August 7, 2020

The following updates have been prepared by the Provincial Territorial Group on Nutrition for the Joint Consortium for School Health.  
  
Each update is provided based on the provincial/territorial representative’s area of work and is not considered a comprehensive update for the entire province or territory.   
  
Provinces/territories not able to provide an update at the time the information was collated have not been included.

Provincial/territorial covid-19 School-related food security updates

Provincial/Territorial Group on Nutrition (PTGN)

# **British columbia**

## Submitted by Meghan Day, Provincial Dietitian

## Information current as of July 31, 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| New Public Health Guidance for K-12 Settings | On July 29, 2020, the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control released new [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf) that will inform full time in-class instruction beginning September, 2020. |
| Suspension of in-person instruction in K-12 schools (March 17) created a gap in food access for vulnerable children as they no longer had access to meals provided through school meal programs | The interruption of in-person instruction impacted food and nutrition programming for school-aged children in the province.  During in-class suspension and for the remainder of the 2019/20 school-year, the Ministry of Education advised school districts to continue to feed vulnerable children that would have otherwise relied on school meal programs.  The BC government worked with Save-on-Foods to lead the mobilization of school districts to meet the demand of vulnerable students and families. Save-on-Foods raised $670,000 for Breakfast Club of Canada to support school meal programming efforts.  Produce and milk usually provided to students 12 times per year in school by [the School Fruit and Vegetable Nutritional Program](https://www.bcaitc.ca/bc-school-fruit-vegetable-nutritional-program) (1451 schools, K-12) and the [+Milk program](https://www.bcaitc.ca/milk-0) (776 schools, K-5) was diverted to support school meal programming and food banks across BC. BC’s Provincial Health Officer is leading work to address the unintended consequences of the public health measures taken during the initial wave of the COVID-19 response. Food security, as well as the impact of school closures on student health and wellness, will be examined.  The Ministries of Health and Education continue to participate on the cross-government working group: Food Programs for Vulnerable Populations. |
| Operational challenges for community food programs given COVID-19 precautions as well as the need to meet increased demand | Community and School Gardens  Community gardens (including school gardens) were also deemed essential food and agricultural services to facilitate their continued (and potentially increased) use during COVID-19. The Province worked in collaboration with key partners to develop community and school garden guidelines, identifying the considerations and protocols required to ensure safety within this setting. These [guidelines](http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/community-settings/community-gardens) provide instructions for both garden users as well as garden coordinators. |

# **Alberta**

## Submitted by Patricia Martz, Manager Primary Prevention and Wellness

## Information current as of July 27, 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| Alberta School Nutrition Program (SNP) | Budget 2020: Alberta government continues to support the school nutrition program (SNP) by allocating $16 million for the SNP in the 2020/21 school year.  SNP is a budget line item for all School Authorities (SA) included in their funding for this school year. A SA can choose to allocate up to the budgeted amount to meet their individual school’s breakfast, lunch or snack programs. Most SAs have multiple schools operating a SNP.  On July 21, 2020, the Minister of Health announced that schools would welcome students under scenario 1: near normal daily operations with health measures.  Guidelines for Food Service  **Health Measures:**  No activities that involve the sharing of food between students or staff should occur.  Classes that teach food preparation may occur as long as students do not share the food they prepare with other students or staff.  **For classroom meals and snacks:**  -No self-serve or family-style meal service. Instead, switch to pre-packaged meals or meals served by designated staff.  -Food provided by the family should be stored with the student’s belongings.  -Close the food preparation areas off that could be accessed by students/children, non-designated staff, or essential visitors.  -Ensure that food-handling staff practice meticulous hand hygiene and are excluded from work if they are symptomatic.  -Students/children should practice physical distancing while eating.  -There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and peppershakers, ketchup).  -Utensils should be used to serve food items (not fingers).  - If a school is using a common lunchroom and staggering lunch times, ensure that all surfaces of the tables and chairs (including the underneath edge of the chair seat) are cleaned and disinfected after each use.  **Food Service Programs (Cafeteria)**  - Food service establishments should follow the Alberta Health restaurant guidance.  -School Cafeterias should use alternate processes to reduce the numbers of people dining together at one time.  -Remove/rearrange dining tables to maintain physical distancing.  -Place tape or other markings on floors to maintain a physical distancing of 2 meters.  -Stagger meal service times to reduce the numbers of people present at any one time.  -Adapt other areas to serve as additional dining space to increase spacing among persons in the same room.  -Do not use buffets. Instead, switch to pre-packaged meals or meals served by staff.  -Dispense cutlery, napkins and other items to students/children, rather than allowing them to pick up their own items. |

