

MOTION

6. Taking Steps Toward a National Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program

At the Council meeting on March 10, 2020, Council referred the following motion to the Standing Committee on Policy and Strategic Priorities meeting on March 11, 2020, in order to hear from speakers.

Moved by: Councillor Bligh

WHEREAS

1. The City of Vancouver recognizes that access to sufficient, safe, nutritious, and affordable food is fundamental to health and equality;
2. The *Vancouver Food Charter*, dating from January 2007, states that food is “a basic human right” and that all residents need accessible, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, with children in particular requiring adequate amounts of nutritious food for normal growth and learning;
3. In January 2013, Vancouver City Council adopted the Vancouver Food Strategy, an official plan and road map that integrates a full spectrum of urban food system issues within a single policy framework that includes food production, food processing, distribution, food access and food waste management, and builds on years of food systems initiatives and grassroots community development that considers all aspects of the food system. Vancouver's food strategy goals express how the City wants the food system to take shape in the future;
4. In October 2014, Council adopted the Healthy City Strategy, which includes a goal to ensure that Vancouver's children and youth, up to age 24, have the best chance of enjoying a healthy childhood;
5. In December 2014, Council unanimously adopted a motion asking City staff to identify \$400,000 in the City's operating budget to expand access to healthy foods for school-aged children. These funds enabled meal programs through Vancouver School Board and the Strathcona Community Centre Association between 2015 and 2018;
6. The Vancouver School District's Food4School program, which was established in 2015/2016, received \$222,895 from the City during that school year and received \$320,000 from the City in the 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 school years;
7. In June 2017, Council unanimously adopted a motion for submission to the Union of BC Municipalities and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (UBCM) calling on UBCM to advocate for a Universal Healthy School Food Program to the provincial and federal governments,

in light of the ongoing fact that Canada is one of the only industrialized countries without a national school meal program;

8. In September 2017, the City of Vancouver made a submission to the Federal Government's National Food Policy consultation process, noting the City's concern regarding increasing levels of food and income insecurity among Vancouver residents and stating that "Individuals living with food insecurity report poorer health, higher rates of obesity, poorer mental health and more mood and anxiety disorders" as well as observing that health care costs are 76% higher for individuals who are food insecure;
9. Among the City of Vancouver's recommendations to the Federal Government's National Food Policy consultation in September 2017, there was a recommendation for the Federal Government to work with the Provinces and Territories to create a cost-shared universal healthy school food program to ensure that all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day, in accordance with the view that school meal programs not only benefit classroom learning, but also model healthy eating, teach food skills, and serve to eliminate stigma through universality;
10. At the April 2018 Annual General Meeting of the BC School Trustees Association (BCSTA), the membership passed a resolution calling on the BCSTA to, among other things, "endorse the Coalition for Healthy School Food's national Universal Healthy School Food Program campaign" and for the "Ministry of Health and the provincial Ministry of Health [to] provide new money to invest in a cost-shared Universal Healthy School Food Program," in recognition of the fact that ensuring the life-long health and success of children and youth is proper nutrition and that the establishment of healthy eating habits, along with the provision of appropriate foods during a student's developmental years, is critical to building not only a base for success in school but a foundation for life-long health;
11. In addition to the BC School Trustees Association's official endorsement of the Coalition for Healthy School Food and its call for the development of a universal, cost-shared School Food Program for Canada, numerous other organizations have officially endorsed the Coalition and its call including the Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC), Family Services of Greater Vancouver, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, IUOE Local 963, and the City of Victoria among others;
12. In 2018, the City of Vancouver proclaimed March 1, 2018, as "Great Big Crunch for Healthy School Food Day" in Vancouver, and did so again in 2019. The Great Big Crunch is a national movement and annual moment of anti-silence in which students, teachers, parents and others passionate about food join the food movement and crunch into apples (or other crunchy fruit or vegetable) to make noise for healthy school food;

13. A September 18, 2018, staff report to Vancouver City Council entitled “City Support for Healthy School Meal Programs” cites research showing that “every student would benefit from access to a meal program, as these programs show positive benefits not only on reducing school day hunger, but on improving academic achievement, physical and mental well-being, and fruit and vegetable consumption (Coalition for Healthy School Food, 2016). School meal programs are also well placed to model systemic changes on environmental sustainability and local agriculture through procurement practices”;
14. On March 19, 2019, Finance Minister Bill Morneau tabled Budget 2019 in which the federal government committed to developing a “Food Policy for Canada” with the intention to “set out a coordinated and collaborative approach to addressing food-related issues” in Canada;
15. The federal government’s Food Policy for Canada initiative states that it is a “roadmap for a healthier and more sustainable food system for Canada” that, among other objectives, is taking the first consultative steps alongside provinces, territories, and not-for-profit organizations towards the creation of a National School Food Program, in order to help improve the health of Canada’s children as they learn, leading to better futures for them, and ultimately for our country;
16. In September 2019, the Vancouver School Board (VSB) passed a motion requesting that school district staff “create a holistic 10 Year Vision and Food Framework for the District” with the work to include:
 - a 10-year vision for the District that would include a Food Framework incorporating relevant key components including but not limited to: food growing, production, distribution, nutrition, waste, security, donations, education, funding and lobbying that is in alignment with the District’s Strategic Plan and budget;
 - formation of a Food Working Group made up of external representatives;
 - Identifying the capital and operating costs associated with developing a Food Framework and its implementation.
17. In November 2019, a consultant’s report commissioned by VSB staff noted that the Vancouver School District delivers 15 different nutrition programs at 119 sites, with operational oversight of seven teaching cafeterias, and management of FoodSafe and regulatory compliance in 30 commercial kitchens;
18. The City of Vancouver 2020 Budget and Five-Year Financial Plan, under the Department Service Plan for Arts, Culture and Community Services, recommended “an increase of \$160,000 to reinstate grants for the Vancouver School Board school food program that were reduced in 2019” and further, under the heading “Looking ahead, 2021-2024”, noted an

