million investment to establish a province-wide SFP for the 2024-25 school year ([Manitoba Government, 2024](#)). This province-wide program, launched in September 2024, aims to expand SFPs across all 37 school divisions in Manitoba ([CBC, 2024](#)).



36%
376 schools



31%
57,743 students



\$3.87 million
Health (2023-24)

Indigenous Reconciliation
and Northern Relations



Education (2024-25)
Municipal and
Northern Relations

In October 2024, Manitoba (MB) became the second province to finalize a federal funding agreement, securing over \$17 million in additional support over three years ([Province of Manitoba, 2024](#)). This funding, which complements the \$30 million already allocated by the provincial government, will provide food for an estimated 19,000 children. It will also fund critical infrastructure improvements, including equipment purchases, kitchen renovations, and the hiring of staff ([CBC, 2024](#)).

Programs:

The Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba (CNCM) distributes government and non-governmental funds to support SFPs across MB. Schools apply for CNCM funding each spring; however, CNCM funding often only covers a portion of the food costs required to operate SFPs. To supplement this funding, additional support comes from donations of food and services, such as egg coupons provided annually by MB Egg Farmers. SFPs are managed at the school level and heavily rely on the contributions of school staff (often volunteering their time), parents, charitable foundations, and other members of the school community for both funding and program delivery. For more information, see [CNCM's 2023/24 Annual Report](#).

School and Student Participation:

During the 2023/24 school year, the CNCM flowed funds to 403 SFPs across 376 schools in MB (this included 355 Public Schools, 5 Independent Schools and 16 First Nations Schools, 30% of federally-funded First Nation schools in MB. This equates to 47% of provincially funded schools²² running one or more SFPs, or 36% of schools in MB if federally-

²² 47% of provincially funded schools calculated based on a total of 360 schools (355 Public Schools + 5 Independent Schools) / 766 schools in MB ([2023/24 data from the Government of Manitoba \(pg 5\)](#): 697 public and division administered First Nations schools + 69 publicly funded Independent schools (=766 provincially funded schools)).

funded First Nation schools are added.²³ An average of 57,743 students²⁴ accessed the programs daily, including 3,574 First Nation students. In addition, the CNCM funds Summer Academic Programs: community run programs and are not associated with specific schools.²⁵

Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 52 school nutrition programs that serve 11,667 Indigenous students in MB. These programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous (BCC, 2023). It is unclear if these programs overlap with the programs noted above funded by the provincial government via CNCM so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.



Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew serving food to students at Donwood School in Winnipeg (Photo Credit: Alex Karpa, CityNews).



²³ 36% of schools in MB calculated based on a total of 819 schools in MB (2023/24 data from the Government of Manitoba (pg 5): 697 public and division administered First Nations schools + 69 publicly funded Independent schools (=766 provincially funded schools) + 53 First Nations schools (Federally funded schools).

²⁴ 53,880 students in Public Schools; 3,574 students in First Nations Schools; 289 students in Independent Schools

²⁵ In summer 2023, CNCM provided \$22,000 to fund five Summer Academic Programs that served 440 children.

Government Funding:

\$3,870,000 (Health + Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations)

In January 2024, the MB Government (Mental Health: and Community Wellness + Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations) increased funding to CNCM from \$2.5 million to a total of \$3.87 million for the 2023-24 school year ([Manitoba Government, 2024](#)). Thanks to additional funding, the CNCM distributed a total of \$4,054,734 to schools (88% of funds from the MB Government and 12% of grants and funds raised by CNCM) ([CNCM 2023/24 Annual Report](#)).

In 2024/25, a new \$30 million provincial investment was used to establish a province-wide SFP through three complimentary streams:

- \$15 million going directly to school divisions for SFPs based on enrolment and socio-economic factors;
- \$6 million for public schools in communities with the highest socio-economic need; and
- \$9 million in grants for nutrition programming available on an application-basis that includes expanding support for the CNCM, family outreach initiatives and support for eligible after-school, summer and school break programs.

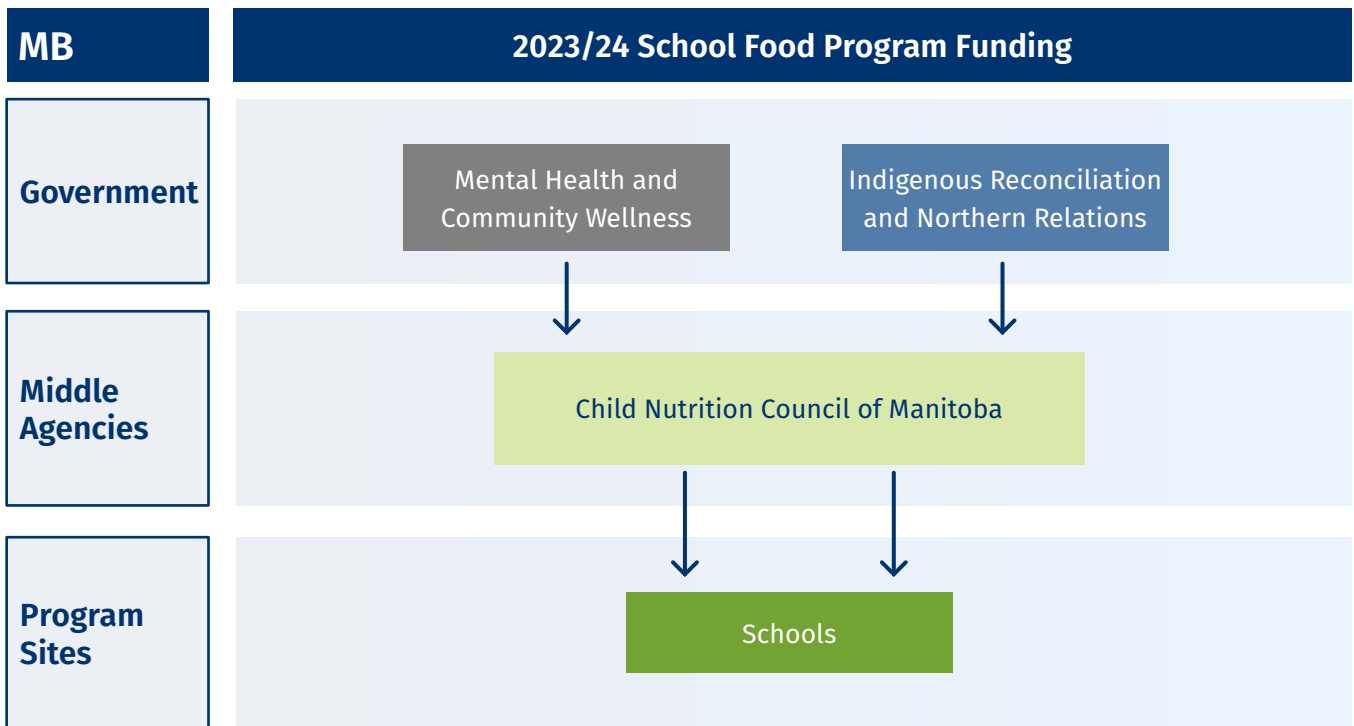
Of the \$30 million distributed in the 2024/25 school year, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning provided \$4.9 million to CNCM for SFPs and summer programs.



Ecole Leila North Community School, Winnipeg, MB - Ashley Taylor

Governance:

In 2024/25, the MB Government transferred responsibility for SFP funding from Health and Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations to Education and Municipal and Northern Relations.



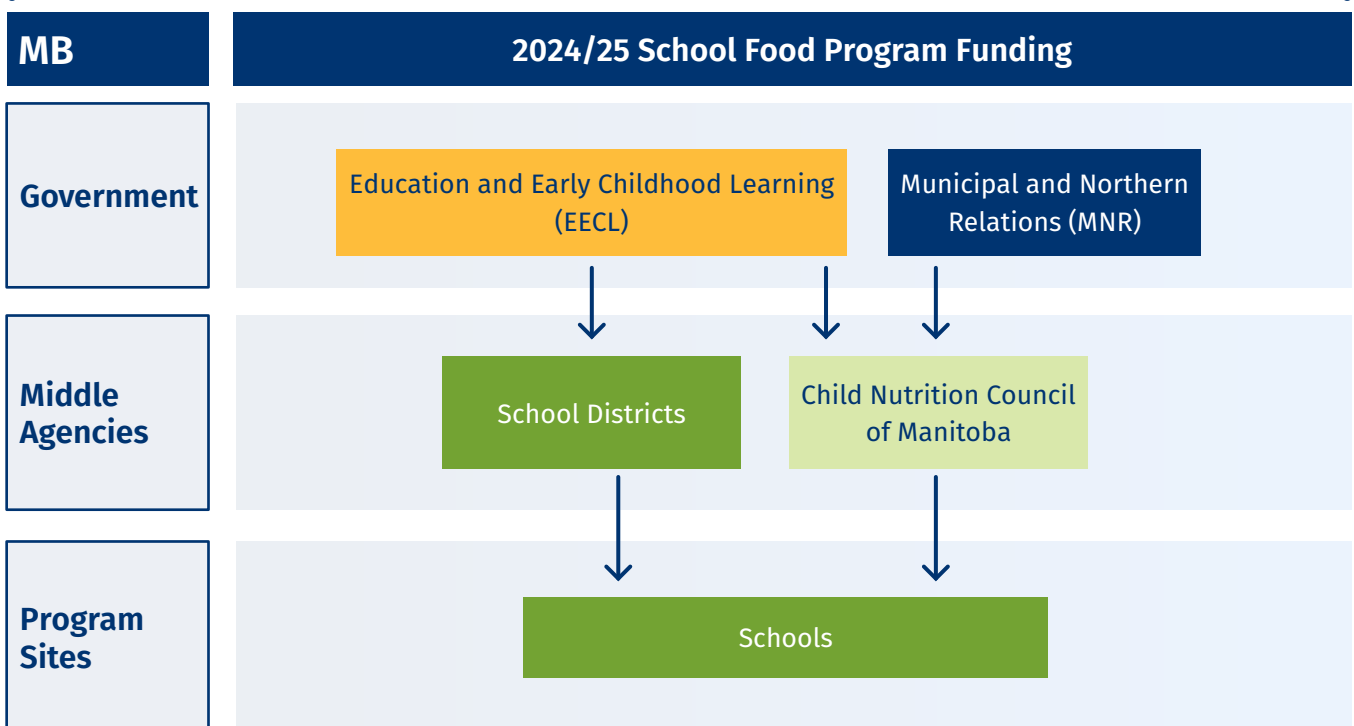
LEGEND:



SFP-specific funding



NGO



LEGEND:

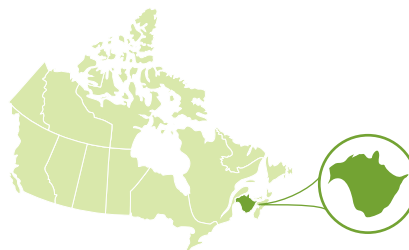


SFP-specific funding



NGO

New Brunswick



New Brunswick (NB) was the last jurisdiction to fund a provincial school food program (SFP). The provincial government initially allocated \$200,000 to a pilot program in 2020/21, which was matched by an equal contribution from the New Brunswick Medical Society, bringing the total funding to \$400,000 ([Balintec, 2021; Government of New Brunswick, 2020: pg 13](#)). The New Brunswick Department of Education and Early Childhood Development continues to support SFPs through partnerships with the Food Depot Alimentaire.

New Brunswick was the fifth province to sign an agreement under the National School Food Program on February 7, 2025, following Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island's agreements in the fall of 2024 ([ESDC, 2025](#)). New Brunswick will receive \$11.2 million over three years from the federal government to support SFPs in New Brunswick, reaching an additional 57,000 students with universal breakfast program access across NB schools in year 1. This will happen through the expansion of the Food Depot Alimentaire's Student Nutrition Program and through direct support to schools with existing programs. The federal funding complements New Brunswick's provincial commitment to invest \$27.4 million annually for a province-wide universal breakfast program and launch a pay-what-you-can lunch program in September 2025 ([CBC, 2024; New Brunswick Liberal Party, 2024](#)).



46%
136 schools



Unknown
students



\$2.3 million
Education

Programs:

Food Depot Alimentaire: The Food Depot Alimentaire (FDA), a non-profit organization, receives provincial funding to support the delivery of food to schools across New Brunswick. Leveraging its central hub, which also services food banks throughout the province, the FDA facilitates bulk food purchasing, along with managing food ordering, procurement, and delivery for participating schools. For schools outside the FDA's transportation network, the NB Department of Education and Early Childhood Development provides funding directly to school districts. These districts then allocate resources to schools based on need. While breakfast programs remain the most commonly offered, some schools also provide snack and lunch programs, although these are less widespread.

Other NGO-operated Programs: Several NGOs in NB, including Breakfast Club of Canada, Rotary Clubs, United Way, and Heart and Stroke NB, also operate SFPs using their own staff or volunteers. These programs are funded independently, often through private businesses and in-kind donations, though specific data on these programs is unavailable.

Indigenous SFPs in NB: Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 2 programs that serve 240 Indigenous students. It is unclear if these programs overlap with the programs funded by the NB Department of Education so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.

NB School District SFP Support: In addition to food supplied by Food Depot Alimentaire for breakfast programs, school districts often allocate Department of Education funding and staff to support SFPs. For example, Community Coordinators, full-time non-teaching staff, play a key role in addressing food security. Their roles vary across districts: some serve individual schools exclusively, while others support multiple schools. Responsibilities may include full program delivery (e.g., food procurement, volunteer coordination, and food space setup) or supporting champions like teachers and volunteers with tasks such as grant writing and partner connections.