**Province/territory [ontario]**

Submitted by: Chelsea Murray, Senior Policy and Program Advisor

Updates are from Ontario’s Ministries of Education (EDU); Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS); and Health (MOH).

Information current as of: July 2020 (exact dates differ across Ministries)

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| Guidance for food preparation/ distribution in schools | Excerpted from the Ontario Ministry of Education’s approach to reopening schools https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-reopening-ontarios-schools  **Lunch/food service**  To the greatest extent possible, students should be encouraged to eat lunch in their classroom with their cohort to ensure chances of contact and transmission are minimized.  Lunch times should be staggered to allow students to wash hands before eating, without creating congestion in washrooms or handwashing stations.  If weather permits, consideration could be given to having lunch breaks outside.  With respect to eating and drinking at school, it is expected that:   * Staff and students will perform proper hand hygiene before and after eating. * Each student will have their own individual meal or snack with no common food items. * Each student will be required to bring their own drink bottle that is labeled, kept with them during the day and not shared. * Water bottles will be required to be filled rather than students and staff drinking directly from the mouthpiece of water fountains. * Schools will remove all self-serving food items and microwave use will not be permitted. * Multi-use utensils will be cleaned after each use. * Schools will not plan non-instructional activities that involve students in preparing or serving of food. * Third party food services, including nutrition programs, will be delivered in a way that any student who wishes to participate can do so. "Grab and Go format" is preferred. All surfaces, bins and containers for food should be disinfected prior to and after each use. |
| Urban Priority High School (UPHS) program | * UPHS supports students to overcome personal and academic challenges that hinder their learning and achievement in 40 high schools within Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, London, Ottawa, Waterloo and Windsor. * There are 15 core UPHS supports, including nutritional supports (e.g., breakfast/lunch programs and snack programs) to support students and their families. Other core supports support health and well-being; academic success and engagement; equity, social inclusion and safety; and strong and supportive parents and/or guardians. * Due to school closures students and their families were not able to receive these nutritional supports and food security became an issue during the Covid-19 crisis (e.g., for families experiencing job loss and increased poverty): * Some UPHS schools were able to temporarily extend/deliver nutritional supports to students and families (e.g., grocery gift cards etc.). |
| Indigenous Education Partner in Thunder Bay | * During the pandemic between April and June, youth workers reached out to their students and families to check in and provide supports including nutritional supports as needed (e.g., food and care packages); resources such as culturally relevant materials about COVID-19; and assisted students and families with issues that arose. |

