

From: ["Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council"](#)

Date: 5/7/2025 11:09:00 AM

Subject: Additional Information: re: Council Memo: VSB School Food Services Funding Summary

Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - School Food Funding Summary (2025-0 5-06).pdf

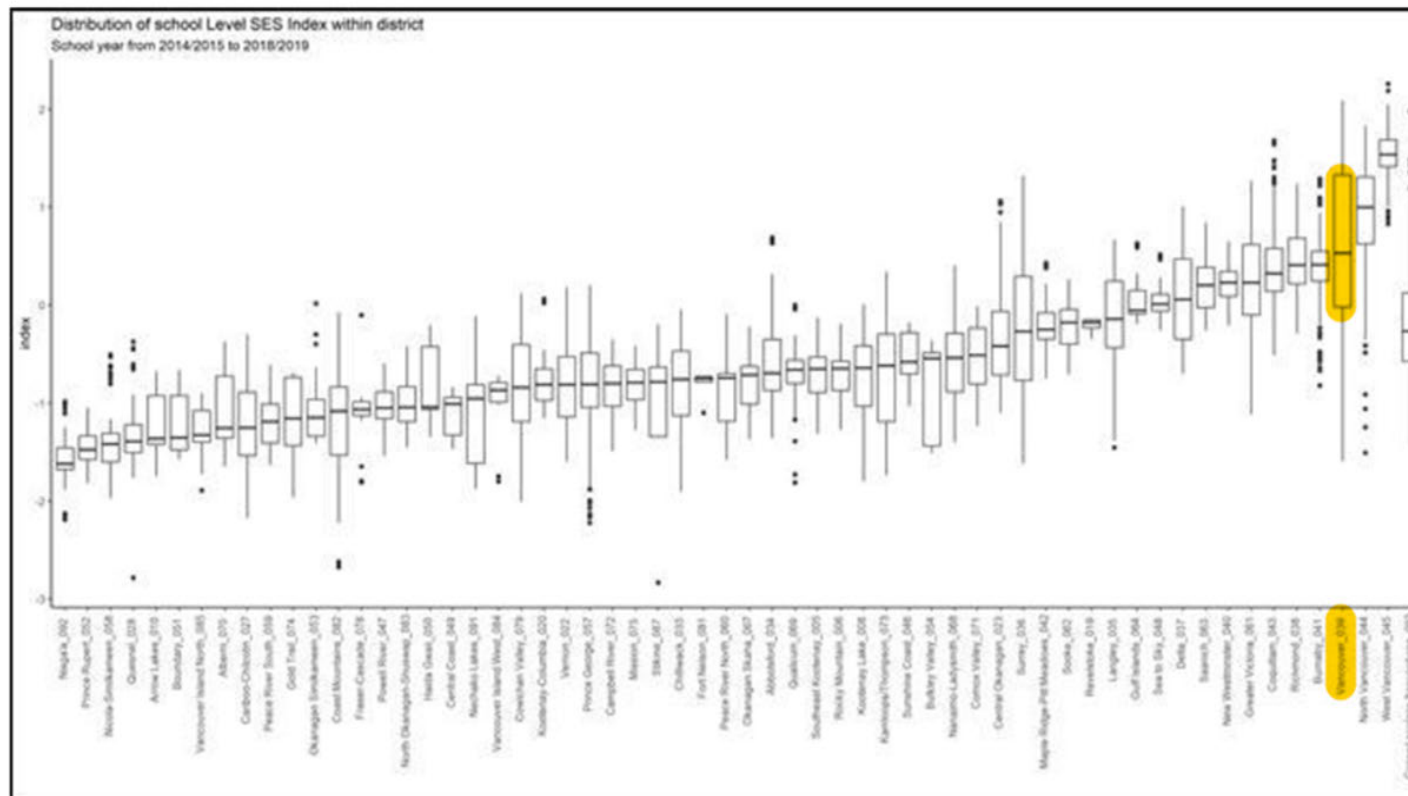
Good morning Mayor and Council,

Further to the memo sent yesterday (attached) regarding senior government school food funding for VSB, please find below some additional information from Margaret's team in ACCS regarding the Province's SES, and data on child poverty in BC relative to the NSFP funding distributions in BC.