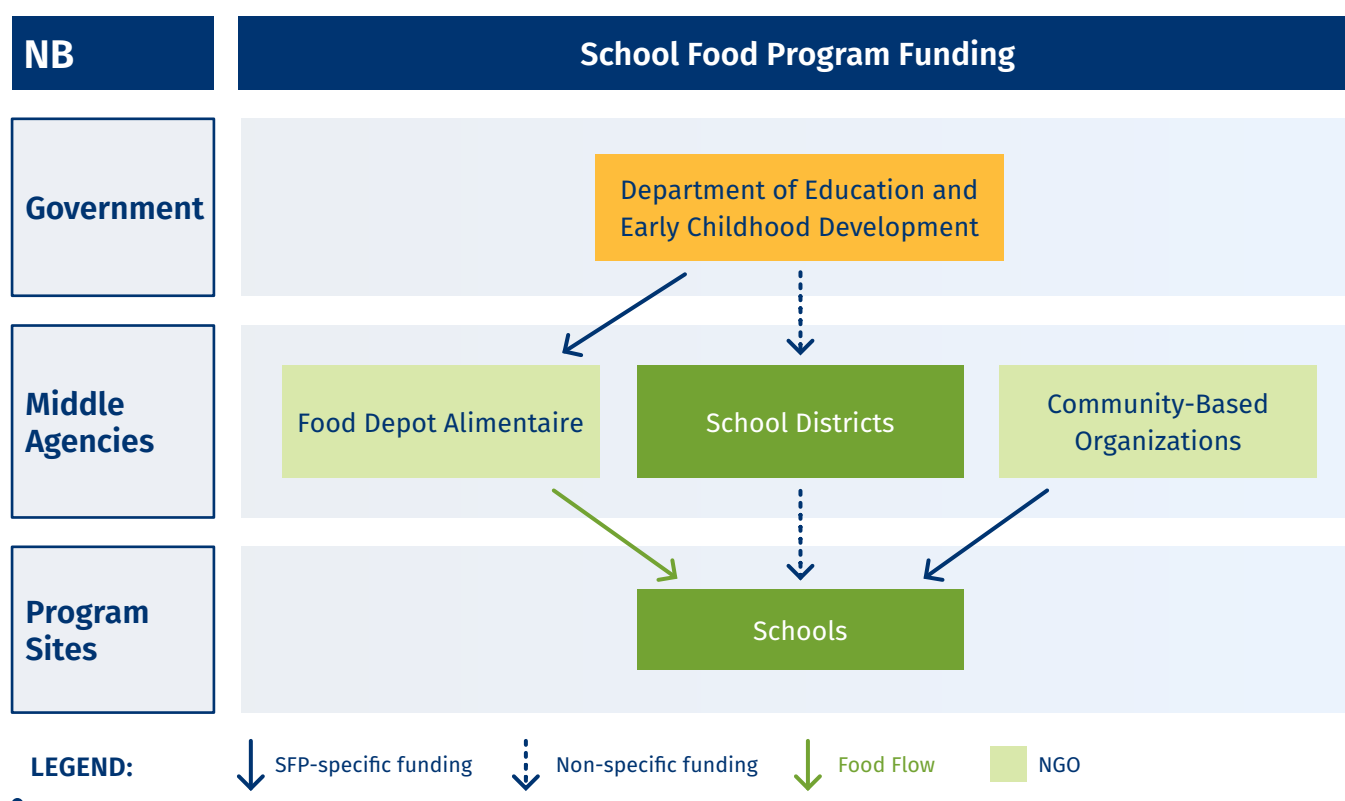
School and Student Participation:

In 2023-24, 136 schools (46%) were supported via the Food Depot Alimentaire. Student participation data in SFPs was not collected until 2022, following the expansion of the program and the hiring of a full-time coordinator. From 2022-23, the Food Depot Alimentaire (FDA) requested that schools report participation data on a monthly basis. However, for the 2023-24 school year, the provincial government directed the FDA to instead report only the total student population at each school and indicate how many students had access to the program (i.e, total student population of schools with SFPs). As a result, student participation in SFPs in NB in 2023/24 is unknown. Anecdotal reports suggest that participation in individual breakfast programs varies widely, ranging from 5% to 100% of the student population.

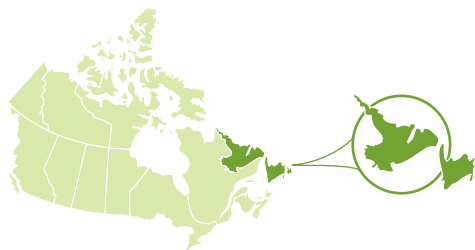
Government Funding:

\$2,300,000 (Education)

For the 2023-24 school year, \$2 million dollars was provided by the NB Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for SFPs programs in schools. An additional \$300,000 was provided to school districts only in 2023-24 as there was a surplus of funding; schools were required to spend these funds on SFPs. For the 2024-25 school year, the proposed funding was \$2 Million.



Newfoundland and Labrador



Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) is home to two of Canada's oldest school food programs (SFPs), both supported by registered charities. The universal free breakfast program is supported by Kids Eat Smart Foundation Newfoundland and Labrador (KES) and School Lunch Association (SLA) has been operating their “pay-what-you-can” (PWYC) lunch program in schools in St. John’s since 1989. In 2023, as part of a new Poverty Reduction Plan, the Government of NL announced increased funding to expand SFPs to all junior kindergarten to Grade 9 schools in the province, ensuring access to both breakfast and lunch for all students, with the greatest expansion needed for lunch programs to reach all regions ([CBC, 2023](#)). The total projected cost of this expansion is estimated at \$10 million, and began with a \$3 million allocation in the 2024 NL Budget to support the first year ([Government of NL, 2024](#)). The federal government has also contributed to support the expansion of SFPs in NL. In September 2024, NL was the first province to sign an agreement with the federal government on the National School Food Program for \$9.1 million over 3 years to expand access to the hot lunch program to 4,100 more students ([CBC, 2024](#)).



100%
256 schools
(breakfast programs)



70%
46,030 students
(breakfast programs)



\$2.5 million
Health (2023/24)

↓
Education (2024/25)

Programs:

Kids Eat Smart (KES) Free Breakfast Programs: For over 30 years, KES has been supporting volunteer-run breakfast programs in schools and community centres throughout the province. KES breakfast programs are available in every elementary and secondary school at no cost. To learn more, see the [2023/24 KES Annual Report](#).

School Lunch Association (SLA) PWYC Lunch Programs: The School Lunch Association (SLA), operating Canada's first “pay-what-you-can”²⁶ school lunch program for over 35 years, serves hot, nutritious lunches to students regardless of family income. SLA utilizes a centralized procurement model, coordinating menu development and food ordering centrally, while meal preparation is done on-site at each school by SLA staff. SLA is a regional program currently active in schools, primarily in the St. John's metro area, with recent expansions to schools in Clarenville (2-hour drive from St. John's), Musgravetown (2.5-hour drive from St. John's), and Gander (+3 hour drive from St. John's). In 2023, the province announced funding to expand the PWYC school lunch program model to all junior kindergarten to Grade 9 students. Offering of the SLA program in schools outside of the capital city in recent years has been an important expansion and learning opportunity to test how the model functions in other regions. For more information on SLA's model, see the program summary report in the [School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report](#) (Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 26-28) and watch this [short video](#) about the program as explained by students.

²⁶ A school food program payment model on a sliding scale where one can select to pay the full meal cost, a portion of the meal cost, or nothing. See the Glossary for the full definition and description.



A student picks up lunch in St. John's. Newfoundland and Labrador is the first province to sign on with Canada's national school food program, funded by the federal government (Curtis Hicks/CBC).

School and Student Participation:

Every school in NL's 256 elementary and secondary schools offer a school breakfast program at no cost to families. The average daily participation²⁷ in KES breakfast programs was 46,030 students/day (70%) out of the 65,654 students in the province in 2023-24 (63,731 students attending publicly funded schools + 1928 students attending private and indigenous schools) (Government of NL, 2024). To not double count students, the provincial total for NL schools and students participating is reflective of the province-wide KES breakfast program participation rates.

The SLA tracks the number of students registered to participate as well as the average participation per day. In 2022/23, the daily average participation was 7000 students; participation varies per day depending on the menu. In 2022/23, student registration rates in individual schools ranged from 24.5% to 88.2% in the 41 operating schools, which have a combined total population of 15,435 JK-12 students (of which 11,067 are registered). This means that across all participating schools 71.7% of students were registered for the program in 2022/23.

²⁷ The number of unique students participating is not available.



Clareville Middle School, Clareville, NL

Government Funding:

\$2,518,700 (Health) → Education (2024/25)

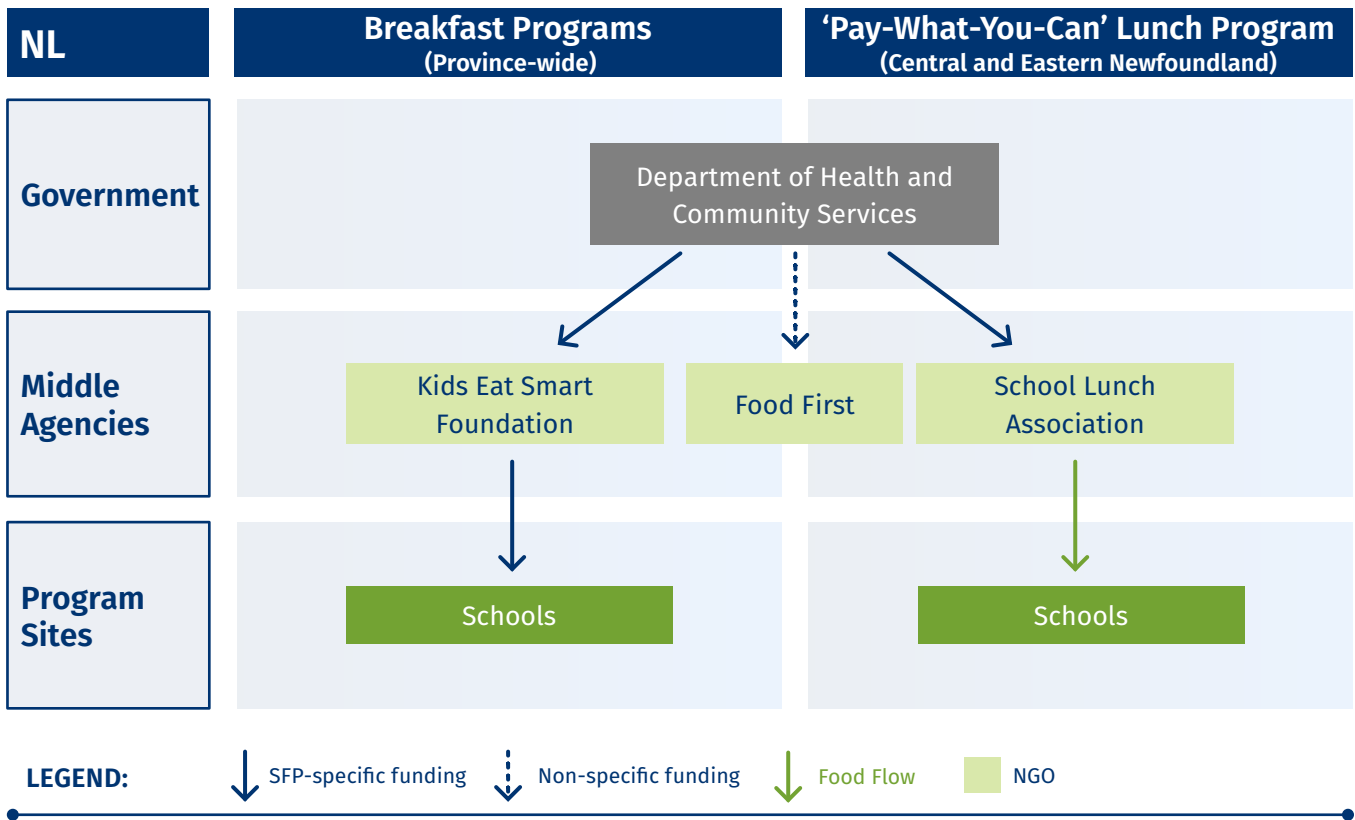
In 2023/24, Kids Eat Smart (KES) received \$1,393,700 from the Department of Health and Community Services (HCS), alongside funding from other contributors and donors. The provincial government and these other sources share the funding for KES breakfast programs, with an approximate 50/50 split.

SLA received \$1,125,000 from the provincial government in 2023/24. The majority of the program, approximately 60-75%, is funded through caregivers' payments for meals, along with a small amount of revenue raised through fundraising and donations ([SLA Case Study, pg 28](#); AAFC Report, 2023). A portion of the revenue from NL's sugar sweetened beverage (SSB) tax has been used to support school lunches in the past, but the exact amounts coming from sugar sweetened beverage tax and going to school food programming is not available as this is revenue that is broadly supporting health-promoting programs like SFPs.

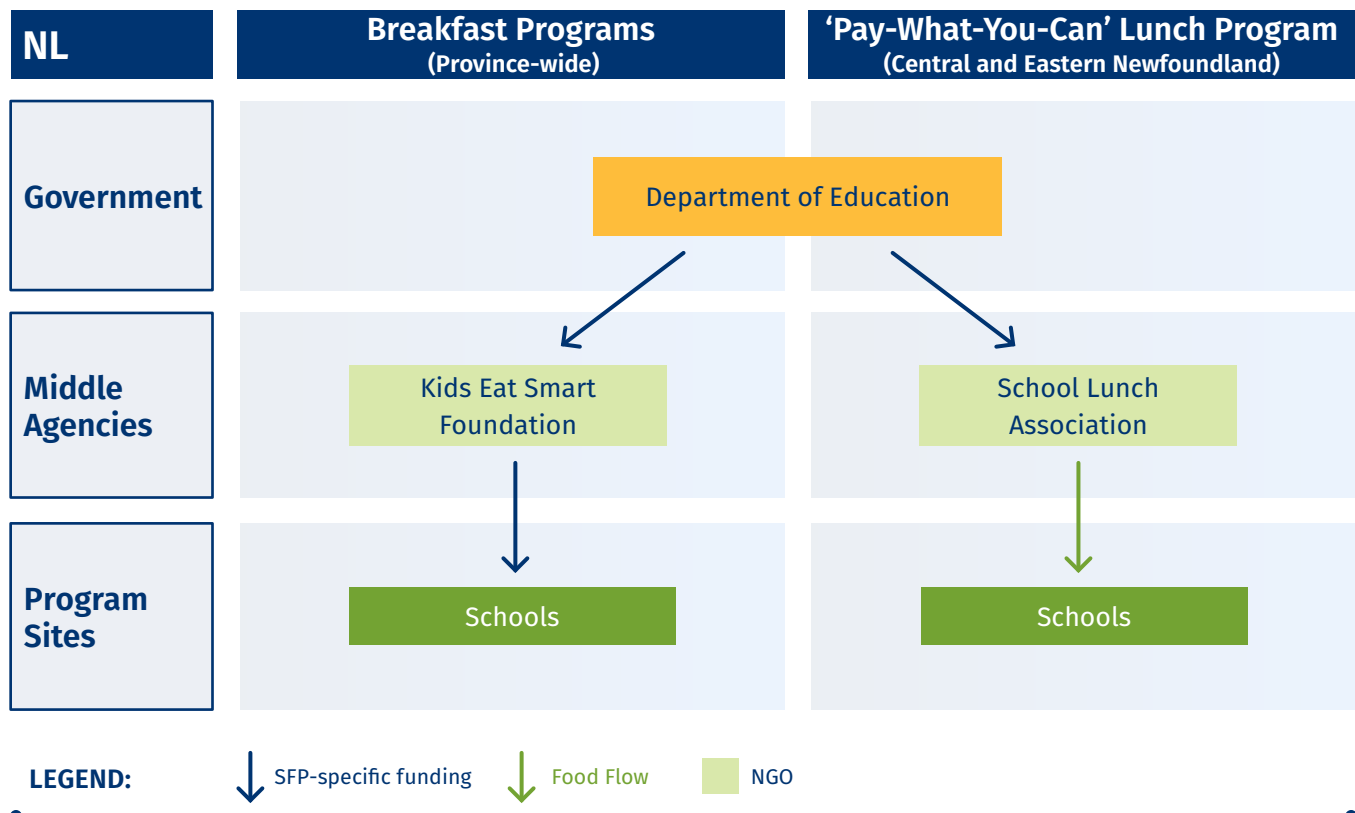
Administrative Structure:

In 2023, Food First NL received provincial funding to lead consultations on expanding school food programs, hiring a project coordinator to engage stakeholders and develop recommendations for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador ([CBC, 2024](#)). In April 2024, the provincial funding of school meals was restructured, shifting from the Department of Health and Community Services to the Department of Education, while the Department of Health continues to support the oversight of school food guidelines. Revenue from the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, which previously flowed through the Department of Health, will now be managed by the Department of Education and used to, in part, support SFPs.

