



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AT-RISK FOOD INSECURE CHILDREN STAND TO BENEFIT FROM TARGETED STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAMS,
STABLE FUNDING IMPORTANT TO THEIR SUCCESS, COMMENTARY FINDS**

Toronto, ON, March 5, 2019 — “Providing a healthy breakfast is an effective measure to improve academic performance and cognitive functioning among undernourished populations,” according to *Health and Grades: Nutrition Programs for Kids in Canada*, an independent Commentary by the C.D. Howe Institute examining student nutrition programs. The report also found “the effects of eating breakfast on academic achievement and health show mixed but generally positive results.” An estimated one in five Canadian children live in poverty¹, a similar number live in a home that struggles to put food on the table.²

Acknowledging the interconnections between food insecurity, health and cognitive performance are not clearly understood, the Commentary states that “eating breakfast provides a significant portion of the daily caloric and nutrient intake that is especially important for children: overall, there is evidence that eating breakfast has beneficial effects on student achievement, compared to no breakfast”. The report’s authors were unable to arrive at conclusive long-term effects and cite what is, in their view, a lack of statistically significant evidence on the impact of nutrition programs on children’s ability to learn and attend school.

“We’re encouraged by the various references to the positive effects of eating breakfast, especially for students at risk of going hungry and remain optimistic the long-term benefits will be uncovered,” says Shaun McKenna, Executive Director of The Grocery Foundation. “Hunger has no upsides. We all stand to benefit by a Canada that is True North, Strong and Fed.”

Aside from what it refers to as “the obvious short-term benefit of relieving students’ hunger”, the Commentary notes “evidence suggests breakfast has benefits on children’s on-task behaviours in classrooms, and evidence that habitual breakfast consumption improves grades or test scores”. The report also states “food insecurity may be associated with higher adverse mental health outcomes — both nutritional and psychological stress”.

“Think about the irony revealed in this report, we have student nutrition programs focused on food insecurity struggling for sufficient and sustained funding. It affirms efforts underway by The Foundation,” says McKenna. “We’ve seen firsthand and have heard time and again accounts of the community-building as well as opportunities to promote nutrition education. We firmly believe these experiences are a critical part of the impact story.”

About the Grocery Foundation

[The Grocery Foundation](#) is an not for profit committed to fundraising for student nutrition programs (SNPs) and to elevating the public’s awareness around their importance. For over 40 years, it has raised \$90M including nearly \$20M through its Toonies for Tummies campaign which benefits 1.1M school-aged children. Programs supported by The Foundation focus on providing nutritious breakfasts and mid-morning meals for at-risk students in stigma-free environments.



1. Canada Without Poverty: <http://www.cwp-csp.ca/poverty/just-the-facts/>
2. Food Insecure Policy Research: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/new-data-available/>

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Note to editors:

As a member and supporter of the C.D. Howe Institute, The Grocery Foundation supported the Institute's efforts to conduct data-driven analysis. Our support of research does not indicate an endorsement of independent assessment or recommendations. The Institute is solely responsible for the paper's contents.