The SES Index and schools across BC

- The Province recently shared the allocation methodology for the federal funding which is based on a socio-economic status (SES) index calculated for each school district.
- The SES is a composite index incorporating 53 indicators across five domains: economic, education, occupation, family, and community.
 - City staff do not have visibility into the specific indicators or weighting method used to determine the school district scores.
- The chart below assesses each school district based on SES score by schools within the district.
- Vancouver has pockets of wealth and so schools may rank overall higher SES but this can obscure pockets of poverty within schools and across the city's neighbourhoods.
- SES scores by school range widely in Vancouver (as one can see with the extent of the vertical line), so some schools will have a very low SES even though the median for the district is among the highest.

Figure 4: SES Median, 25, 75th Percentile Box Plot, by School District



Child Poverty in BC and NSFP Funding Allocations

- ACCS staff have created a table analyzing poverty of school age children in BC (see below) relative to the NFSB funding allocations.
 - This chart uses data from 2020, which coincides with the CERB program which increased income for many households.
 - Since then, the loss of the CERB program would have put more families into a state of food insecurity which we are seeing reflected in other data.
 - Note the Census data used here does not include reserves (which is why Nisgaa and Stikine data is not available).
- Note that the SES method used by the Province cannot be directly compared to child poverty rates (poverty was likely one of many indicators used in the SES index). But we do know that income is a key factor in determining household food security – i.e. those living under the poverty line are much more likely to be food insecure – which is relevant information to determine how to resource school meal programs.
- In order to provide a normalized comparison, in the chart below staff have also added a column that calculates what would be the per-student allocation of the NSFP if child poverty was the key determinant of funding.
- Staff are aware that the NSFP outlined that its funding would prioritize rural and Indigenous communities. Accordingly, nationally, Northern regions received more funding. Staff are not sure if this factored into the Province's allocation decisions for BC communities.

School District	Number of children age 5-18 with family income in 2020 below Canada's official poverty line	Percentage of children age 5-18 with family income in 2020 below Canada's official poverty line	National School Food Program 2024/2025 Allocations (\$) (based on ECC's SES index)	Per st alloca using as only
Surrey	10,575	11%	\$973,259	
Vancouver	9,775	14%	\$125,725	
Richmond	4,515	16%	\$39,097	
Coquitlam	4,500	12%	\$18,226	
Burnaby	4,175	14%	\$7,804	
Victoria	2,895	11%	\$86,275	
Central Okanagan	2,580	9%	\$319,792	
Langley	2,505	9%	\$215,249	
North Vancouver	2,480	11%	\$0	
Abbotsford	2,240	9%	\$399,024	
Nanaimo-Ladysmith	1,925	10%	\$323,151	
Chilliwack	1,690	9%	\$339,891	
Kamloops-Thompson	1,530	8%	\$302,584	
Delta	1,525	9%	\$121,580	
Maple-Ridge Pitt-Meadows	1,465	8%	\$211,257	
West Vancouver	1,415	16%	\$0	
Sooke	1,130	8%	\$141,640	
Cowichan	1,020	10%	\$180,150	
New Westminster	995	12%	\$11,491	
Prince George	995	6%	\$317,136	
Comox Valley	900	9%	\$226,765	
Mission	845	10%	\$160,276	
Vernon	820	8%	\$178,164	
Campbell River	645	10%	\$134,621	
Kootenay Lake	630	10%	\$122,231	
Okanagan-Shuswap	630	8%	\$126,468	
Okanagan-Skaha	585	8%	\$128,009	
Cariboo-Chilcotin	560	10%	\$133,194	
Pacific Rim	545	11%	\$108,604	
Qualicum	545	11%	\$98,789	
Peace River North	540	8%	\$150,366	
Peace River South	485	11%	\$106,842	
Saanich	485	6%	\$59,681	
Sea to Sky	420	6%	\$13,376	
Sunshine Coast	395	11%	\$70,975	
Coast Mountains	375	7%	\$115,087	
South East Kootenay	375	5%	\$123,333	
Quesnel	305	8%	\$90,242	
Fraser-Cascade	290	12%	\$47,894	
Gulf Islands	255	14%	\$28,255	
Rocky Mountain	255	6%	\$80,804	
Bulkley Valley	250	8%	\$51,399	
Nechako Lakes	250	7%	\$116,043	
Kootenay-Columbia	225	5%	\$92,996	