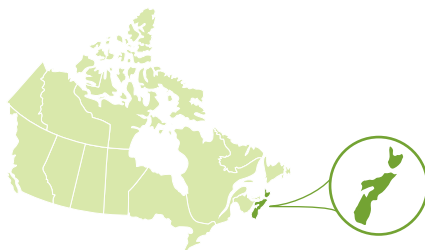
2023/24



2024/25 (started April 2024)



Nova Scotia



Nova Scotia has a province-wide breakfast and lunch program. The universal breakfast program has been operating since 2005 and is available at no cost to students. The lunch program, which began in October 2024, operates on a 'pay-what-you-can' (PWYC) model where families can choose to pay the full meal cost (\$6.50), pay a part of the cost, or pay nothing. In the first year (2024/25), the lunch program operated in 255 schools (~68% schools in the province), making lunch accessible to more than 75,000 students with a focus on pre-primary and elementary students made possible through an allocation of \$18.8 million for 2024/25 ([Government of Nova Scotia, 2024](#)). Nova Scotia's PWYC lunch program will roll out over four years, reaching an estimated annual investment of \$100 million by 2027–28 ([CBC, 2024](#)). On February 24, 2025, Nova Scotia's Education Minister announced a federal-provincial agreement under the National School Food Program, with Canada investing \$12.4 million over three years. For the 2024–25 school year, the funding will support more robust and consistent breakfast programs in schools across the province, purchasing new kitchen equipment, hiring additional program coordinators, and developing new recipes for the launch of the next phase of the PWYC lunch program ([ESDC, 2024](#)).



>83%
>307 education sites
(breakfast programs)



>39%
>51,224 students
(breakfast programs)



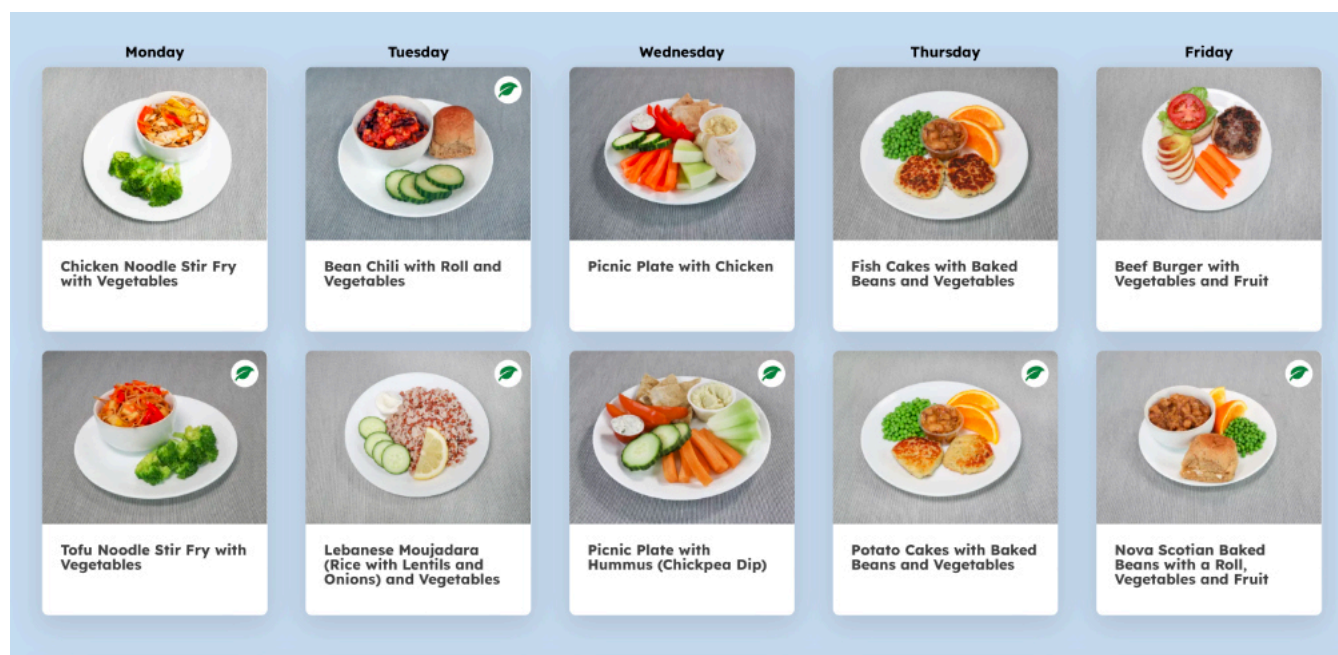
\$4.2 million
Health (2023/24)
↓
Education (2024/25)

Programs:

Breakfast Programs: The majority of schools in Nova Scotia (NS) offer a free breakfast program available to students five days a week. In 2023/24, there were at least 231 breakfast programs at 231 schools in NS, according to the 2023/24 School Healthy Eating Program Survey (n=231 schools; 61% response rate).²⁸ Student participation in breakfast programs varied from school to school, ranging from 4% to 100% of a school's population. In 2023/24, most schools (n=141, 62%) reported that less than 50% of their total student population accessed breakfast on a typical school day. There were 40 schools that indicated 80% or more of their student population accessed breakfast, 5 of which reported participation of 100% of their student population. The grab-and-go model, where breakfast is offered in classrooms or multiple locations, was identified as a key factor in the success of breakfast programs, providing students with easier access to food.

PWYC Lunch Programs: The [Nova Scotia School Lunch Program](#), which began in October 2024, operates on a 'pay-what-you-can' (PWYC) model where families can choose to pay the full meal cost (\$6.50), pay a part of the cost, or pay nothing. In the first year (2024/25), the lunch program will operate in 255 schools (69% schools in the province), making lunch accessible to more than 75,000 students (56% of students in NS) with a focus on pre-primary and elementary students ([Government of Nova Scotia, 2024](#)); average student participation to be determined.

²⁸ Data is from the 2023/24 Healthy Eating Programs (SHEP) survey. Response rate: n=231 schools; 61% of schools in NS. Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 0 programs in Indigenous communities in NS (BCC, 2023).



Nova Scotia School Lunch Program

School and Student Participation:

SFP data in Nova Scotia (NS) has been collected on an annual basis through the provincial School Healthy Eating Programs (SHEP) survey since 2021/22 ([Nova Scotia Health, 2022](#)). The SHEP survey was developed by Nova Scotia Health, Public Health in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) and is part of ongoing monitoring efforts to ensure accountability in the use of provincial SHEP funding and to guide continuous SFP improvement. Student participation data is collected based on the typical number of meals served. Schools are asked to track the total number of students that accessed any foods or beverages offered as part of the breakfast and lunch programs, tracked separately.

The 2023/24 SHEP survey response rate (61%) was significantly lower²⁹ than the 2022/23 survey response rate (84%). The researchers independently evaluated the data and determined that the 2022/23 SHEP survey results for the number of education sites³⁰ participating was a more accurate representation of school participation than the 2023/24 data, therefore >307 education sites (>83% schools) was utilized for this report. The 2023/24 data for students participation was higher than the student participation reported in 2022/23, so the students participation rate collected for 2023/24 (>39% of students; >51,224 students³¹) was utilized for this report despite the 61% response rate in this year. Therefore, both the number of educational sites and students participating is likely higher than what is reported and this is denoted with a greater than (>) symbol for each.

²⁹ Importantly, NS noted that respondent burden may have contributed to lower participation rates in 2023-24 as the school system has been asked to engage in additional information gathering in preparation for the launch of a new school lunch program in Fall 2024. The survey timeline was also shorter than previous years. Low response rates mean that the findings presented in this report should not be generalized to all public schools in Nova Scotia. As such, the Government of Nova Scotia advises that direct comparison to previous SHEP survey cycles should be avoided. While the SHEP survey has been conducted for the past three years, variations in questions and survey completion rates limit the direct comparison of data points across survey cycles.

³⁰ It is unclear if pre-primary students are consistently accessing or included in school breakfast programs. Given that survey respondents were not asked to specify involvement of pre-primary students in school healthy eating programs, quantitative analysis has assumed access for all students and included pre-primary populations.

³¹ Only 39% was provided by the NS Government; therefore, 51,224 students was calculated based on that percentage.

Government Funding:

\$4,208,000 (Health: breakfast programs) → Education (2024/25)

The universal breakfast program has had provincial core/annual funding of \$1.7 million over the last several years, in addition to ad-hoc funding for things such as infrastructure or top-up funding for food. In 2023/24, a total of \$4,208,000 (\$1.7 million + \$2,508,000 in supplementary funds) supported the delivery of the breakfast program. SHEP funding may be used to cover the costs of foods and beverages, equipment and supplies (e.g., appliances and materials required to operate programs) and human resources and travel (e.g., wages for program staffing, honoraria for program volunteers, mileage reimbursement). No more than 10% of total SHEP funding can be allocated to equipment and supplies, according to the 2022/23 SHEP report (SHEP, 2023: 9).

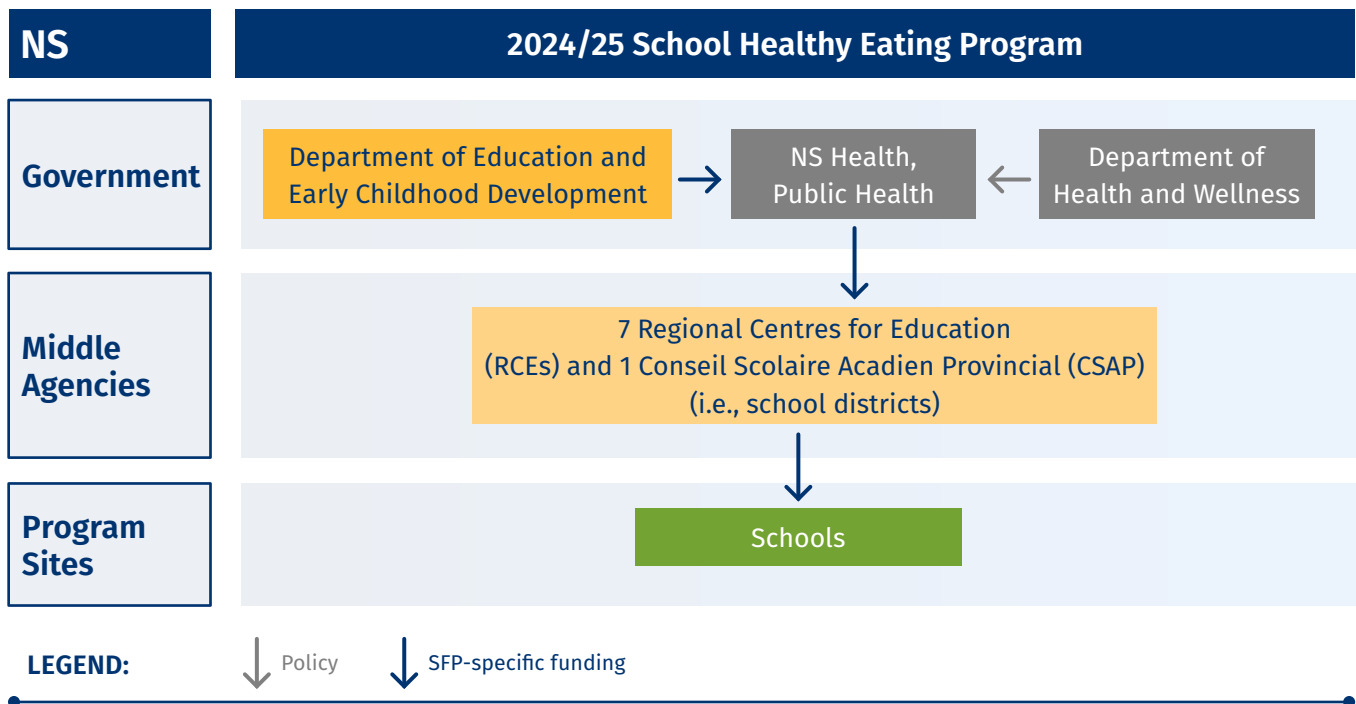
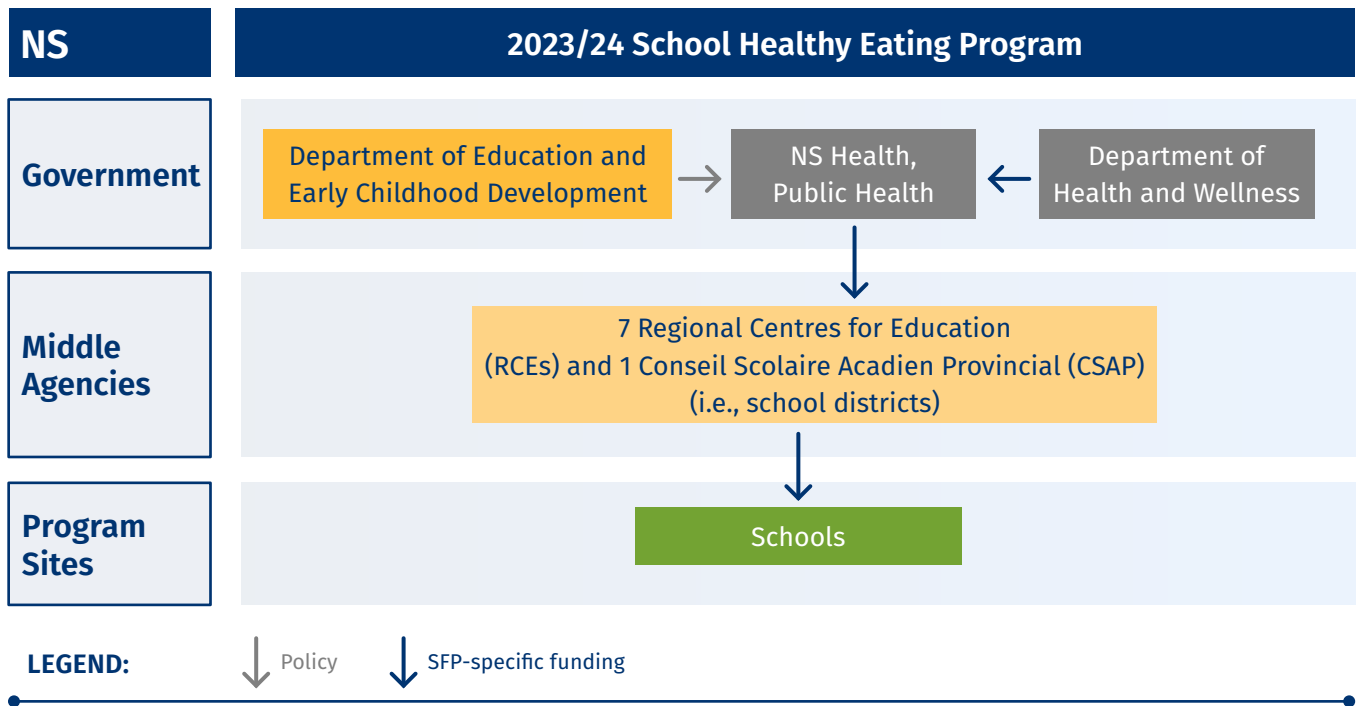
Nova Scotia's PWYC lunch program began in 2024/25 with a \$18.8 million dollar investment to support the first year (CBC, 2024). The lunch program will roll out over four years across the province, reaching an estimated annual investment of \$100 million by 2027–28 (CBC, 2024).

Administrative Structure:

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) is responsible for ensuring the provincial school food and nutrition policy is implemented. School Healthy Eating Program (SHEP) funding from the provincial government requires that meal programs adhere to the policy. In 2023/24, the Department of Health and Wellness transferred funding for the School Healthy Eating Program (SHEP) to Nova Scotia Health (NSH), Public Health to the seven Regional Centres for Education (RCE) and Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP). Public Health uses a funding formula to determine how much each RCE/CSAP receives. Components of Nova Scotia Health's funding formula include an equity component and a population component. RCEs/CSAP have the autonomy to distribute their funds to schools, which may include additional non-governmental funding sources. Some RCEs/CSAP use the same funding formula as the province and at least one RCE has created their own formula to further integrate equity considerations in funding distribution. In 2024-25, SHEP funding moved to be administered by the Department of Education (DEECD) to RCEs/CSAP.



