



CODRINGTON WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Resolution

Mandatory that all Canadian Secondary Schools teach Food Literacy, Cooking Skills, Human Nutrition and other wellness practices which will contribute to a healthy modern Canadian Society.

Whereas the Codrington Women's Institute (WI), a branch of the Federated Women's Institute of Ontario has learned that the Canadian government has expressed concern regarding Canadian citizen's nutrition and poor food choices **and** the resulting potential increase in healthcare and job related costs

And Whereas the Canadian government is in the process of developing a Canadian Food Strategy

And Whereas the Ontario Home Economist Association(OHEA), Registered Dieticians(RD), and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture(OFA) have called for mandatory training in cooking and human nutrition in Ontario

And Whereas the Federated of the Women's Institute of Ontario (FWIO) believe that knowledge of human nutrition and cooking skills are essential to a healthy population,

Therefore be it resolved that the Government of Canada will assist Provincial and Territorial Governments across Canada to develop and put in place a **mandatory** lifestyle program which will *teach all Canadian Secondary School Students Food Literacy, Cooking Skills, Human Nutrition and other wellness practices* which will contribute to a healthy modern Canadian society.

Dated this 12th day of June, 2017

President: Andrea Nelson
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Codrington Women's Institute

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Preamble

This resolution is written out of concern for the health and well-being of future generations of Canadian citizens. We are extremely concerned about the fact that our young people are not consistently being taught human nutrition and healthy cooking **at school** during their formative years. They may be taught the Canadian Food guide, but this tends to be incidental and taught and policed by teachers who have little background knowledge of applied human nutrition. Canadians know that education is the key to giving its citizens the opportunity to make informed and wise dietary choices.

FWIO is advocating the institution of an inclusive Canadian school program which will:

1. Help **every** person in Canada to know good human nutrition basics.
2. Teach **every** person to cook healthy and less expensive meals.
3. Encourage each individual to develop a life health plan involving their personal strategy to maintain their health.

Resolution History

In 2013, The Ontario Federation of Women's Institutes put forth a resolution calling for the Ontario Ministry of Education to develop a mandatory **Lifestyle Program** which would teach all Ontario students cooking skills, human nutrition and other wellness practices.

This was well received and supported by OHEA, OFA and the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge Health Unit. At that time, the Federation of Women's Institutes of Canada (FWIC) also requested this resolution be written for all of Canada. Four years later, the Canadian Government is moving toward a Canadian Food Strategy which is multifaceted. It is important to get this policy right. It is essential to teach all Canadian citizens how to use and enjoy the food that is produced in Canada or imported to our markets. It has become very obvious that Canadian food consumption has reached a critical point.

Background Information

The Women's Institute, formed in 1897, taught rural women the basics of good nutrition and safe food preparation practices to ensure a healthy lifestyle for rural populations. In the past FWIO has advocated for changes which have made Canada a better and safer place to live including the pasteurization of milk; the wrapping of bread in retail stores and the inclusion of the "best before" date printed clearly on all food products.

Until the 1990s, there were several ways to get the training for food preparation. Strong Family Studies courses at both the elementary and secondary schools, as well as 4-H Homemaking Clubs, gave girls and a few boys great training.

In Ontario during the 1990s, at the elementary level, Family Studies/ Home Economics was terminated. At the secondary level, Family Studies classrooms deteriorated and the emphasis became Culinary

courses which provide training for Chefs and Cooks. At the time, it was expected that the population would be eating outside the home regularly in the future. Many thousands of dollars were spent to put new industrial kitchens in many Ontario secondary schools.

The emphasis in Family Studies throughout the curriculum shifted to a social science based curriculum. This seems to be the trend across Canada. In looking at Health, Family Studies and Home Economics curriculums of all the provinces, **the disconnect between family studies and care of family's nutrition needs becomes obvious.**

In elementary schools, healthy food, nutrition and Canada's Food Guide are included in the Health curriculum. Many of the provinces have Cooking and Nutrition units included in their intermediate Home Economics courses or Food and Nutrition Course. At the senior level, Food and Nutrition Courses are in place in most provinces. *These courses are all electives. There are no mandatory Food and Nutrition courses in school curriculums across Canada!*

Today places to get food skills training is commonly community based and not consistent across Canada. 4-H Homemaking Clubs which taught cooking skills, food safety skills and other essential skills for life has decreased substantially with the decrease in the rural population. (4H is alive and well in our community!)