Powell River (Qathet)	225	9%	\$74,379	
Okanagan-Similkameen	220	8%	\$65,538	
Nicola-Similkameen	180	8%	\$65,242	
Boundary	175	11%	\$39,436	
Fort Nelson	160	18%	\$19,707	
Prince Rupert	160	7%	\$50,771	
Vancouver Island North	160	9%	\$36,164	
Gold Trail	140	11%	\$30,039	
Revelstoke	80	6%	\$19,675	
Vancouver Island West	75	21%	\$9,318	
Haida Gwaii	50	8%	\$12,289	
Arrow Lakes	40	8%	\$14,081	
Central Coast	20	3%	\$5,520	
Nisgaa	<i>Data not available*</i>	<i>Data not available</i>	\$12,306	
Stikine	<i>Data not available*</i>	<i>Data not available</i>	\$4,241	
Data source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population, custom tabulation accessed through Community Data Program			Data source: Ministry of Education and Childcare, National School Food Program Year 1 (2024/2025) Allocations	

** First Nation Reserves are not included in census data*

Thank you,

Sandra

From: Singh, Sandra
Sent: Tuesday, May 6, 2025 1:30 PM
To: Direct to Mayor and Council - DL
Cc: City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL ; Wittgens, Margaret
Subject: Council Memo: VSB School Food Services Funding Summary

Good afternoon Mayor and Council,

Attached please find a memo from Margaret Wittgens, GM of Arts, Culture and Community Services regarding funding for the VSB's food services in schools. Key points of information include:

- Recognizing that the funding of food services in schools is the responsibility of senior government and

- facing increasing demands on the overall City budget for services within City jurisdiction, the Province's 2023 allocation of \$5.56 million per year in Provincial government funding to VSB for food services presented an opportunity to bring the City's \$325,000 per school-year grant to a close and redirect that City funding to services within the jurisdiction of and required of local governments.
- The VSB was informed verbally and in writing of the City's draft 2025 budget recommendation to bring the grant to VSB to an end after the end of the 2024/2025 school year ahead of the draft 2025 budget release in the fall of 2024, allowing VSB sufficient time to prepare and to engage with Council during the 2025 budget deliberation process should they have concerns. The VSB did not seek to address Council to express concerns with this recommendation prior to Council deliberating and deciding on the 2025 budget in December 2024.
- The City funds two community-based food programs for school-aged children in VSB schools through Social Policy Grants Programs which staff will recommend continue in an upcoming Social Grants report scheduled for July 2025.
- In its 2024 budget, the Federal government committed to funding a National School Food Program, and in March 2025, the Federal government entered into an agreement with the Province BC, providing approximately \$39 million over three years in additional school food program funding to BC to complement the Feeding Futures fund.
- Of a total \$7,203,027 NSFP funding for school districts province-wide, the Province allocated \$125,725 for Year 1 (2024/2025) to the VSB.
- The VSB's allocation of \$125,725 represents 1.7% of BC's share of the federal funding, while staff estimate that VSB's student enrolment represents approximately 8.6% of public-school enrolment province wide.
- City staff foresee two upcoming reports to Council when school food advocacy considerations or further related Council direction could be provided: the July Social Policy Grants Report and the Food Systems Grants Review in Q4 2025. The latter report and presentation will identify opportunities for Council to set direction on the City's food-related grants funding and advocacy priorities to address persistent funding challenges facing community food programs more broadly.

Should Council have any further questions please contact Margaret directly at margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca and she will ensure questions are addressed through the weekly Q&A.

