

**Update from the Breakfast Club of Canada
Global Child Nutrition Forum - 2020
Meeting Summary**

On Wednesday, November 11, 2020, [Breakfast Club of Canada](#) provided an update on the Club's progress since 2017 at the [Global Child Nutrition Forum](#)'s 2020 forum. The purpose of the event was for the Club to discuss the organization's work since hosting the 2017 Global Child Nutrition Forum in Montreal, with particular focus on how the Club and its regional partners pivoted operations in the context of COVID-19 to continue delivering nutritious meals to children and families in need.

The event featured remarks from the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, the Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, and the provincial Minister of Education, the Hon. Jean-Francois Roberge, remarks from Arlene Mitchell, the Executive Director of the Global Child Nutrition Forum, and presentations from three regional stakeholders and community partners of the Club: [Four Arrows Regional Health Authority](#), [Kids Eat Smart Foundation](#), and [Toronto Foundation for Student Success](#).

Daniel Germain, Founding President of the Breakfast Club of Canada, described the challenge created by COVID-19, with school closures creating barriers to access while the pandemic increased food insecurity and need. Daniel noted that support from municipal, provincial, and federal governments allowed the Club and its partners to continue to deliver nutritious meals to communities. Daniel concluded by noting that the pandemic has exacerbated the need and the urgency for a national school food program.

Minister Bibeau noted the Government of Canada's commitment to ensuring children in Canada have enough healthy food on their plates, which has become especially important due to the pandemic. Minister Bibeau thanked the Club and its partners for their work in achieving this shared goal. Minister Roberge provided a virtual greeting to viewers, where he acknowledged the Club's importance in ensuring that students and children had access to a healthy meal during school closures. Minister Roberge also highlighted that the GCNF is an exceptional forum for international nutrition organizations to work together and share ideas to improve best practices in school nutrition.

Arlene Mitchell commended Canada's leadership in addressing food insecurity and Canada's response to COVID-19, noting the Club's quick pivot in operations, which allowed it to continue reaching children despite school closures. Arlene applauded the Government of Canada's commitment in the 2019 budget to establish a National School Food Program.

Judith Barry, Co-Founder and Director of Impact & Sustainable Solutions at Breakfast Club of Canada, introduced a panel of regional stakeholders in student nutrition from diverse communities across the country.

Byron Beardy from Four Arrows Regional Health Authority in Winnipeg discussed the difficulty of delivering food in remote communities of Northern Manitoba, particularly the logistical challenges of accessing fly-in communities during a spring thaw. Despite the practical difficulties, Four Arrows Regional Health Authority managed to deliver 500 Good Food boxes in a week to the doors of families with young children. Byron noted the importance of considering the perspectives of local communities in what food to provide in order to ensure that food deliveries address local needs.

Celina Stoyles from Kids Eat Smart Foundation in Newfoundland discussed how the organization received calls for help from communities once schools closed. Kids Eat Smart Foundation adapted by launching a “Food for Kids” campaign, mobilizing quickly to deliver thousands of food hampers to families in need, with help from local donors and businesses. Celina noted the deep gratitude of families that were helped.

Catherine Parsonage shared how the Toronto Foundation for Student Success worked with public school boards and community partners in order to design and implement the “Food for Kids Toronto” program. Under said program, families with children in priority area schools would register for gift cards to local grocery stores, which provided the equivalent of a month’s worth of healthy breakfasts. Catherine emphasized the urgency of the need and the speed at which Toronto Foundation for Student Success pivoted operations to be able to deliver services in the pandemic context – reaching families in need within a week, and providing support to over 100,000 children.

The regional stakeholders emphasized the impact of the government and the Club’s financial support in allowing operations to continue so that their organizations could continue to deliver aid to children in need. Byron, Celina, and Catherine all noted the importance and urgency of implementing a national school food program in Canada now, in order to help address food insecurity permanently.

Audience members and participants were invited to ask the panelists questions. First, panelists were asked about any concerns they might have for their specific regions if a nationalized program were put in place. All panelists noted they would welcome a national school food program and did not see a national program as a reason for concern, so long as the national program considered customized policies to meet local community need, particularly in Indigenous jurisdictions. Second, an audience member asked about the timeline for a federal program being established. Daniel emphasized need to work together collaboratively to have a program implemented as soon as possible. Finally, panelists were asked about the infrastructure to operationalize the program. Panelists emphasized that the infrastructure is already present in local organizations and communities, and that work has already started and is ongoing.

In concluding remarks, Daniel thanked all panelists for their participation in the event, for their work, and for their continued advocacy for a national school food program.