Cobequid Consolidated Elementary School, Old Barns, NS



Nunavut



In Nunavut, there is universal access to school food programs (SFPs) across the territory with every school offering one or more SFPs. The Department of Health is the main government funder, administering funding for SFPs through approved Community Wellness Plans (CWPs). The Department of Health administers CWP funds to sponsoring agencies - such as hamlets, non-profit organizations or district education authorities (DEAs). Every CWP must allocate funding for SFPs in their community; however, the amount of funding allocated towards SFPs is determined by the sponsoring agency. In 2023/24, 20% of the total CWP budget was allocated to support SFPs.

Nunavut is the first territory to announce an agreement with the federal government under the National School Food Program on February 28, 2025. Nunavut will receive approximately \$7.6 million dollars over 3 years to enhance their school food programming, which will benefit the more than 11,000 students across the territory. This includes \$2.3 million in the first year to support kitchen upgrades, hiring staff, more nutritious meals and access to traditional foods, such as lingonberries, cloudberries, caribou, salmon, cod – foods that nourish children while keeping cultural connections strong.



100%
45 schools



Unknown
students



\$1.7 million
Health
+

Indigenous Services Canada
Education (unknown)

Programs:

All 45 schools (100%) in Nunavut ran a total of 138 universal SFPs which ran Monday to Friday, 5 days per week. Every school offered a breakfast program, 35 schools (78%) offered a morning snack program, 31 schools (67%) offered an afternoon snack and 27 schools (60%) offered a lunch program.

Country Food: In Nunavut, 87% of SFPs included country food. Among these, 25% served it weekly or more frequently. The main barriers to offering country food were insufficient availability in the community and a lack of staff to prepare it.

School and Student Participation:

The total number of meals and unique students participating is unknown; however, all programs are intended to be universal. It is common for students to have more than one serving for breakfast (62%), morning snack (40%) and lunch (24%).

Human Resources:

According to the Department of Health's 2022/23 Nunavut Wellness Agreement Performance Report, SFPs in 2022/23 were primarily operated by volunteer school staff (58%). Next, students, volunteers, and paid SFP staff each contributed equally to program operations (42%), while family members (9%) and community members (2%) were less involved. The top challenge identified by 13 schools was the need for additional staff and helpers to prepare food.

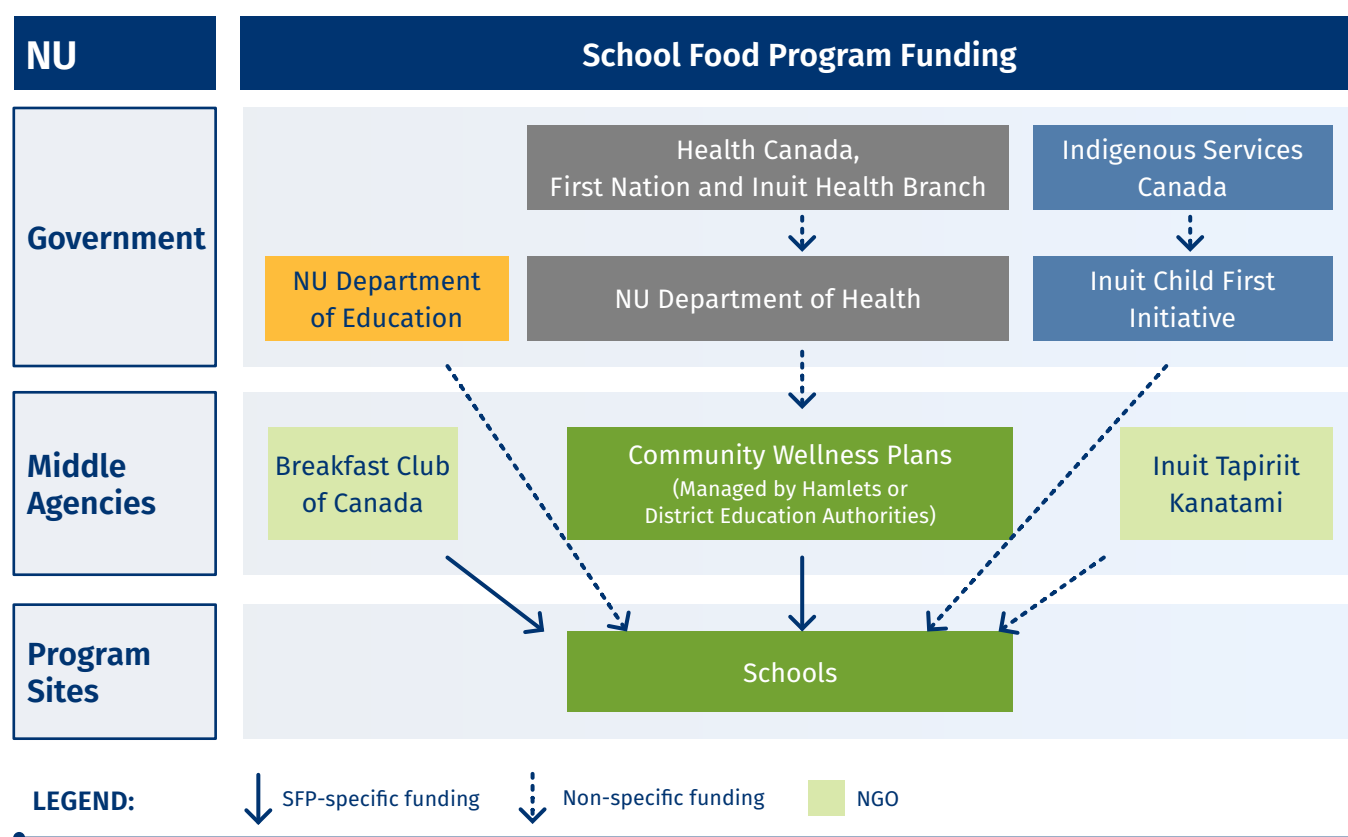
SFPs received nutrition and program support from Regional Nutritionists (Registered Dietitians) and community and regional wellness staff. Their assistance included menu development, food costing, nutrition training for staff and volunteers, providing tools and resources, supporting food safety guidelines, and helping with funding applications.

Government Funding:

\$1,726,646 (Health) + Indigenous Services Canada (unknown) + Education (unknown)

The main source of funding for SFPs in Nunavut comes from the CWP fund administered by the Department of Health, Population Health Division. The base funding for SFPs was \$1,626,646 from the CWP, with an additional \$100,000 in enhancement funding. SFP funding represented 20.3% of the total CWP fund (\$8,469,696) in 2023/24.

In addition to funding from the Department of Health, most SFPs in Nunavut rely on at least one additional funding source. Schools reported receiving supplementary SFP funding from the following sources, listed in order of most to least commonly reported: Indigenous Services Canada's Inuit Child First Initiative, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami³², Breakfast Clubs of Canada³³, and the Department of Education (funding amounts unknown). 38% of schools reported that they had to compromise the quantity of food served to avoid running out of funds; 28% of schools ran out of SFP funds at least once in 2023/24.



³² Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami is a non-governmental organization that represents Inuit across Canada, advocating for their rights, interests, and well-being on issues like health, education, and the environment.

³³ Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 7 nutrition programs that serve 1,078 Indigenous students in NU (BCC, 2023). These programs overlap with the SFPs funded by the territorial government so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the territory.

Northwest Territories



Every school in the Northwest Territories (NWT) offers at least one school food program (SFP), including breakfast, lunch, and/or snacks depending on the schools' discretion. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment is the main government funder, providing annual funding to all schools through the Healthy Food for Learning program. Additional funding support comes from the Department of Health and Social Services and Indigenous Services Canada. The Food First Foundation also supports schools in the territory by distributing SFP funding and promoting food and nutrition education through its Taste Makers program. Meanwhile, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation supports students and their families' in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region by coordinating food purchases and deliveries.



100%
of schools



Unknown
students



\$700,000
Education

Health and Social Services
+
Indigenous Services Canada
(unknown)

Programs:

Healthy Food for Learning: The Department of Education, Culture and Employment provides funding to all NWT schools for SFPs—breakfast, snacks, and/or lunch—through the Healthy Food for Learning program, which is part of the territory's Anti-Poverty Strategy ([NWT Government, n.d.](#)). Funds flow through NWT's 10 education bodies and can only be used toward the cost of food. Schools may partner with local grocery stores, businesses, and government departments to develop and implement their SFPs, and often involve students.

Food First Foundation: The Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) funds Food First Foundation, a registered charity dedicated to supporting food and nutrition education in NWT schools. Food First Foundation receives two funding streams from HSS: the Anti-Poverty Fund and the Healthy Choices Fund. The Anti-Poverty Fund permits their funding to support SFPs operating under the *Healthy Food for Learning* program as noted above. On the other hand, the Healthy Choices Fund stipulates that their funding is only utilized for nutrition education. Supported by the Healthy Choices Fund, the Food First Foundation offers *Taste Makers*, a cooking and nutrition education program for schools. From food safety to grocery budgeting to recipes and activities, the *Taste Makers* manuals have been developed in the North for the North and align with the NWT curriculum ([Food First, n.d.](#)).

Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC): Since 2021, the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation (IRC) has operated a comprehensive SFP funded by Indigenous Services Canada. The IRC supports all seven schools (100%) in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region's six communities with providing breakfast every morning and lunch at least once per week³⁴ at no cost to all students as well as funding SFP cooking staff ([ITK, n.d.](#)). In addition to school meals, the IRC offers summer meal programs for families, with each community tailoring its approach. The IRC also coordinates regional food purchasing to ensure consistent and efficient access to nutritious meals via the family summer meal and SFPs. The IRC School Food Program has also been incorporating country foods from

³⁴ Some communities receive lunches more frequently, depending on the availability of staff to support the program.

the Country Food Processing Plant in Inuvik into school breakfast and lunch menus, while collaborating with staff in the Health and Wellness Division at IRC to educate children and youth about healthy eating and nutrition ([Inuvialuit Corporate Group, 2022](#)). To learn more about the IRC SFP, see the program case study in the [School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report \(Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 29-31\)](#).

School and Student Participation:

\$700,000 Education and Health + Indigenous Services Canada (unknown)

All 49 schools in NWT receive funding from the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to run one or more SFPs via the Healthy Food for Learning program; student participation unknown. The Food First Foundation funded 31 schools (63% of schools), which reached 2986 students (35% of NWT students) in 2023/24 offering some insight into student SFP participation in NWT. The IRC School Food Program is accessible to all ~1,400 students across seven schools in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, though the exact number of participants in these breakfast and lunch programs is unknown.

Government Funding:

Department of Education, Culture and Employment, to all NWT schools

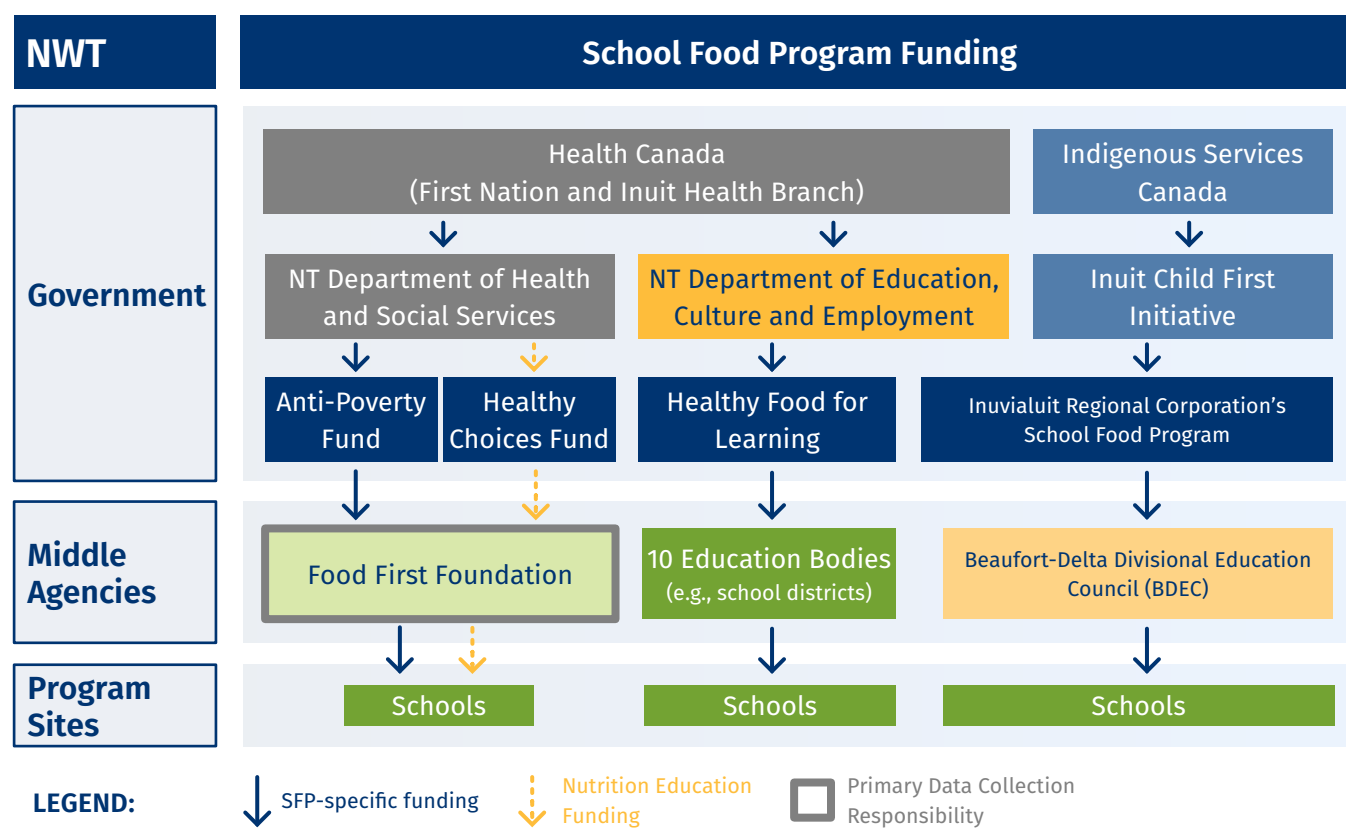
- \$650,000 annually for the *Healthy Food for Learning* program (via the Anti-Poverty Strategy).

Department of Health and Social Services, to the Food First Foundation

- \$50,000 annually for SFPs (Anti-Poverty Fund).
- \$10,000 annually for nutrition education³⁵ (Healthy Choices Fund).

Indigenous Services Canada, via IRC

- Provides funding for the IRC School Food Program to cover food purchases, shipping, staff wages, and administrative support. The funding amount is unknown.



³⁵ Nutrition education is not classified as SFP funding; therefore, it is excluded from the total funding tally.

Ontario



In Ontario, three large government funded programs provide meals and snacks to students with breakfast being the most common. Ontario's programs are some of the longest standing in the country, with provincial funding dating back to 1995 (Ruetz and McKenna, 2021). In November 2024, the province of Ontario was the third province to sign an agreement with the federal government to expand and enhance their school food programming. In the first year, the federal investment of approximately \$108.5 million will help Ontario reach over 160,000 more students and serve over 9.8 million more meals (CBC, 2024).