Thank you,
Sandra

Sandra Singh | Deputy City Manager
City of Vancouver
E-mail: sandra.singh@vancouver.ca
Pronouns: she/her

Assistant: Laura Holvor
Phone: 604.829.9602
E-mail: laura.holvor@vancouver.ca
Pronouns: she/her

The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selílwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

May 6, 2025

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy & Deputy Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Vancouver School Board's Food Program Funding Summary

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo provides a summary of the Vancouver School Board's (VSB) food program funding, including commitments made by the Provincial and Federal governments as well as what is known about the VSB's utilization of senior government funding.

BACKGROUND

Across Canada, school food programs differ across provinces and territories and municipalities or local districts and are often underfunded and inconsistent.

City of Vancouver Funding for Food Programs for School Aged Children

Starting 2015, in the absence of a senior government funded school food program, the City of Vancouver allocated annual funding to the VSB's daily lunch program, Food4Schools. The Food4Schools program provides approximately 280 students with a daily lunch delivered across 18 schools. This program is one of several meal programs offered by the VSB, which altogether serves meals in 69 schools, to approximately 700 students with daily breakfast and

approximately 3,100 students with daily lunch (out of 48,500 students enrolled in VSB schools). Originally approved in 2022, the current three-year grant agreement providing a City contribution to the VSB Food4Schools (\$325,000/year) is set to expire at the end of this current 2024/2025 school year, culminating in a final instalment of \$162,500.¹

In May 2023, the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care announced Feeding Futures to create or expand local food programs in schools throughout B.C. In its 2024 budget, the Federal government committed to funding a National School Food Program (NSFP). More information on these programs is outlined below. The launch and/or announcement of these two senior government programs signalled that senior governments were finally stepping into providing food services within schools, suggesting that the significant advocacy from community-based organizations, school food advocates, and local governments such as the City had an impact.

Recognizing that the funding of food services in schools is the responsibility of senior government and facing increasing demands on the overall City budget for services within City jurisdiction, the Province's 2023 allocation of \$5.56 million per year in Provincial government funding to VSB for food services presented an opportunity to bring the City's \$325,000 per year grant to a close and redirect that City funding to services within the jurisdiction of and required of local governments.

The Vancouver School Board was informed verbally and in writing of the City's draft 2025 budget recommendation ahead of its release in the fall of 2024, allowing VSB sufficient time to prepare and to engage with Council during the 2025 budget deliberation process should they have concerns. The VSB did not seek to address Council to express concerns with this recommendation prior to Council deliberating and deciding on the 2025 budget in December 2024.

In addition to directly funding the VSB, the City funds two non-profit organizations to operate meal programs in VSB schools through Social Policy Grants Programs:

- The Strathcona Community Association: funded since 2015 to operate the Breakfast Program at Strathcona Elementary School (\$84,000/year).
- Fresh Roots (in partnership with Growing Chefs!): funded since 2019 to deliver the LunchLAB Program at Lord Roberts Elementary, Total Education Alternate Program, as well as pilot expansion in several other schools (\$68,126/year).

While the funding agreements for these two programs also conclude in June 2025, as community-based food programs for school-aged children, continued funding for both will be recommended to Council in July 2025 as part of the Social Policy Grants report. The Social Policy Grants to these organizations are funded primarily for their community development and capacity building programming versus direct food provision.

¹ City of Vancouver. (2022, July 19). Council Report - 2022 Community Services and Other Social Grants.

DISCUSSION

Senior Government Funding Programs: Overview and Allocations to VSB

Feeding Futures Fund: Overview and Allocations

In May 2023, the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care announced Feeding Futures – a three-year \$214 million funding program for “school districts [to] create or expand local food programs in schools throughout B.C.”² The funding is allocated to all school districts to ensure students have daily access to nutritious meals in a non-stigmatizing, equitable way. Districts can tailor programs to local needs, using funds for food purchases, staffing, equipment, and partnerships.