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| Ministry of Children, Community & Social Services | | |
| Student Nutrition Program | * The Ontario government recognizes the importance of breakfast and lunch programs to support children and youth to learn, develop healthy eating habits, and feel a sense of belonging at school. The Student Nutrition Program (SNP) provides nutritious meals and snacks to students in 75% of provincially funded schools. The program is delivered by 14 agencies across the province, in partnership with schools, volunteers and other community organizations. * During the current school closures, all agencies that deliver the SNPs are supporting the delivery of nutritious food to children and youth by working with community partners, school boards, food banks, community centres, Children’s Aid Societies, social services providers and municipalities to:   + Distribute grocery gift cards or farm vouchers to families.   + Deliver food boxes/hampers or frozen meals to families.   + Provide SNP funds to local food banks to increase the nutritious options for families with school age children * On June 14, 2020, MCCSS announced the investment of an additional $1M to the SNP for continued alternate delivery in July and August to address the needs of families arising from the COVID-19 emergency response. In other funding years, ministry funds could not be used for summer programming. * Starting July 6, 2020, MCCSS is providing $125,000 in one-time funding for the Student Nutrition Ontario (SNO) activities that will support the 14 Lead Agencies who deliver SNP as they continue alternate delivery in response to the COVID-19 school closures and through the reopening of schools. |  |
| First Nations Student Nutrition Program | * The First Nations Student Nutrition Program (FNSNP) helps provide children and youth with access to healthy food at school to support learning and healthy development.   + The program helps provide nutritious meals and snacks in 62 First Nations and two Tribal Councils through a First Nations-led process   + Meals and snacks are delivered through 96 schools and 26 school bussing programs   + The majority of FNSNP sites are located in Northern, remote or Northern/remote communities, where food security is an ongoing challenge. * As of May 11, 32 First Nations participating in the FNSNP have declared states-of-emergency and 24 are under self-isolation due to COVID-19. |  |
| OFIFC Student Nutrition Program | * The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres Student Nutrition Program (OFIFC SNP) helps provide urban Indigenous children and youth with nutritious food to support learning and healthy development.   + The program is delivered at OFIFC’s 27 member Friendship Centres; one Friendship Centre satellite; and two non-Friendship Centre delivery sites across the province   + The OFIFC SNP is part of the larger Akwe:go and Wasa-Nabin programs, which address the mental, physical and emotional health and wellness of Indigenous children and youth in urban communities in a culturally relevant and holistic manner.   + In 2018-19, 24,666 meals were served to 11,429 children. * In response to the COVID-19 emergency, OFIFC has developed plans to support the urban Indigenous community including measures to support food security:   + provision of nutritious food;   + food delivery services for individuals that are quarantined and/or vulnerable; and   + community-based meal services once social distancing measures are lifted. |  |
| Ministry of Health | | |
| School closures led to changes in the way the Northern Fruit and Vegetable Program (NFVP) was implemented in 2020. The NFVP provides servings of fruits and vegetables to students and targets issues of food security in Northern ON | * The NFVP increases awareness and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among school aged children by providing twice weekly no cost fresh fruits and vegetables in combination with healthy eating and physical activity education. * The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association (OFVGA) worked with agencies in northern Ontario that had set up alternate food distribution channels such as drop in centres and healthy food box distribution to continue supplying fresh fruits and vegetables to northern Ontario families while the schools remained closed. * Over the course of the program from March 22 through to the week of July 27 the NFVP will have reached 93 different communities or organizations across Northern Ontario, serving an estimated 44,000 residents in over 11,000 individual households. | . |

# **new brunswick**

## Submitted by Aisha Khedheri, Program Advisor, Department of Health

## Information current as of July 23, 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| Ensuring COVID-19 requirements are followed when food is provided, prepared for or offered to students | Representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood (EECD) met with the Public Health Healthier School Food Environment Workgroup to discuss potential concerns and solutions. EECD drafted a section for provision of food in schools for their COVID-19 return to school guidance and feed-back was provided by a Dietitian and Public Health Inspector from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. |
| Reduced access to food for students in need when closure of schools required due to COVID-19 | Regional/local initiatives: Food networks across the province have various initiatives underway to provide meals or food boxes to families and/or children. Some of these programs offer delivery through volunteer organizations (e.g. Boys and Girls Club).  A local initiatives specifically for students included grab-and-go lunch bags assembled in a school and distributed to children from community centres throughout the city. |
| COVID-19 guidance for Early Learning and Childcare Facilities (includes food-related guidance) | COVID-19 Resources on NB Department of Early Childhood Development and Education Website: <https://www.nbed.nb.ca/parentportal/en/home/daycarecovidresources/>  Document created in collaboration between NB Department of Health and EECD: COVID-19 Recovery Phase: Guidance to Early Learning and Childcare Facilities and Summer Camps  For operational plans based on this guidance, it is recommended to consult the local Public Health inspector, dietitian or Healthy Learners in School Program nurse. |