>82%
4083 schools



>49%
840,107 students



\$41.4 million
Children, Community and
Social Services

+

Health

Programs:

Ontario Student Nutrition Program: The Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP) is the largest SFP in Ontario, spanning the vast majority of the province except for remote areas of Northern Ontario. 14 Regional Lead Agencies (all NGOs) oversee SFPs in their respective jurisdictions. Student Nutrition Ontario (SNO) is a provincial NGO that coordinates large-scale partnerships, distributes funding and resources, and supports the delivery of student food programs across 14 regions. It also fosters knowledge sharing, builds local networks, and helps Lead Agencies attract donors, volunteers, and community support.

First Nations Student Nutrition Program: The First Nations Student Nutrition Program (FNSNP) provides funding for breakfast, snack and lunch programs in 159 educational settings throughout Ontario, including 65 First Nations communities and in 27 urban Indigenous communities. The program is delivered by 42 Indigenous partners through a First Nation-led process.³⁶ Delivery models vary depending on the needs, capacity and infrastructure of the program site. Indigenous partners are responsible for all aspects of the design and delivery of their programs including food sourcing, meal preparation and distribution. The FNSNP partners may also incorporate traditional food practices including traditional cooking classes, berry offerings, drumming, and harvesting/fishing/hunting. Through the FNSNP, approximately 1.4 million nutritious meals and snacks are served each year.

Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program: The Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP) is a 20-week³⁷ initiative running from January to June that provides no-cost fresh fruits and vegetables to school-aged children in northern and remote fly-in communities. Funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health, the NFVP was initially launched in 2006 in the Algoma and Porcupine districts. Due to its successful adoption by schools and high student engagement the NFVP was expanded in 2014 and again in 2017 to now service all of northern Ontario.

³⁶ The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres also receives funding for Student Nutrition Programs for children and youth who attend Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin programs or the Alternative Secondary School Program.

³⁷ In 2023-24, the program offered fruit and vegetables for 24 weeks due to a funding surplus. Normally only 20 weeks.

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) manages the menu planning, procurement and distribution of the NFVP, delivering approximately 60% of Ontario-grown produce to over 85,731 students in over 459 provincial and First Nation schools in 2023/24.³⁸ Each student receives two servings of fruits and vegetables per week, along with education on healthy eating and physical activity. Public Health Units coordinate with school boards, provide schools with necessary resources to implement the program and complementary healthy eating education.

School and Student Participation:

Instead of tracking the number of unique students participating in SFPs, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services tracks the daily average of students participating in the Ontario Student Nutrition Program. The First Nations Student Nutrition Program only tracks the number of meals served. Data from Ontario reflects the number of schools participating in the OSNP (3924 schools) and the FNSNP (159 education sites) (>82% of schools; 4083 schools) while only the number of students participating in the OSNP (>49% of students; 840,107 students) as student participation data is unavailable for the FNSNP.

School and student participation in the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program overlaps with the operation of the OSNP in some regions of the province, so to avoid double counting data from the NFVP was not included in Ontario's tally, representing a modest underreporting as there are a handful of schools participating in the NFVP that do not participate in the OSNP.

Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 53 nutrition programs that serve 4,109 Indigenous students in ON. These programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous (BCC, 2023). It is unclear if these programs overlap with the FNSNP and/or NFVP so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.

Government Funding:

\$41,413,100 (Children, Community and Social Services + Health)

- \$32.8 million from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), Child Development Unit for the Ontario Student Nutrition Program (OSNP).
- \$5.2 million from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Child Welfare and Protection Division for the First Nations Student Nutrition Program (FNSNP). Funding is given directly to First Nation communities and NGOs.
 - MCCSS funding for the OSNP and FNSNP in 2023/24 includes a one-time investment of \$5 million announced in October 2023; therefore, is collectively \$5M more than the typical core annual funding from MCCSS.
- \$3,413,100 from the Ministry of Health for the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP).

Governance of the Ontario Student Nutrition Program:

Student Nutrition Ontario (SNO) Responsibilities:

- Provides a unified voice to speak on behalf of the student nutrition programs across the province.
- Leverages large-scale partnerships to enhance the delivery of student nutrition programs.
- Shares knowledge, best practices, and learning that support innovative program delivery.
- Streamlines the distribution of funding and resources to all partners delivering SNPs on behalf of national and provincial partnerships.
- Supports the creation of local partnerships, coordination of services, and attracting donors and volunteers.

³⁸ The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) works in partnership with Public Health Units, school boards, and schools in Algoma, North Bay, Parry Sound, Northwestern, Porcupine, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, and Timiskaming regions.

SNO Lead Agency Responsibilities:

- Administering funds/program. The funds from Lead Agencies flow three different ways:
 1. From Lead Agencies to Community Partners (based on a locally agreed upon formula), who then flow it to Boards > schools, or directly to Schools;
 2. From Lead Agencies to Boards, who flow it to schools;
 3. From Lead Agencies directly to schools. In all these arrangements, the Lead Agency determines the amount of funds that the schools get and the required uses of funds. Funds then go to a) community partners to Boards, b) directly to Boards or c) schools. If funds go to a) or b) the financial controller from each school board then processes an EFT to each school based on the allocated amounts that the Lead Agency provides.
- Staffing Food and Logistic Coordinator (FLC) roles. FLCs are responsible for regional procurement, logistics support; province-wide collaboration among regional FLCs.
- Staffing Community Development Coordinators (CDCs) within the Lead Agency, or in collaboration with Community Partners/Committees (NGOs). CDCs are responsible for identifying funding sources for infrastructure and food purchasing, liaising with Public Health partners, etc.
- Oversight and evaluation, including ensuring SNPs adhere to the Ontario Nutrition Guidelines.

Community Partner / Advisory Committee:

In 2024, there were 20 funded community partners which are non-profit / charitable organizations that are subcontracted to run SNPs in some regions, and 26 Advisory Committees which have volunteer representatives from PH, education, community, corporate, and SNPs that work with regional CDC to support local SNPs.³⁹

Responsibilities include:

- Developing a strategic plan to guide local efforts in achieving SNP goals, including annual work plans with specific targets, timelines and expectations.
- Liaising with the local Public Health Unit to support program delivery through education, workshops, consultation, site visits/assessments, and print resources.
- Fundraising partnerships with local sponsors for food, infrastructure, capacity building, sustainability
- Developing local guidelines and criteria for grant applications
- Community partner NGOs support SNP operations in some regions by:
 - Buying and delivering food for SNPs
 - Recruiting and training volunteers
 - Liaising with Lead Agency staff and regional SNP provider

Public Health Unit Responsibilities

- Support the implementation of the Ontario SNP Nutrition Guidelines
- Support, implement and advance school food policy with school boards, administrators and school communities; participate in provincial and national advocacy
- Strategic direction and community development expertise to community partnerships and committees
- Some Health Units are the community lead agency that act as funding flow-through; some health units assume the financial responsibilities for SNP community partnerships
- Public Health Inspectors carry out school inspections and offer Safe Food Handling certification for SNP volunteers

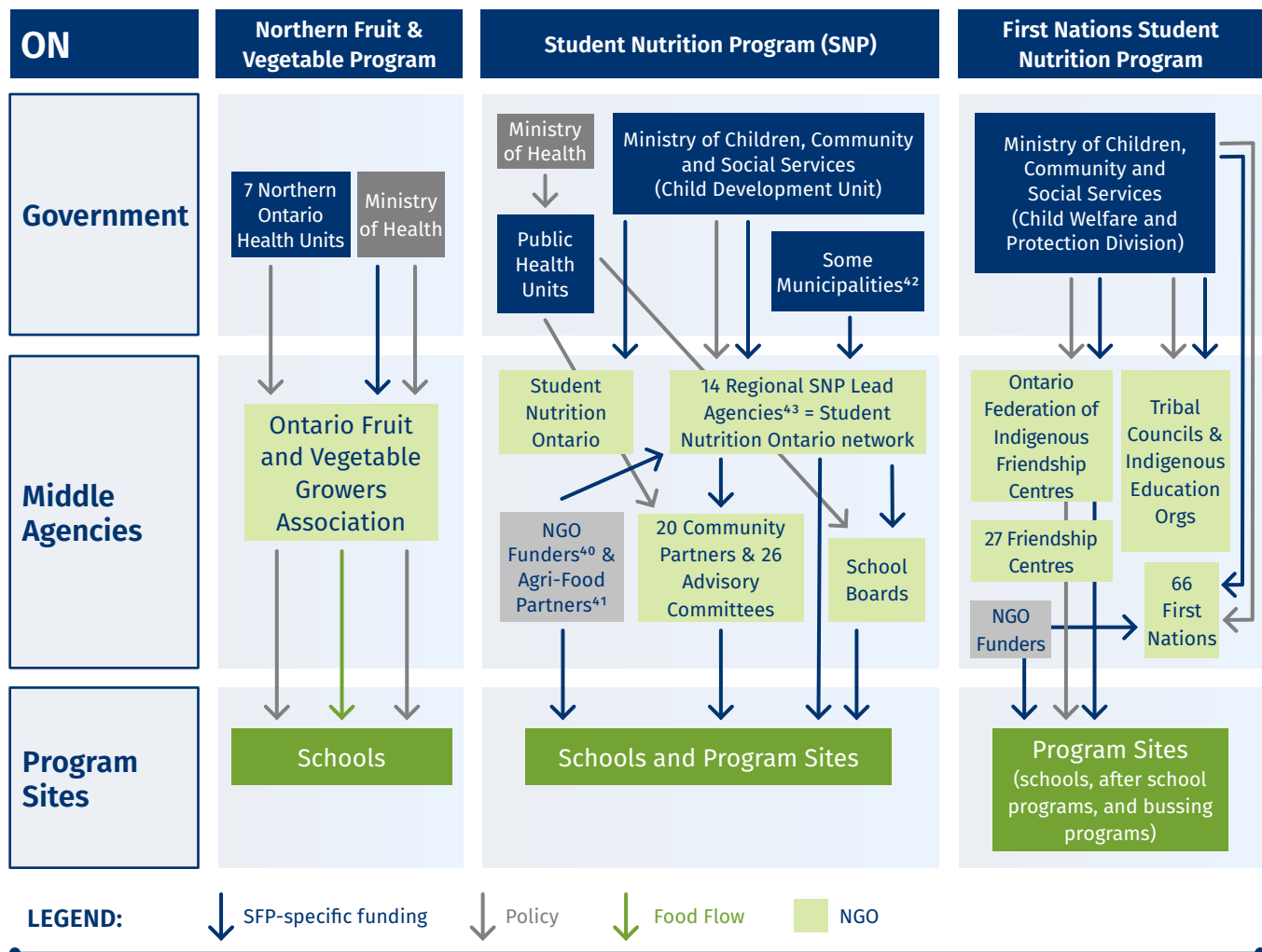
³⁹ Some Community Partnerships also have Advisory Committees to guide their work. Community partnerships flow funding but Advisory Committees do not. Advisory Committee members often consist of public health RD, school board reps, community members, corporate reps, and general SNP stakeholders, supported by paid CDCs / FLCs.

School Board Responsibilities:

- Providing funds to schools to operate programs with help of regional FLC and CDC / CDW, etc.
- Board reps sit at community partnership, liaise with Board on SNPs
- Some areas have MOUs between Boards and community partnerships to support SNPs

School Responsibilities:

Finding school-level volunteers to run programs, buying food (ordering food or arranging for pick up), preparing and serving food to students, and tracking and reporting.



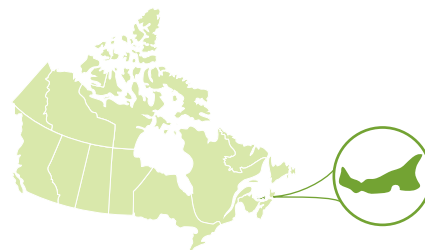
⁴⁰ NGO Funders: Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC), PC Children's Charity (PCCC), The Grocery Foundation (GF), and others provide direct funding for schools and in some cases in-kind donations of food to programs. These funds/food follow to a) Lead Agencies, b) Community Partners/Committees, or c) directly to schools. PCCC does not communicate directly with Lead Agencies, but Agencies know how much PCCC funding each of the schools in their region receives as their schools report this to them

⁴¹ Agri-Food Partners: food producers, food processors and small businesses provide preferential pricing or in-kind donations.

⁴² Municipalities: A few municipalities have funded student nutrition programs in Ontario for several years. The City of Toronto provides the largest investment, with an annual investment of over \$20 million to SNPs. The Cities of Ottawa and Brantford, as well as Prince Edward County, also support SNPs financially through various approaches (i.e. multi-year grant stream, annual funding or campaigns). In 2024, several additional municipalities began to invest in SNPs, including Cambridge, Kingston, Norfolk, and Hamilton.

⁴³ Lead Agencies: There are 14 Lead Agencies (all NGOs) that sit at the SNO table; however, MCCSS recently merged the transfer payment agreement from two of the Lead Agencies into one, so there are only 13 Lead Agencies with transfer payment agreements with the provincial government.

Prince Edward Island



There are two province-wide school food programs (SFPs) in Prince Edward Island: a breakfast/snack program and a lunch program. A non-profit administers the pay-what-you-can (PWYC) universal lunch program, that began in 2020 modelled off of Newfoundland's PWYC program coordinated by the School Lunch Association. PEI became the 4th province to sign an agreement with the Federal government in November 2024 to expand SFPs in their province. The federal government agreed to contribute \$7.1 million over the next three years to provide over 1,500 more students with lunches, and over 800 more students with breakfasts and snacks in 2024/25 (CBC, 2024).



100%
of schools



63%
of students



\$5.5 million
Social Development
Education

Programs:

Breakfast and snack programs: The PEI Department of Education and Early Years partially funds breakfast and/or snack programs in every school in the province. In 2023/24, 88 breakfast and snack programs provided free breakfasts and/or snacks to nearly two-thirds of PEI's elementary and secondary students each week. Community volunteers and school staff play a vital role in delivering PEI's breakfast and snack programs.

PWYC Lunch Program: Building on a 2020 pilot project, the Department of Social Development and Seniors, as part of its poverty alleviation strategy, funds the non-profit PEI School Food Program Inc to oversee a Pay-What-You-Can (PWYC) lunch program called BON APPÉTIT. PEI's PWYC Lunch Program was the first province-wide universally accessible school lunch program in Canada modelled off of Newfoundland's PWYC lunch program. All K-12 students in PEI have access to the lunch program where families choose the amount they pay—whether it is the full price of \$5.75, part of the cost, or \$0. The program is operated by paid SFP staff in every PEI school through one of three food service delivery models: an internally operated hub kitchen model; an externally contracted vendor model; or the Commission Scolaire de Langue Francais (CSLF) kitchen model. For more information, see the program's website and the case study in the School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report (Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 48-51).

School and Student Participation:

The breakfast program operates in all educational institutions in PEI,⁴⁴ and supported approximately 13,778 students (63%) in 2023/24. The Lunch Program operates in all 62 publicly funded English and French schools in PEI. In 2023-24, an average of 5,536 meals were served daily. Participation is estimated to be around 50% of students registered in the program. To not double count students, the provincial total for PEI student participation is reflective of the breakfast program participation rate.

⁴⁴ In 2023/24, there were 74 educational institutions in PEI: 56 publicly funded English schools, 6 CSLF schools and 12 Alternative Education sites.