The Province’s Feeding Futures allocations to the VSB was \$5.56M in the 2023/2024 school year, \$5.65M in 2024/2025 and \$5.55M in the 2025/2026 school year. Staff estimated that this amount is roughly proportional to VSB’s share of provincial student enrollment.

National School Food Program: Overview and Allocations

In its 2024 budget, the Federal government committed to funding a National School Food Program (NSFP) (\$1B over four years).³ The National School Food Policy⁴ was then released on June 20, 2024. In March 2025, the Federal government entered into an agreement with the Province of British Columbia through the NSFP, providing approximately \$39 million over three years in additional school food program funding to British Columbia to complement the Feeding Futures fund.⁵

Of a total \$7,203,027 for school districts province-wide, the Province allocated \$125,725 for Year 1 of this funding program (2024/2025) to the VSB (VSD 39).⁶ Given previous funding allocations through provincial programs to VSB, there was an expectation from VSB that the district would receive a higher proportion of funding.

The Province recently shared the allocation methodology for the federal funding which is based on a socio-economic status (SES) index calculated for each school district⁷. They indicated that their approach seeks to recognize that students from lower SES backgrounds are more likely to experience hunger and face academic challenges. The Province indicated that their SES-based funding model is designed to ensure that federal support is distributed as a targeted top-up in areas of greater need, with a particular focus on students in rural and remote communities. As a result of this allocation methodology, the VSB’s allocation of \$125,725 represents 1.7% of BC’s share of the federal funding, while staff estimate that VSB’s student enrolment represents

² [Government of British Columbia. \(2023, March 27\). Province provides new funding to support school food programs.](#)

³ [Prime Minister’s Office \(April 1, 2024\). “A National School Food Program to set kids up for success.”](#)

⁴ [Government of Canada. \(2024, June 20\). National School Food Policy](#)

⁵ [Government of Canada. \(2024, September 13\). Feeding the future today: Canada’s National School Food Program](#)

⁶ [British Columbia Ministry of Education and Child Care. \(2025\). National School Food Program: Year 1 \(2024/25\) - BC school district allocations. Government of British Columbia.](#)

⁷ Ibid.

approximately 8.6% of public-school enrolment provincewide.^{8,9} Meanwhile the Province's Feeding Futures allocations are more proportional to enrolment numbers.

VSB Use of Senior Government Funding

2023-2024 School Year

For the first year of the VSB's Feeding Futures funding (\$5.56M in 2023/2024), the VSB allocated the funding as follows¹⁰:

- \$2.65 million was allocated to expand school food services, while the remaining \$2.9 million was redirected back to recover meal program expenses that were previously paid from the VSB's operations and program budgets (CommunityLINK and Operating Fund Budget).
- Of the \$2.65 million allocated to school food services:
 - \$1.0 and 1.2 million were allocated to expanding hot meal production from the commissary kitchens at Britannia Secondary and Templeton Secondary Schools, respectively, through kitchen upgrades and taking over third-party run cafeterias;
 - \$0.25 million was allocated to replace elementary school kitchen equipment; and
 - \$0.20 million was allocated for community partner programming, namely the LunchLab program operated by Fresh Roots and Growing Chefs!

2024-2025 and 2025-26 School Years (more details in Appendix A)

Feeding Futures funding allocations for the 2024/25 and 2025/26 School Years as outlined in the VSB annual Financial Plan is included in the Appendix and in summary went towards:

- Food Programs: food and cafeteria supplies purchased at commissary kitchens and the secondary school cafeterias to produce meals for VSB's school food programs;
- Staff: including the food services coordinator supporting daily meal production at commissary kitchens and meal delivery to various schools; secondary school culinary arts programs, meal production and additional commissary staffing to support the increasing meal production at commissary kitchens;
- Food Delivery: five trucks transporting the delivered meals to over 55 locations; and
- Third-Party Food Providers: Working with Growing Chefs, students are empowered to cook food for themselves and share with their classmates.

The VSB will utilise the 2024/25 Federal NSFP amount (\$125,725) towards replacing and upgrading its walk-in cooler at Gladstone Secondary School to ensure its cafeteria and food programs comply with Vancouver Coastal Health standards.