# **Prince Edward Island**

## Submitted by Erin Cusack, Health Promoter

## Information current as of July 27, 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| With schools closed, students could not access the breakfast and lunch programs. | Healthy School Food Pilot Program launched in February 2020 was modified to provide meals for students at home. Students registered in the new emergency food security program received one meal and snacks/day 7 days a week.  The program was a partnership between the Department of Social Development and Housing, Department of Education and Lifelong Learning, the Public Schools Branch, PEI Home and School Federation, and Breakfast Club of Canada  The program has been extended throughout the summer months. |
| Increased financial strain and food insecurity for families due to layoffs, reduced hours, lost wages, increased childcare needs/costs etc. with workplaces closed and schools closed. | Food Hamper Program –Initiated by a partnership between the provincial government, PEI Potato Board, and Amalgamated Dairies Ltd.  Individual schools are participating in the program and the Public Schools Branch has become involved to provide school staff volunteers to deliver food hampers with milk, cheese, butter and potatoes to families. |
| Increasing access to local, nutritious, and affordable foods | Six healthy school food pilots began in February 2020. These pilots will re-start in the coming school year.  Healthy School Lunch Program has grown from those pilots to a universal healthy school food program that incorporates a pay-what-you-can model available to schools across Prince Edward Island during the 2020/21 school year. |

# **NEWFOUNDLAND/LaBRADor**

## Submitted by Heidi Boyd, Health Promotion Consultant Gov NL

## Information current as of July 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| School closures, due to COVID-19, meant school-aged children could no longer access food through school-based nutrition programs. This had negative impacts on food security for some families in NL.  . | School-based nutrition programs in NL, which receive Provincial Government funding, specifically the Kids Eat Smart Foundation (KES) and School Lunch Association (SLA), provide food to students in schools across the province. School closures, due to COVID-19, meant school-aged children could no longer access food through school-based nutrition programs. This had negative impacts on food security for some families in NL.  When schools closed in March, KES and SLA worked with schools in the province to distribute the food supplies on hand. This food was provided directly to families in the community, to the Community Food Sharing Association, which supplies food banks across the province, and to a community food hub, which redistributed the food to community meal programs.  This redistribution of food provided some immediate relief to families and communities; however, it was identified that continued school closures meant an ongoing food security challenge for some families.  A “Food Security during COVID-19 pandemic” working group was established with representation from multiple Provincial Government departments and community groups. This group identified challenges in the community related to access to food during the pandemic and worked together to develop strategies to meet the increased needs.  The Government of NL partnered with Food First NL to distribute a Community Food Program Support fund to over 120 community programs working to safely provide food and meals during the pandemic. These community groups continue to support families across the province. Specifically, community centres have received provincial funding along with additional federal funding to support children and families throughout the summer months, e.g. breakfast, lunch and snack programs, food hampers etc.  Kids Eat Smart launched a Food4Kids campaign, with support from Breakfast Clubs of Canada and other private donors. This campaign has supported 700 families across the province with monthly food hampers during April-June and continues to support community centres over the summer months with access to healthy food for children participating in their programming.  The Government of NL has released a K-12 education re-entry plan and the focus is to maximize in-person attendance in the K-12 education system while ensuring health and safety measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission for students, all teaching staff, support workers and families.  School Districts have been meeting with food providers to plan for access to healthy food for students when they do return to school. The Food Security working group continues to meet, identify and address any ongoing food security issues related to the impacts of COVID-19. |

# **NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

## Submitted by Mabel Wong, Territorial Nutritionist/Senior Nutrition Advisor

## Information current as of July 24, 2020

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| Topic/Issue | Actions Planned/Taken |
| Charitable Food Assistance | Government of NWT departments which allocate funding to school meal programs and community nutrition education programs have responded to community needs by permitting regular program funds to be used for emergency food.  Since March 17, 2020 schools and non-government agencies are administering the charitable food assistance activities. |