objective to “Update the Vancouver Food Strategy by developing priority food actions for 2021-2030 and targets for 2050 for integration within the City’s next environmental plan.”;

19. “Thousands of hungry kids are fed every day in VSB schools, sometimes breakfast, sometimes a hot lunch and sometimes a delivered meal. Those meals are provided in 32 Vancouver schools in neighbourhoods identified as vulnerable.” (Tracy Sherlock / Vancouver Courier – November 25, 2019);
20. On February 13, 2020, Victoria City Council unanimously supported a motion calling for the City of Victoria to “endorse the efforts of the Coalition for Healthy School Food to advocate for a universal, cost-shared healthy school food program.... based on a shared belief that all children and youth in British Columbia should have daily access to healthy food at school.”;
21. The City of Vancouver has proclaimed March 12, 2020, as “The Great Big Crunch for Healthy School Food Day” in the City of Vancouver (as in 2018 and 2019); and
22. The path to civic progress and a stable society – in Vancouver, throughout the province of B.C., and across Canada – requires that we accept our social responsibilities and act upon them, and although school meal programs cannot address the root causes and totality of food insecurity, they do provide a stable meal on school days to support student learning and are consistent with the objectives of the City’s broader Food Strategy and the City’s Healthy City Strategy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Vancouver City Council direct the Mayor, on behalf of Council, to write to the Prime Minister of Canada to encourage the Government of Canada to make the creation of a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program a top priority for the national agenda of the 43rd Parliament in 2020, consistent with the leadership already shown by the Government of Canada in working to create a national food policy;

FURTHER THAT Council’s letter to the Prime Minister should reference the City and Council’s strong support for the Federal Government to work with the Provinces, Territories, Indigenous communities, and non-profit groups to create a Cost-Shared Universal Healthy School Food Program that ensures all school children learn basic food skills and have access to healthy, nutritious meals every day to support classroom learning while also modelling healthy eating and teaching food skills.

- B. THAT Vancouver City Council call on the Provincial Government to commit to an universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program for all K-12 students in BC, including an invitation to all parties represented in the Provincial Legislature to support a universal, cost-shared, healthy

school food program, and to work with local non-profits and school communities to pilot and implement a flexible program that respects local conditions and food cultures, while promoting positive health and education outcomes;

FURTHER THAT Council direct the Mayor, on behalf of Council, to write to the Premier and the Provincial Ministers responsible for school food, namely the Ministers of Education, Health, and Agriculture, to advise them of Council's endorsement and strong, ongoing support for an universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program for all K-12 students in BC, including a reference to the positive physical and mental health outcomes of universal meal programs as well as the agricultural market opportunities through institutional local food procurement which is a stated priority of Ministry of Agriculture.

- C. THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to report back to Council, prior to the 2021 City of Vancouver Budget deliberations, regarding the status of, and funding requirements of, the Vancouver School District's existing food program(s) for the 2021/22 school year and that staff include recommendations in their report for any transitional funding that may be required from the City in support of these food program(s) should an Universal Healthy School Food Program not yet be in place, and for these transitional funding recommendations to be included in the City's proposed 2021 Operating Budget;

FURTHER THAT Council direct staff to convey Council's support and encouragement to the School District for the creation of its "holistic 10 Year Vision and Food Framework" and to note the opportunity for the City and the School District to explore potential partnerships and alignments on shared objectives relating to food, food security, and the fostering of healthy communities within the city in the larger context of an anticipated Universal Healthy School Food Program.

- D. THAT Vancouver City Council and the City of Vancouver endorse the ongoing efforts of the Coalition for Healthy School Food to advocate for a universal, cost-shared healthy school food program based on the shared belief that all children and youth in British Columbia should have daily access to healthy food at school.
- E. THAT Vancouver City Council direct staff to work with their counterparts in other B.C. municipalities in order to share data that may be relevant to food matters and to support each other in advocacy efforts toward a universal, cost-shared, healthy school food program.

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