⁸ Vancouver School Board. (2024, April 15.) "[Our District.](#)"

⁹ Province of British Columbia. (2023, Sept. 5). "Education by the numbers." BC Gov [News.](#)

¹⁰ [Vancouver School Board. \(June 26, 2023\). Feeding Futures School Food Programs Fund Spending Plan. \(p.31-33 of PDF\)](#)

NEXT STEPS

This moment presents an opportunity for alignment between Mayor and Council and VSB to advocate to senior government for food services in schools and the needs of school-age children in Vancouver. Furthermore, City staff foresee two upcoming reports to Council when school food advocacy considerations or further related Council direction could be provided: the July Social Policy Grants Report and the Food Systems Grants Review in Q4 2025.¹¹ The latter report and presentation will identify opportunities for Council to set direction on the City's food-related grants funding and advocacy priorities to address persistent funding challenges facing community food programs more broadly.

FINAL REMARKS

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca and staff will provide a response through the weekly Council Q&A.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'm. Wittgens', is positioned above the typed name and title.

Margaret Wittgens, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca

¹¹ This grants review is in response to the July 2024 Council motion, "[Closing the Gap: Investing in the City of Vancouver's Food System to Increase Food Access and Support a Resilient, Equitable, and Sustainable Food System for All.](#)"

APPENDIX A

VSB Use of Feeding Futures Funding (2024-2026)

2024-2025 School Year

The VSB outlined high level allocations for the second year of Feeding Futures funding in its 2024-2025 Financial Plan,¹² which includes:

Food Programs: \$2.44 million	This allocation includes food and cafeteria supplies purchased at commissary kitchens and the secondary school cafeterias to produce meals for VSB's school food programs. We are continuing to engage with FeedBC, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, to increase purchasing from BC local food suppliers.
Staff: \$2.55 million	The food services coordinator is included for providing meal production, kitchen operation and staff support at commissary kitchens. The primary role is to ensure the daily preparation of meals for breakfast and lunch and the logistics of meal delivery to various schools. The staffing also includes secondary school culinary arts programs, meal production and additional commissary staffing to support the increasing meal production at commissary kitchens.
Food Delivery: \$0.24 million	Material Services is responsible for transporting the delivered meal programs. Currently five trucks deliver meals to over 55 locations daily and there is capacity to add locations in the future.
Third-Party Food Providers: \$0.43 million	Working with Growing Chefs, students are empowered to cook food for themselves and share with their classmates. This gives the opportunity for students to interact and learn about food. There are plans to add additional school sites to this program in addition to the existing locations (John Norquay and Lord Roberts Elementary and Total Ed Secondary Program)
Total: \$5.66 million	

¹² [Vancouver School Board. \(2024, April 10\). Open Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting Agenda.](#)

2025-2026 School Year

For the upcoming school year, the VSB has highlighted the following high-level allocations for its third year of Feeding Futures funding in its 2025-2026 Financial Plan:¹³

Food Programs: \$2.27 million	This allocation includes food and cafeteria supplies purchased at commissary kitchens and the secondary school cafeterias to produce meals for VSB's school food programs. We are continuing to engage with FeedBC, led by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, to increase purchasing from BC local food suppliers.
Staff: \$2.86 million	The food services coordinator is included for providing meal production, kitchen operation and staff support at commissary kitchens. The primary role is to ensure the daily preparation of meals for breakfast and lunch and the logistics of meal delivery to various schools. The staffing also includes secondary school culinary arts programs, meal production and additional commissary staffing to support the increasing meal production at commissary kitchens.
Third-Party Food Providers: \$0.42 million	Working with Growing Chefs, students are taught about food literacy and empowered to prepare different foods and share with their classmates. This gives students the opportunity to interact and learn about food. There are plans to add additional school sites to this program in addition to the existing locations (John Norquay and Lord Roberts Elementary and Total Ed Secondary Program)
Total: 5.55 million	

¹³ [Vancouver School Board. \(2025, April 16\). Open Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting Agenda.](#)