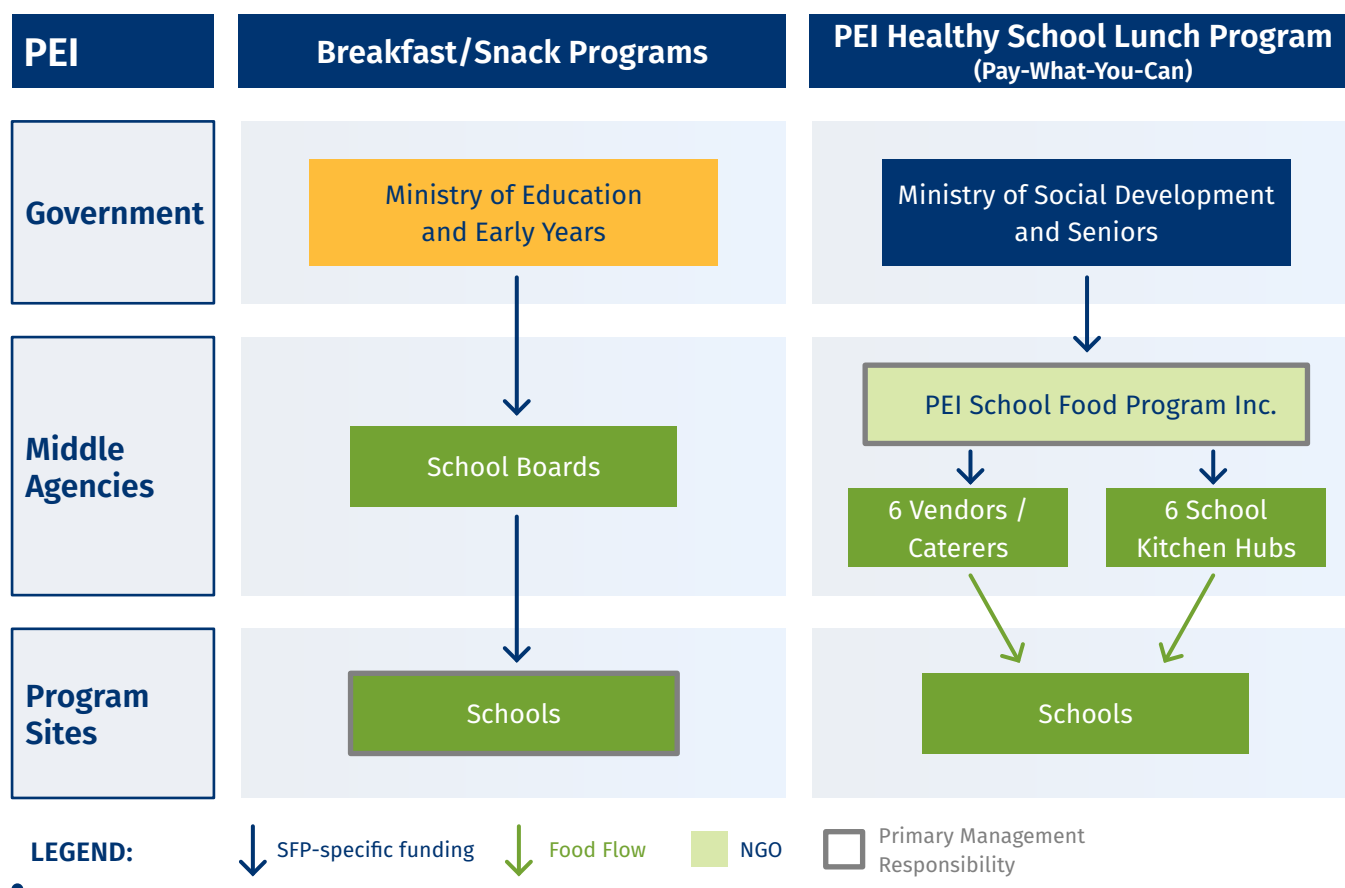
Indigenous SFPs in PEI: In addition to the programs above, Lennox Island First Nation offers a daily free meal to all students (48 students). This universally accessible program is provincially funded and Band operated aimed at addressing food insecurity and improving student health and academics. Breakfast Club of Canada also provides financial support to the program (BCC, 2023).

Government Funding:

\$5,443,705 (Social Development + Education)

The PEI Department of Education and Early Years partially funds breakfast and snack programs. Provincial funding is distributed to school boards, then transferred to the schools (determined through an application process). These programs rely on a combination of provincial funding, local donations, fundraising efforts, and support from provincial and national charities. In 2023-24, the budget for the breakfast program was \$325,000.

The Department of Social Development and Seniors provides funds to the non-profit, PEI School Food Program Inc., which administers the PWYC lunch program. In 2023-24, the PWYC lunch program received \$5,118,705 in provincial funding, accounting for approximately 80% of its total budget, with the remaining 20% provided through parental contributions (2022/23 data from the program case study, Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 50).



Quebec



In Quebec (QC), the majority of school food programs (SFPs) are supported through a combination of QC government funding and funds raised by two large non-profit organizations: La Cantine Pour Tous and The Breakfast Club of Canada. The Ministry of Education flows most funds used for SFPs, while the Ministries of Health; Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; and Work & Social Solidarity, support several different health promotion and local food procurement programs that complement SFPs. In 2023-24, SFPs were available in approximately 657 schools (~27% of the province), supported by \$60.9 million dollars from the Ministry of Education. In addition, \$1 million from Indigenous funding sources supported SFPs for Indigenous students.

In QC's March 2024 Budget, an additional \$6.8 million per year was allocated to SFPs, increasing core annual funding to nearly \$69 million starting in 2024-25, with a total five-year investment of \$34 million ([CityNews, 2024](#)). Despite substantial investment from the QC government, the decentralized allocation and administration of funds across various SFPs and complementary initiatives make tracking student participation in SFPs in QC challenging. On March 7, 2025, Through this agreement, Quebec signed their National School Food Agreement for \$65.2 million over three years.



~27%
670 schools



~11%
111,497 students



\$60.9 million
Education

Programs:

Breakfast and PWYC Lunch Programs: The Ministry of Education funds SFPs using discretionary funds channeled through two non-profit organizations. The Breakfast Club of Canada supports breakfast programs across the province, while *La Cantine pour tous* operates *La Cantine dans les écoles (LCDE)*, a regional "pay-what-you-can" (PWYC) lunch program that provides school lunches by partnering with local non-profit caterers. Under LCDE's PWYC model, caregivers choose the amount they pay per meal, with a minimum contribution of \$1. Families are encouraged to contribute more if they are able, fostering a system where those who can help support those who cannot (refer to the Glossary for a detailed definition and description of PWYC). In the 2023/24 school year, parents paid an average of \$3.27 per meal of the suggested price of \$6 per meal ([LCPT 2024, pg 12](#)).

Initially established in Montreal, LCDE has expanded to surrounding rural and remote locations where caterers are available (e.g., Gaspésie). In 2023/24, 25 caterers provided PWYC lunches to 31,590 students across 106 schools in 10 regions of the province ([2023/24 LCPT Annual Report](#)). For more information on the LCPT's operation model, see the LCDE's case study in the [School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report](#) (Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 57-60).

Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC) supported 591 breakfast programs (including 34 daycare programs), serving 87,038 children daily across QC in 2023/24 ([2023/24 BCC Annual Report](#))⁴⁵. This included an average daily participation of approximately 11,655 Indigenous students in QC (First Nation and Inuit) through 81 breakfast programs in 2023/24. Indigenous student participation rates are approximate as these breakfast programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous. BCC's support focuses on supplying nutritious, high-quality food, providing essential equipment, training and offering technical and administrative support, including warehouse management and transportation logistics ([BCC, 2023: p. 20](#)).

Measure 15012, Food Aid: The Ministry of Education has several different funding allocations for “food aid”, with the main source flowing through Measure 15012, which provides funding to every school district (centres de services scolaire) which is authorized to be used on food literacy activities (e.g., cooking workshops and gardening projects), in addition to food purchases and small equipment; therefore, not a dedicated SFP funding source. School districts determine how much funding goes to each school based on socioeconomic data and distribute these funds directly to schools, who individually manage funds. Anecdotally, some schools implement universal programs while others run targeted SFPs, which may be due to limited funding. How often each school provides snacks and meals via this funding is unknown.

Regional Programs

There are also a few regional SFPs operating in Quebec. La Tablée des Chefs has run [the Solidarity Soups program](#) (les soupes solidaires) since 2022, which combines social and environmental benefits of making large quantities of unsold food into soup for school lunch. In 2023/24, soup was made available to all students at 21 schools in five regions of the province, Quebec City/Capitale-Nationale, Montérégie, Montréal, Laval, and Lanaudière⁴⁶. “Feeding the future” ([alimenter l'avenir](#)) is a regional snack program that has been operating in the Montérégie region since 2022. Run by [Moisson Rive Sud](#) - Montérégie's food bank - the program served 24 schools at no cost in 2023/24.

Complementary Initiatives Supporting SFPs

Complementary initiatives (not classified as SFPs) supporting the BCC's breakfast programs and LCTP's PWYC lunch programs include the National Strategy for purchasing Quebec foods, 2020-2027 [Stratégie nationale d'achat d'aliments Québécois, SNAAQ) and the Intergovernmental Policy on Health Prevention, 2022-2025 [Politique gouvernementale de prévention en santé, PGPS].

The National Strategy for purchasing Quebec foods (SNAAQ) provides funding to promote the purchase of Quebec-grown food in schools. Managed by the NGO M361, funds of up to \$15,000 per school are distributed directly to schools by the Quebec Institute of Tourism and Hospitality [[Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec](#), ITHQ], and Équiterre, an environmental NGO supporting QC schools implement sustainable food education and procurement. ITHQ helps schools track and quantify local food purchases, with its Aliment du Québec program focusing on increasing Quebec-grown food in school menus. [Équiterre](#) has been supporting schools in implementing M361-funded projects.

The Intergovernmental Policy on Health Prevention, 2022-2025 (PGPS), administered by the Ministry of Health and co-funded by the Ministries of Education (MEQ), Health (MSSS), and Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPAQ), allocated \$12.5 million to health-related programs through various NGOs in 2023/24. While school food is among the initiatives supported, the exact portion of funding dedicated to it remains unknown.

⁴⁵ BCC made breakfast accessible to a total of 141,953 daycare and JK-12 students (total school and daycare population of the 591 schools with breakfast programs), with 87,038 students on average participating daily in QC= 61.3% participation across these schools ([2023/24 BCC Annual Report](#)). BCC's QC data includes a pilot of 34 publicly-funded daycares funded by the Ministry of Children and Families ([Read more](#)).

⁴⁶ Soup is available for all 8739 students across the 21 schools. The number of students participating is unknown.

School and Student Participation:

Analysis by Le Collectif québécois, the Quebec chapter of the Coalition for Healthy School Food, identified a total of 821 unique SFPs (breakfast, snack and/or lunch) taking place in 657 schools (~27%⁴⁷), and serving 111,497 students (~11%) from primary and secondary schools, reflecting a tally of schools operating one or more SFPs, i.e., a BCC breakfast and/or LCDE PWYC lunch program.⁴⁸

Indigenous Participation: Breakfast Club of Canada (BCC) supported 81 breakfast programs that served approximately 11,655 Indigenous students in First Nation and Inuit communities (3,129 Inuit students in 16 Inuit schools⁴⁹ in Nunavik and 8526 First Nation students in 65 First Nation schools and daycares⁵⁰) in QC in 2023/24. Indigenous student BCC participation rates are approximate as these breakfast programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous. Approximately 78% of Inuit youth ages 5-19 are reached in Nunavik⁵¹ and 34% of First Nation youth ages 5-19 (on- and off-reserve; however, primarily on-reserve) in QC.⁵²

Government Funding:

\$60,900,000 (Education)

In 2023-24, the provincial government allotted \$60.9 million for food aid in schools, which included \$40.5 million for the food aid Measure 15012, \$15 million for BCC and \$5.4 millions for LCPT ([Ministry of Education in La Presse, 2024](#)). An additional \$5 million for BCC and \$1.8 million for LCPT was announced in the [2023 fall economic statement](#) as part of the Fight Against Poverty Plan 2024-2029 ([Plan de lutte à la pauvreté 2024-2029: pg 49](#)). For LCPT, approximately 46% of the program's funding comes from the GC Government, 18% from private donors, and 40% from parental contributions (2022/23 data from the [LCPT Case Study, pg 60](#)). Quebec's 2024 March Budget, allocated an additional \$6.8 million per year to SFPs, increasing core annual funding to nearly \$69 million starting in 2024-25, with a total five-year investment of \$34 million ([CityNews, 2024](#)).

In 2023/24, BCC received several sources of public funding (totalling \$1 million) to support the operation of 81 breakfast programs serving Indigenous students: the QC First Nations and Inuit Relations Secretariat (\$450,000) (Secrétariat aux relations avec les Premières Nations et les Inuits), Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Quebec region (\$200,000), Cree School Board (\$250,000), Cree Health Board (\$100,000).⁵³

⁴⁷ In 2023/24, according to the QC Ministry of Education there were 2,765 publicly funded schools (1818 Primary, 381 Secondary, 219 Primary and Secondary, 176 Vocational Training, and 171 Adult Education); however, for the purpose of this research the subtotal of primary and secondary schools was used= 2,418 schools.

⁴⁸ School and student participation data was unavailable from QC government funders given the decentralized manner in which funds are allocated and programs are administered. Indigenous SFPs supported by BCC are excluded from this total.

