

Office of the Auditor General of Prince Edward Island
Press Release

Charlottetown, PEI – The Office of the Auditor General of Prince Edward Island has tabled a Performance Audit Report – Healthiness of Food in Schools with the Legislative Assembly today, August 30, 2024.

The main highlights from this 2024 Report include:

Healthiness of Food in Schools Highlights

Why we did this audit

- Not having access to enough food, or enough quality foods, to meet a person’s basic needs is considered food insecurity.
- In 2022, approximately 29 percent of all Islanders and 41 percent of Island children under the age of 18 experienced food insecurity, according to Statistics Canada.
- Nutritious foods and beverages can benefit children’s lifelong eating habits and reduce the risk of developing long-term health problems.
- Healthy school food programs can help reduce hunger and increase access to foods for Island students which can improve academic outcomes and achievement, while providing students with the energy they need to thrive.

Objectives

To determine whether the Public Schools Branch and la Commission scolaire de langue française:

- have school nutrition policies that are based on current best practice;
- are adequately monitoring and reporting on healthy eating in schools; and
- schools are complying with school nutrition policies.

Conclusions

- The Public Schools Branch and la Commission scolaire de langue française both have school nutrition policies from 2016 and 2011, respectively, but neither are based on current best practice.
- The Public Schools Branch and la Commission scolaire de langue française were not monitoring and reporting on healthy eating in schools.
- Not all schools in the Public Schools Branch and la Commission scolaire de langue française were complying with the school nutrition policy of their education authority.

What we found

School Nutrition Policies ○ The Public Schools Branch (PSB) and la Commission scolaire de langue française (CSLF) school nutrition policies from 2016 and 2011 are based on outdated versions of Canada's Food Guide.

RECOMMENDATION (paragraph 25)

Monitoring and Reporting ○ Neither the education authorities, nor the schools, have a process to regularly monitor compliance with the school nutrition policies.
○ No action has been taken by the education authorities to address barriers identified in implementing school food programs and policies.
○ Neither of the education authorities have developed goals and objectives specific to healthy eating in schools. Therefore, they are not able to publicly report on outcomes specific to healthy eating in schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS (paragraphs 35, 41, 47 & 48)

Compliance with Policy ○ 95% of the PSB schools and 50% of the CSLF schools in our sample were not compliant with the school nutrition policy of their respective education authority.
○ One school tested in the PSB and both schools tested in the CSLF did not have contracts in place with third-party vendors who operated their cafeterias.
○ For the PSB, where contracts were in place for cafeteria services offered by third-party vendors, they did not include a requirement to follow the PSB's school nutrition policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS (paragraphs 79 & 89)

This Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Prince Edward Island is available on our website at www.assembly.pe.ca/auditorgeneral.

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