**School Health Coordinators’ Committee Discussions**

**Discussion Topic: Support for Secondary School Cafeterias After Nutrition Guidelines Hurt Bottom Line**

**Source: Jennifer Munro-Galloway** (ON) October 15 2013:

**Question:** As many of you know, here in Ontario we’ve had our mandatory nutrition standards in schools since Sept 2011. Since then, our cafeterias have experienced about 35-40% decline in sales, which in Ontario means about $8-10M/yr, several boards have closed their cafeterias as well.   
  
We’re interested to know what others with school nutrition guidelines/policies have experienced and how they have helped, if at all.  
have school cafeterias had to close?  
has your P/T implemented any programs/done anything to help struggling cafeterias?

**Responses:**

**Q1:**. Do you have mandatory, voluntary or no nutrition standards for school?

**(1)** **Nunavut:**

None in Nunavut but we are developing some.

**(2) Nova Scotia:**

Yes, mandatory, the same policy for grades primary through grade 12

**(3) Prince Edward Island:**

Our school nutrition policy is a mandatory school board policy, identical in both boards E/F, and it covers all grades K-12

**(4) New Brunswick:**

Yes. Provincial policy implemented in Oct. 2005.

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**Q2:** Have your cafeterias struggled?   
  
**(1)** **Nunavut:**

Most of our schools in NU do not have cafeterias, only canteens. When schools cut chips and pop from their canteen stocks, the kids simply took their money to community stores close to the schools. In most NU communities, the kids go home at lunchtime unless they are participating in extra-curricular events over lunch hour and then they are expected to bring a lunch or partake in a lunch provided by the school for “those who occasionally forget”. The lunch is something like a cheese toastie or country food stew.  
  
**(2) Nova Scotia:**

We have heard anecdotally that cafeterias have struggled to meet the policy and have lost money in the early days but with continued implementation, sales have returned to pre-policy levels   
  
**(3) Prince Edward Island:**

- 90% of our cafeterias (we only have them in intermediate/senior high schools) are with a company called Chart wells - they complain a lot about their profit margins  
- the school boards, who have the contract with them, would not sign the contract unless Chart wells complied with the school nutrition policy  
- Chart wells has created a two week menu specific to the P.E.I. school nutrition policy

**(4) New Brunswick:**

Yes.

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**Q3:** Have school cafeterias had to close?

**(1)** **Nunavut:**

NA.

**(2) Nova Scotia:**

I am not aware of any cafeterias that have had to close

**(3) Prince Edward Island:**

No.

**(4) New Brunswick:**

Some school cafeterias have decreased service from 5 days a week to 3 days a week. We also have about 25 French schools as well as a smaller number of Anglophone schools who no longer have the large service providers (i.e. Chartwells). Instead they are running their cafeterias as a social enterprise. They actually rehired the previous staff, provided training and are now focusing on healthier menus and local food whenever possible. Challenges seem to be at the H/S level in particular.

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**Q4: H**as your P/T implemented any programs/done anything to help struggling cafeterias?

**(1)** **Nunavut:**

NA

**(2) Nova Scotia:**

While not specific to struggling cafeterias, we’ve been providing Health Promoting Schools funding which would assist schools globally and School Food and Nutrition Policy funding specifically to support the implementation of the school food and nutrition policy.

Amount made available to schools through Health Promoting Schools funding:  
$250,000, province-wide/year to support implementation. That has included equipment purchases, training, taste-tasting with students, workshops for food service providers, contracting a dietitian to reduce barriers (develop menus, communication of policy, organize bulk buying), assessment of food/beverage offerings in schools.

**(3)**  **Alberta**  
Sharon’s comments also reflect the experience in Alberta. We provide grant funding through the Wellness Fund to schools or school districts to support comprehensive school health (including changing the food environment so that it supports the Alberta Nutrition Guidelines). The funding available to schools is through a call for proposals (usually done twice per year). The available funding ranges from $5,000 for a school to $50,000 for a school district. The school or school district would use the funding to support implementation of identified priority areas (including healthy eating).  
  
This year the Wellness Fund will receive more than 2.5 Million to support implementation of CSH.

**(4) Prince Edward Island:**

Things seem to be going well, but we have to put out a lot of fires - i.e., complaints from students/parent re: foods sold or served that are outside of the intent of the policy  
- without nutrition expertise within the school board - they rely on the P.E.I. Healthy Eating Alliance (which is funded by 'Education' and 'Health') to help address identified needs

**(5) New Brunswick:**

Schools have access to School Wellness Grants.  If a school chooses healthy eating as a focus area, the cafeteria could be part of their overall plan (as resources could be available as a result).

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