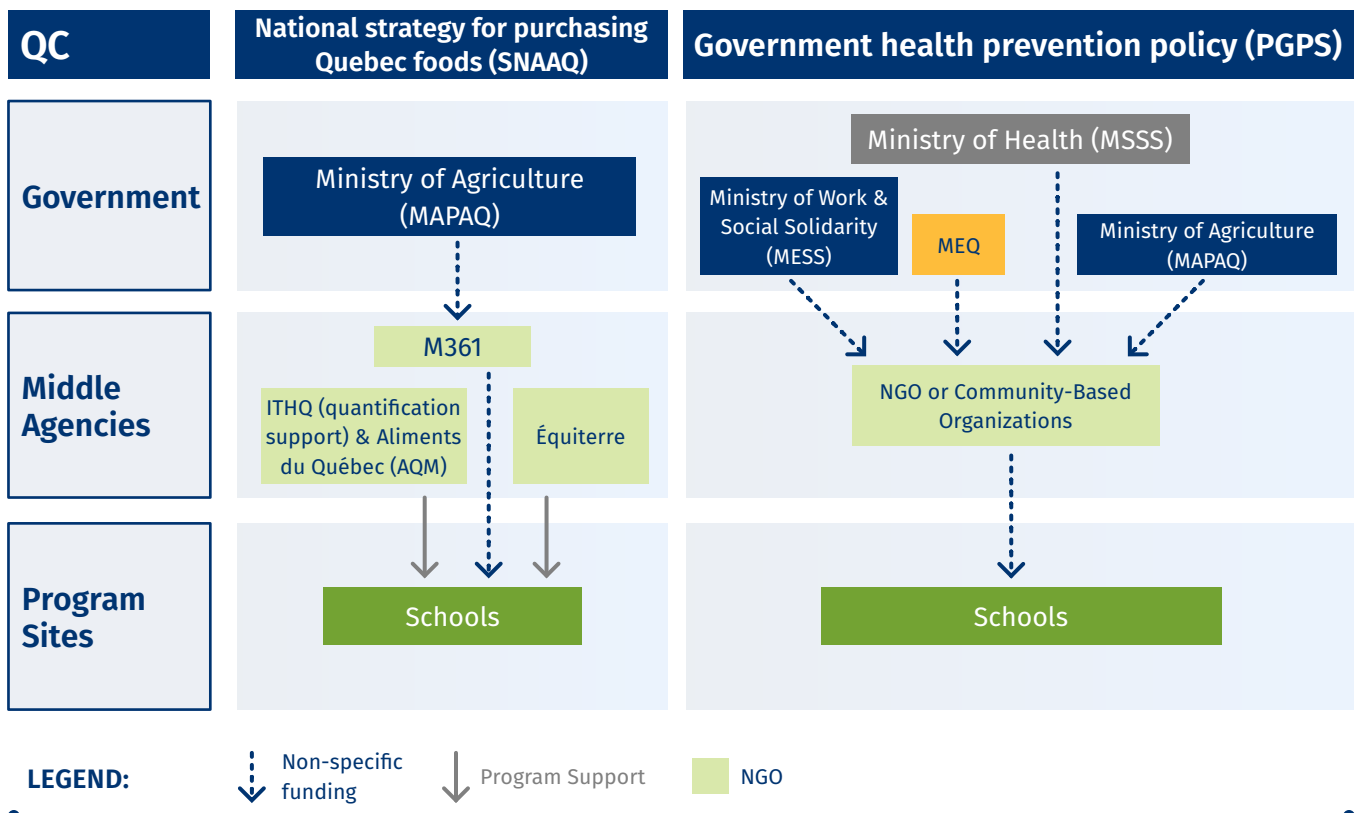
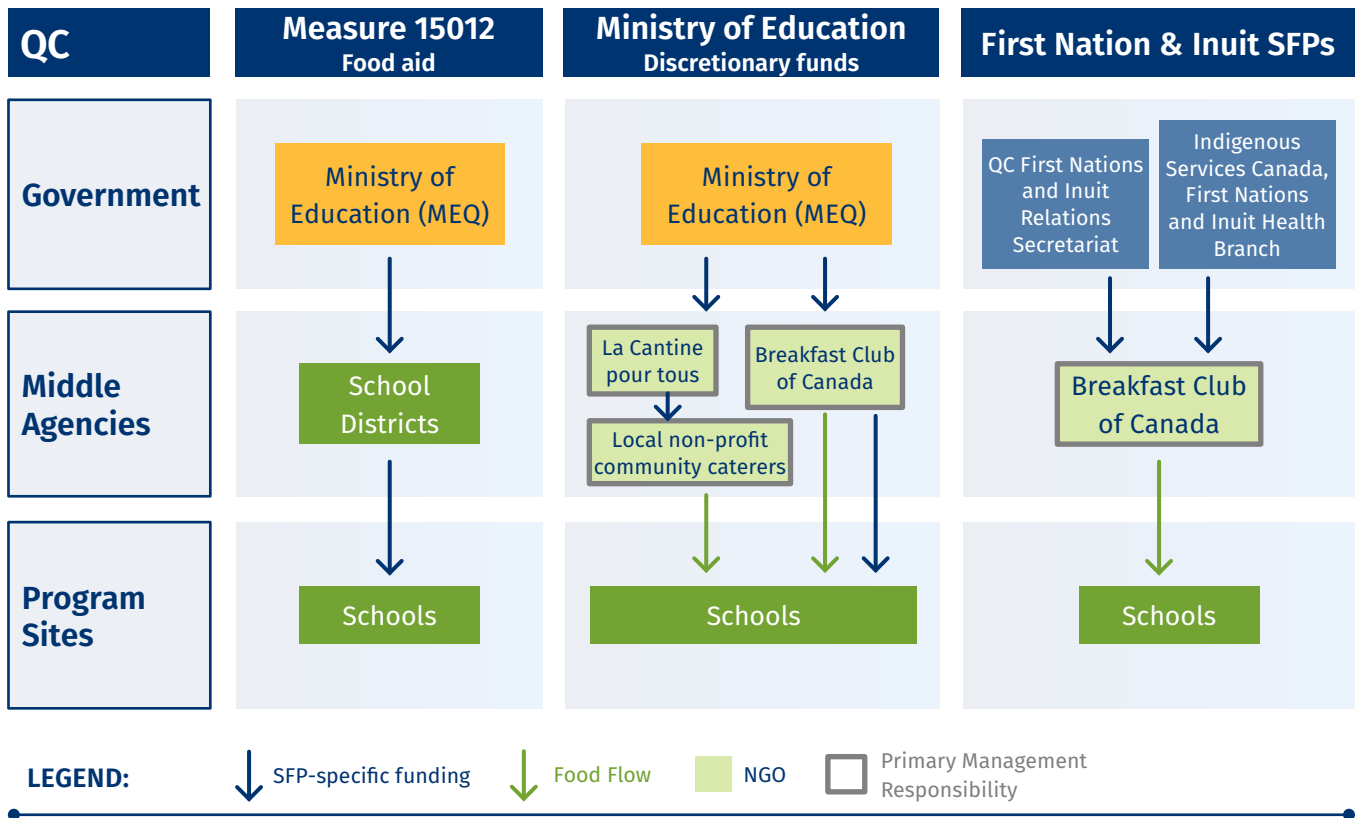
⁴⁹ Breakfast was accessible to a total of 3182 Inuit students in Nunavik at 16 Inuit schools with an average participation of 3129 Inuit students served daily= 98% of Inuit students in BCC participating schools.

⁵⁰ Majority of First Nation schools were on-reserve; only 4 schools were off-reserve. Breakfast was accessible to a total of 11,606 First Nation students in Quebec at 65 schools and daycares with an average participation of 8,526 served daily= 73.46% of First Nation students in BCC participating schools served daily.

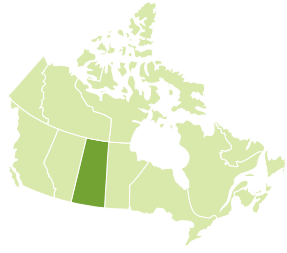
⁵¹ Calculated based on a total of 4,025 Inuit youth 5-19 in Nunavik (QC) according to the 2021 Census ([Statistics Canada, 2021](#)). Canada-wide: 21,330 total Inuit youth ages 5-19, residing inside or outside Inuit Nunangat, according to the 2021 Census ([Statistics Canada, 2021](#)) = 14.7% of Inuit in Canada reached in QC.

⁵² Calculated based on a total of 25,020 First Nation youth 5-19 (on- and off-reserve) in QC according to the 2021 Census ([Statistics Canada, 2021](#)) = 3% of First Nation students on- and off-reserve in Canada reached in QC (8526 FN students participating/288,235 Canadian total of FN youth ages 5-19). Majority of the 65 First Nation schools were on-reserve; only 4 schools were off-reserve.

⁵³ In 2024/25, in addition to the 2023/24 sources, public funding also includes Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, \$452,800 (formerly Kativik School Board, Nunavik), the Cree Regional Government, \$75,000, and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, \$200,000.



Saskatchewan



School food programs (SFP) in Saskatchewan are funded through the province's Child Nutrition Program, which provides programs and services that promote good nutrition practices including SFPs. In 2023-24, 327 schools received funding for SFPs from their school division or a community-based organizations (CBO).



43%
327 schools



Unknown
students



\$1 - 2.5 million
Education

Programs:

Child Nutrition Program: The Child Nutrition Program (CNP) promotes good nutrition practices for children, through programs and services such as SFPs, local food security initiatives, and help in developing independent living skills. The CNP is delivered through two program streams. The Ministry of Education flows funds to school divisions (SDs) for the operation of SFPs, and to community-based organizations (CBOs) to support a combination of SFPs, gardens, and other community food security programs. In 2023-24, 229 schools in 19 of the province's 27 SDs offered one or more SFPs. An additional 98 schools delivered SFPs with support from 25 CBOs, either directly supporting programming or redirected funds to schools. For example, in the case of CHEP Good Food, the NGO offers a variety of programs for schools, families and individuals in Saskatoon, including delivering school lunches and infrastructure support for schools as well as redistributing SFP funds directly to schools as bulk food buying credits. Nutritional guidance for the CNP is provided in partnership between the Ministries of Health and Education.

School and Student Participation:

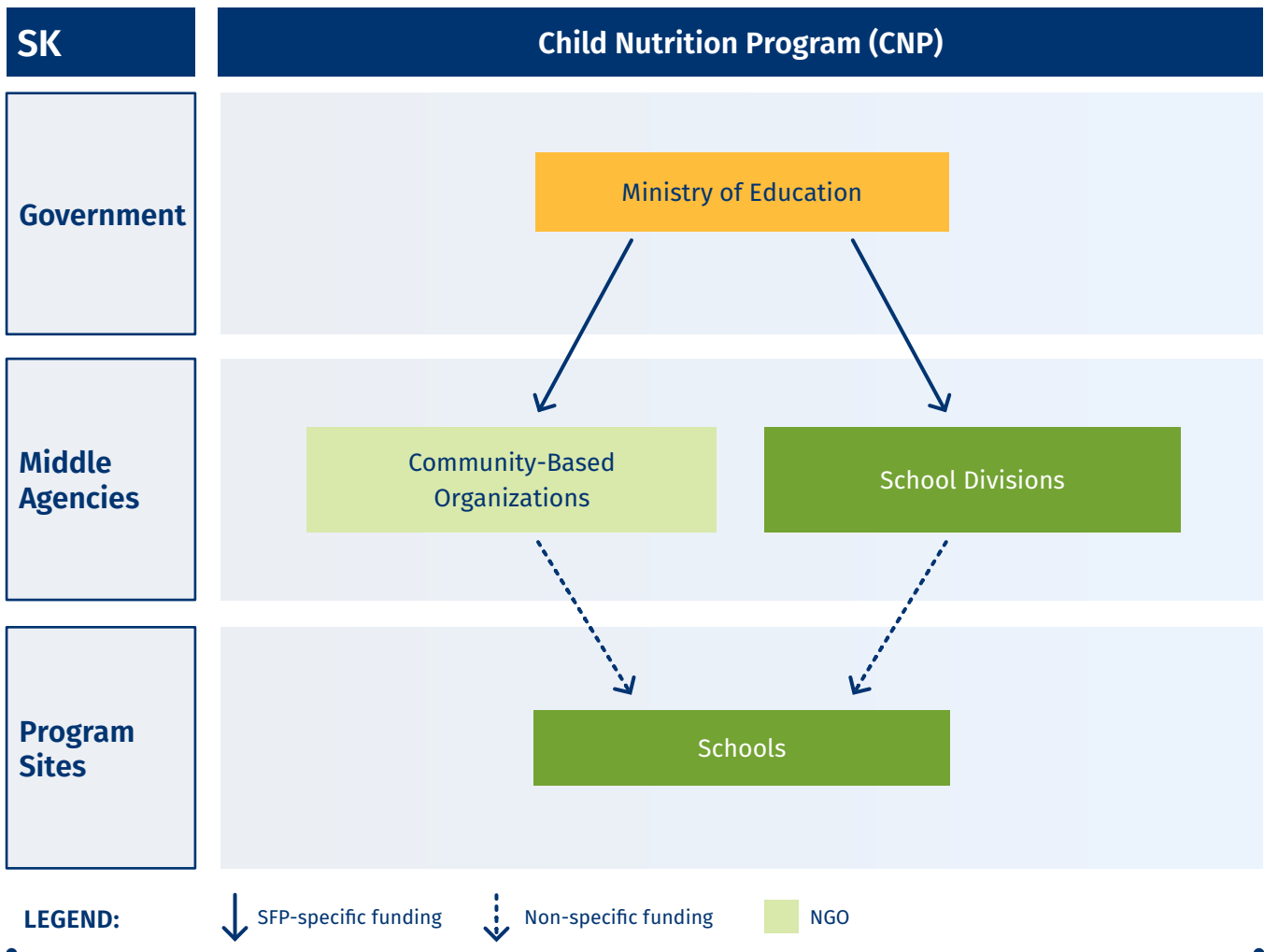
In 2023/24, 327 or 43% of schools in SK offered one or more SFPs. The Ministry of Education does not currently collect data on the number of unique students served across the two program streams, but rather collects the number of snacks and meals served over the school year. In 2023-24, SDs served 4,167,950 meals and snacks, while CBOs served 2,305,184 meals and snacks.

Indigenous SFPs in SK: Breakfast Club of Canada reports funding 38 school nutrition programs in SK that serve 6,074 Indigenous students. These programs are either in Indigenous communities or in public schools where at least 50% of the school population is Indigenous ([BCC, 2023](#)). It is unclear if these programs overlap with the programs funded by SK Ministry of Education's Child Nutrition Program so they were not added to the tally for schools and students participating in the province.

Government Funding:

>\$1,049,970 to <\$2,575,000 (Education)

The province's Ministry of Education funds the Child Nutrition Program (CNP) via school divisions and community-based organizations (CBOs) who apply for CNP funding on an annual basis. These dollars, and funding from other sources, are used by SDs and CBOs to support the nutrition and nutrition education needs of children and families in school and after-school. In 2023-24 between \$1,049,970 to \$2,575,000 dollars flowed through these programs. Funding for SFPs in SK is a minimum of the lowest figure which is the amount allocated directly to school districts for SFPs but less than the total value of the CNP which is a combination of school districts and CBO-funded initiatives that support a combination of SFPs, gardens, and other community food security programs.



Yukon



The Yukon's Indigenous-led school food programs provide no-cost meals and snacks to children across the territory, using a holistic, wrap-around service model that integrates student food literacy with community food and well-being services. Administered by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED), the territory-wide program offers two meals and two snacks daily to all Indigenous students, ensuring consistent access to nutritious food. YFNED's programs are primarily supported by federal government funding, while supplementary SFP funding support comes from the Yukon Food for Learning Association (YFFLA). The holistic and community-oriented approach to community nutrition services and SFPs in the Yukon is unique, supporting the broader needs of students and their families.



100%
29 schools



Unavailable
students



\$6.2 million
Indigenous Services
Canada
Education
Health

Programs:

The Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED) administers a Nutrition Program as one of its offerings in their wrap-around nutrition services, funded by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) via Jordan's Principle. Launched in 2018 with the Rural Nutrition Program, these initiatives began by supporting school food programs (SFPs) for all 12 rural Yukon First Nations, administered through the Council of Yukon First Nations (CYFN). In 2020, the program expanded to include 16 urban schools in Whitehorse and other communities, and was transferred to the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate (YFNED), a First Nation-led organization governed by the Chiefs Committee on Education.

The Nutrition Program ensures equitable access to healthy food for all Indigenous children aged 0 to 18 through in-school meal and snack services, food hampers, and family feasts throughout Yukon. With a team of 54 cooks and cook helpers working in school-based and YFNED kitchens, along with private catering partnerships, YFNED prepares meals for Indigenous students and their families across the territory. In Whitehorse, food is prepared in on-site kitchens in 9 of the 16 urban schools and one rented central kitchen facility; 24 cooks and cook helpers are employed to prepare these meals. YFNED cooks receive 34 days of training, which includes hands-on cooking with Indigenous ingredients, foraging and edible plants, and cooking for children given their nutrition requirements.

The Nutrition Program also promotes traditional practices such as seasonal harvesting, food preservation, and meal preparation. In collaboration with the Yukon Food for Learning Association, YFNED extends some food services to non-Indigenous students in need while integrating Indigenous culinary programming.

In 2023-24, YFNED distributed 1,413 Winter hampers (629 to rural communities and 784 in Whitehorse) and 1,168 Spring Break hampers (668 to rural communities and 500 in Whitehorse). They also organized nine family feasts, fostering community engagement and support (YFNED 2024). Fundamental to the success of these programs are the relationships the YFNED holds with First Nations and schools.

For more information on YFNED, see the program summary report in the [School Food Programs in Canada: 15 Promising Cases report](#) (Ruetz et al., 2024: pg 62-65).

The Yukon Food for Learning Association (YFFLA), funded by the Department of Health and Social Services, and Department of Education, offers funding directly to schools (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to provide small amounts of funding for breakfasts, lunches, snacks, emergency food, and small kitchen appliances.

School and Student Participation:

In 2023-24, The YFNED provided 1600 meals per day to students in 29 publicly funded Yukon schools serving students from grades K-12.⁵⁴ YFNED programs cover all publicly funded rural and urban schools across the territory so their figures serve as a proxy for territory-wide school participation. Meals rather than individual student numbers are tracked (see [2023-24 YFNED Annual Report](#) for more information).

The YFFLA also does not track individual student participants. YFFLA offers funding to all public schools who request it (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous). Unique student numbers are not tracked, but rather meals or snacks are counted. Collecting student participation numbers is challenging for schools in the territory as student numbers can fluctuate from month to month. Families may move internally in the territory, as well as in and out of the territory during the year for various reasons such as employment, health care, and traditional activities on the land.

Government Funding:

\$6,228,329 (Indigenous Services Canada + Education + Health)

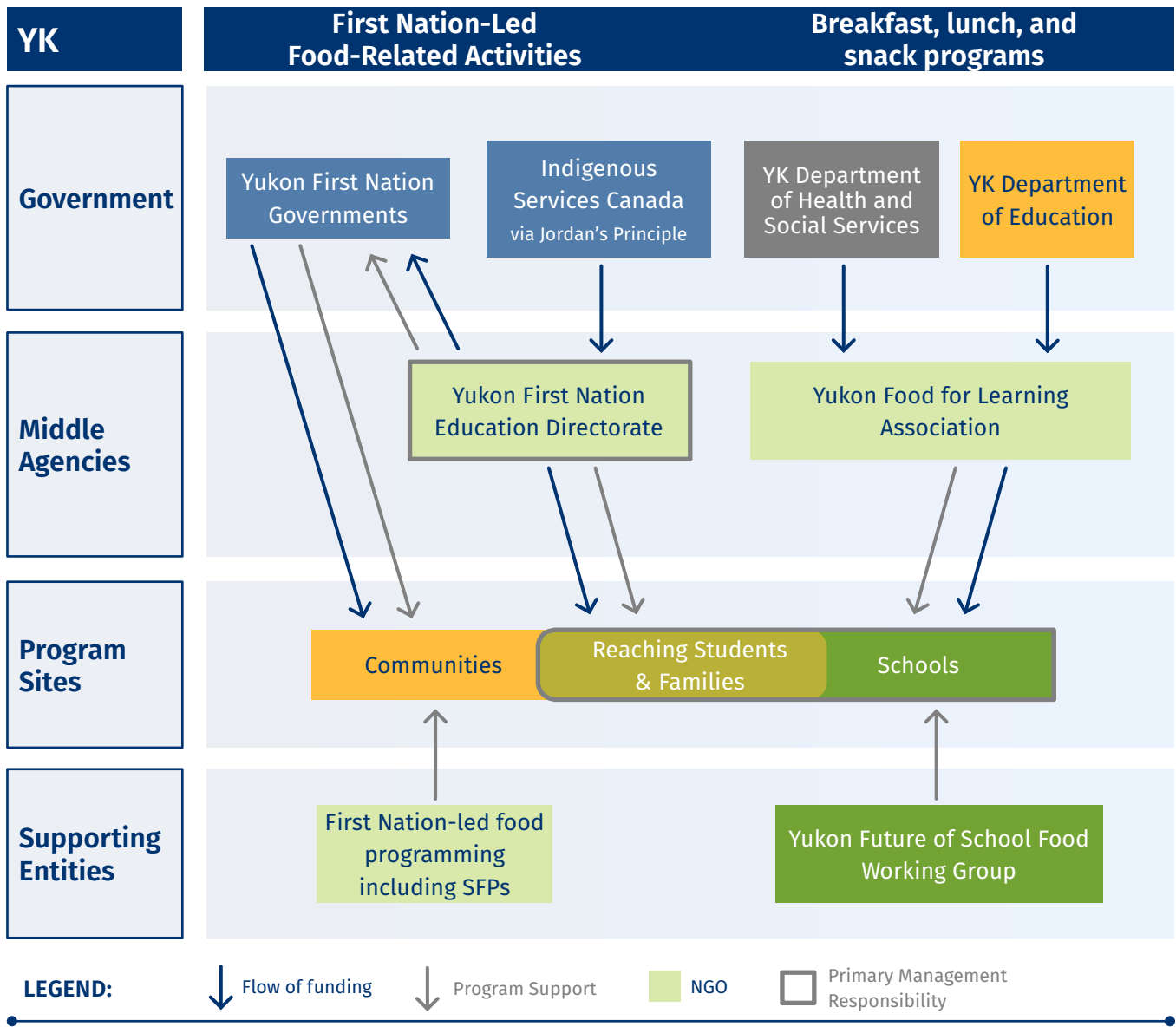
In the 2023-24 school year, the YFNED Nutrition Program had a budget of \$5,641,329, provided by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) via Jordan's Principle. These funds provided two meals and two snacks to each Indigenous student in the 29 rural and urban schools. YFNED also received a one-time \$50,000 contribution from the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services to support school feasts and other food-related programs.

YFFLA received \$587,000 (\$137,000 in annual funding and \$450,000 in one-time funding) from the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services in 2023/24 ([Yukon Government, 2024](#)). The amounts YFFLA distributed to schools varied from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars.

Governance:

The Yukon Future of School Food Working Group (YFSFWG), established in 2022, includes representatives from the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, YFFLA, the Departments of Education and Health and Social Services, school principals, and members of rural Yukon First Nations. This collaborative group works to streamline efforts related to equitable funding distribution, resource allocation, and SFP monitoring and evaluation, reflecting a unified and innovative approach to supporting SFPs across the territory.

⁵⁴ There is also one Teen Parent and Youth Achievement Centre in the Yukon which also receives meals from YFNED.



Appendix A: School Food Policies, Guidelines and other Guidance Documents

ALBERTA		
Food/Beverage/School Standards/Regulations <u>Alberta Provincial Food Regulation Act (2006)</u> Speaks to permitting for the spaces both external and internal to schools. <u>Calgary Board of Education - Administrative Regulation 3047 - Nutrition (2012)</u> Outlines service agreements between the Calgary Board of Education holds agreements and organizations related to school food provision. <u>Edmonton Public Schools - FBEAR Health and Wellness of Staff and Students (2015)</u> Identifies the role of the Principal in each school in promoting nutrition education and healthy eating in school communities.	Health/Educational Policies that Mention School Food/Nutrition/Literacy <u>Protection of Students with Life-Threatening Allergies Act (2020)</u> Outlines the requirements of how schools can support students with life-threatening allergies at school. Guidance Documents/Handbooks <u>School Nutrition Education Resource List (2024)</u> <u>Healthy Eating Starts Here (2025)</u> Provides a list of resources related to healthy eating environments in schools, creating healthy relationships with food, healthy eating lessons, nutrition youth advisory panel, etc.	Guiding Principles/ Frameworks <u>Alberta Nutrition Guidelines for Children and Youth (2012)</u> Acts as the guiding framework for the province. Allergens <u>Allergy Information for Classroom Teachers (n.d.)</u>

BRITISH COLUMBIA		
Guiding Principles/ Frameworks <u>Feeding Futures Guiding Principles (2024)</u> Intended to guide the development of school food programs and are not mandatory. <u>School Food Program Spotlights (2025)</u> Highlights schools and districts in British Columbia who are utilizing the Feeding Futures funds and innovating their school food programs.	Toolkits <u>BC School Food Toolkit (2023)</u> A Best Practice Document/toolkit published in early 2025 and informed by various consultants of the School Nutrition Practice Group. Sourcing/Procurement <u>A Guide to Sourcing B.C. Food in Kindergarten to Grade 12 School Food Programs (2024)</u> Recommends that Feed BC partners with public institutions to work towards spending 30% of total food expenditure on B.C. food (led by the Ministry of Agriculture). References additional resources such as <u>Cooking in Two Worlds: A Process Guide for Incorporating Indigenous Foods into Institutions. (2024)</u>	Guidance Documents/Handbooks <u>Create or Expand a School Food Program (2025)</u> A website that provides information to help start or grow school food programs. <u>School Meal and School Nutrition Program Handbook (2011)</u> <u>Guidelines for Food and Beverage Sales in B.C. Schools (2013)</u> <u>Healthy Food Guidelines for First Nations Communities (2014)</u>

There is no established governance of school food within the province or mandates. Instead, there are guidance documents available to help school food or meal programs

SASKATCHEWAN		
School Nutrition Policies <u>Nourishing Minds: Eat Well - Learn Well - Live Well (2019)</u> A provincially-provided document which is followed by school divisions, created and released in conjunction with the new Canadian food guidelines. Within the document, the Ministry of Education Policy Statement can be found.	Guiding Principles/ Frameworks <u>Healthy Foods for My School - Nutrition Standards for Saskatchewan Schools (2014)</u> Defines food and drinks to offer in Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools as part of nutrition programs, concessions, canteens, vending machines, fundraising, special classroom events, and more.	Guidance Documents/ Handbooks <u>Planning Healthy Menus for my School (2018)</u>

MANITOBA

School Nutrition Policies

The Public Schools Act (2025)

This Act governs school food beyond meal programs and relates to school nutrition as a whole.

Part III - Powers and duties of school boards and employees of school divisions and school districts

Section 41(b.3) (p.103) - all schools must have a school nutrition policy in place

Clause 41(1)(b.2) (Bill 2) was amended to include that the policy is reviewed at least once per school year by the school's advisory council, local school committee or school committee and actions to implement the policy is reported within the school's annual school plan

Section 47.2(3.1) (page 127-8) - annual report on nutrition programs (Bill 235 - The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Program))

Section 47.2(4) (page 128) - defines "nutrition program" as a meal or snack program provided by a school to its pupils at no charge.

Operational Policies

All meal programs must **register with the MB Health Protection Unit**. A Public Health Inspector will review the menu and facility and determine if a permit is required before operating.

Allergens

Bill 232 - The Public School Amendment Act (Anaphylaxis Policies) (2008)

Guiding Principles/ Frameworks

Province of Manitoba - Food in Every School (n.d.)

Guidance Documents/Handbooks

Moving Forward with School Nutrition Guidelines (2014)

Designed to assist schools as they make plans to improve school nutrition environments in Manitoba. These guidelines are not enforced or measured by the province.

CNCM School Meal Program Resources (n.d.)

Final Report of the Poverty and Education Task Force (February 2023)

A report from the Poverty and Education Task Force following their examination of the impacts of poverty on education, providing recommendations and actionable strategies. Recommendation 1 highlights the importance of in-school meal programs and partnerships.

ONTARIO

School Nutrition Policies

Policy/Program

Memorandum 150 (2010)

Is the most well-known policy for food in schools within Ontario that is commonly referred to by suppliers. Within this policy, 80% of food must meet the guidelines.

Operational Policies

Regional Health Unit regulations include food handling and inspection carried out at both local and regional levels. Health inspections aim to occur once per school year onsite and are supportive/educational in their approach (i.e., offering recommendations on how to improve in health and safety), however this may vary amongst municipal/public health levels or regions.

Guidance Documents/ Handbooks

Student Nutrition Program: Nutrition Guidelines (2020)

100% of food is recommended to meet the guidelines. These guidelines are more strict than the PPM150.

Health/Educational Policies that Mention School Food/ Nutrition/Literacy

Bill 216 (2020)

Learning about food and food systems education was included for grades 3, 5-9 in the 2022 Science and Technology curriculum.

Health and Physical Education additionally has direct food and nutrition related links.

QUEBEC

School Nutrition Policies

Going the Healthy Route at School (2007)

A framework policy on healthy eating and active living, encouraging students to develop personal competencies related to healthy eating and active living.

Health/Educational Policies that Mention School Food/ Nutrition/Literacy

Intergovernmental Health Prevention Policy Plan (2016)

Includes recommendations and areas where monies are allotted, including for school food and school food literacy (i.e., access for school-aged children).

Sourcing/Procurement

Stratégie nationale d'achat d'aliments québécois pour une alimentation locale dans les institutions publiques (SNAAO) (National Strategy for the Purchasing of Quebec Food: for local food in public institutions) (2020)

Aims to provide all public institutions in Quebec with a target for purchasing Quebec food. The goal for 2023-2027 is set for 92% of Quebec public institutions to have set a target or indicated their objective for purchasing Quebec food by March 2025, however, this is currently not strictly enforced. Annually, funding is provided to ~120 schools to create a school food initiative (i.e., salad bar) and schools must apply to be considered for the grant.

Guiding Principles/ Frameworks

The ÉducaMiam Referent (2024)

Developed to harmonize the practices of school staff and have consistent messages on healthy eating.

NEW BRUNSWICK

School Nutrition Policies

Policy 711 (2018)

Establishes the minimum requirement for creating a Healthier School Food Environment and governs what can be served within school cafeterias.

District Scolaire Francophone Sud has maintained the revised version of Policy 711 within their district: Policy 711 ASD-S Guidelines and Resources.

Policy 711 ASD-S Guidelines and Resources (2019)

A revised version of Policy 711 by District Scolaire Francophone Sud.

Guiding Principles/
Frameworks**Where to Eat in New****Brunswick Schools (2019)**

Recognizes school food providers who offer ideal nourishing foods to students and provides an overview of their stories of success.

Toolkits

Food for All NB Toolkits (n.d.)

A variety of toolkits supporting starting a community garden, starting a community kitchen, starting a school breakfast program, starting a fresh food bag program, and starting a farmer's market.

NOVA SCOTIA

School Nutrition Policies

School Food and Nutrition Policy (September 2024)

The School Food and Nutrition Policy (September 2024) is the most current policy governing school food within Nova Scotia, and was led by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The former 2006 policy was led by public health. The intention of the 2024 revision was to simplify the policy, and consisted of consultations with school food services and school administrators.

Food/Beverage/
School Standards/
Regulations**School Food and
Beverage Standards
(September 2024)**

Guiding Principles/ Frameworks

Equity Meals Across the Province (2024)

Acknowledges the new school lunch program and existing breakfast programs across the province and stands as a framework to develop a consistent approach to equity meals.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

School Nutrition Policies

**French School Nutrition
Policy (GEN-310) (2011)**

Operational Policies

**Operational Policy - Nutrition in
Schools (602) (2016)**

Operational policy to guide the Public Schools Branch personnel and school communities to support students, staff and parents/guardians to make nutritious food and beverage choices.

Allergens

**Minister's Directive No. MD 2020-07-
Procedures for Dealing with Life
Threatening Allergies (2020)**

Designates authority to the school principal to create a care plan with a parent and place food-related restrictions (food bans) within their schools.

Guidance Documents/
Handbooks**Operational Procedure -
Nutrition in Schools (602.1)
(2016)****Guide to Food Choices (2018)**

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Guidance Documents/Handbooks

The Provincial School Food Guidelines (2022)

The Provincial School Food Guidelines are intended to be recommendations which can be interpreted and implemented at the discretion of the school principal and therefore may vary across schools.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there are currently no identified mandated policies that govern school food programs.

The details provided in this chart were collected by Chelsea Costa and Amberley T. Ruetz and reflect information shared by key informants during personal communications in addition to online searches. The information included is intended to be as comprehensive as possible but may not reflect all existing policies. We are seeking information about territorial guidelines and guidance documents and will amend the change as more information is collected. Please contact the Coalition for Healthy School Food (schoolfood@foodsecurecanada.org) and Amberley T. Ruetz (amberleyruetz@gmail.com) for updates.



THE ARRELL FAMILY
FOUNDATION