A great interest in food has resulted in a proliferation of cooking shows on television, but these do not teach nutrition and may demonstrate foods which are not healthy.

Group kitchens and school food programs provide good food to a limited population, but food skills training is missing. A national requirement for a mandatory course on Cooking and Human Nutrition across Canada would benefit children and their parents who need this knowledge of hands-on cooking, nutrition and balanced meal preparation.

Support for Mandatory Food skills and Human Nutrition Curriculum

According to a letter sent by Michele McAdoo, PH. Ec., to Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Premier, there are many calls for a mandatory Food Skills and Human Nutrition course to be included in the Ontario Curriculum.

The Conference Board of Canada (2013) published "*What's to Eat? Improving Food Literacy in Canada.*" This document reveals gaps and deficits in Canadians' knowledge and skills related to food. *The Food Literacy for Life Study* with Public Health Ontario funding (2013) also supports improved food literacy for all.

The Ontario Home Economist Association called for mandatory food education in 2013. On August 27, 2014, CBC TV News Ottawa ran a news story and a poll with 85% of respondents in favour of mandatory food education.

Ontario Family Studies & Home Economics Educators' Association (OFSHEEA) endorsed OHEA's petition for mandatory food education in order to support the health and well-being of families in Ontario.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) prioritized food literacy in conjunction with *The Local Food Act*. Their initiative program "Six by Sixteen" is being instituted at local community centers.

Ontario Council of Women, Dietitians of Canada and several medical doctors have called for *mandatory* food education to cut healthcare costs by reducing diet / life-style related diseases.

Michele McAdoo also states that "Mandatory food education is directly in line with the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long term Care report "*No Time to Wait*" calling for action to address health of mothers and children through food and nutrition. It also coincides with the *National Food Strategy* that calls for direct action through education to ensure the next generation develops the necessary skills to thrive."

Connection between Health of Canadians and a Healthy Diet

Public Health Ontario reports that 'nearly one third of children and youth are overweight or obese – conditions that can result in chronic diseases like Type II diabetes, cancer and heart disease.' Today, food skills are lacking as they are rarely taught in the home. Many families 'eat out' too regularly which can result in unhealthy choices, large serving sizes, over-consumption of sugar and sodium, under-consumption of vegetables and fruit and a strain on family budgets. Recent reports that chronic bowel disorders in children under 5 years old have increased. It is obvious that the Canadian diet needs to be re-evaluated.

The Ontario government set a goal to reduce childhood obesity by 20 % over five years.

Being proactive in teaching all students food literacy and cooking skills and human nutrition, the heavy workload of Dietitians and Nutritionists in Healthcare teams and in Health Units will be reduced and the system should become more efficient.

Canadian Government Initiatives

As stated in the Food Secure Canada article, "FAQs about Canada's National Food Policy".

"Food policy development is a complex issue for policy makers"

"Quick fix solutions can fail to have the impact we hope for as we haven't accounted for the many forces that feed into the problems or addressed the underlying issues". Just as we need to teach the basic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division for the

understanding of more complex math processes, teaching basic food cooking skills and human nutrition is essential to Canadians living healthily.

In 2015, Food Secure Canada called for national food policy in which key issues were healthy school food, affordable food in the north, support for new farmers and zero hunger in Canada.

In October 2016, at the Food Secure Canada (FSC) the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AFC)

suggested The National Food Policy should be developed around four pillars:

- (i) Food Security
- (ii) Health
- (iii) Environment
- (iv) Sustainable Growth of the Agriculture and Food Sector

What is lacking here is the practical teaching of food skills and human nutrition for all Canadians.

The Canadian Government will hold consultations on a National Food Policy later in 2017 with launch of policy in 2018. A National Food Policy Council is being developed and will be "a place for stakeholders who rarely talk to each other to gather and propose solutions to chronic food system problems." One of Food Secure Canada's goals will be to showcase municipal and provincial innovations and best practices that can inform the national policy."

We recognize that there are many contributing factors to the health issues faced by Canadians today.

The Federation of Women's Institute of Ontario believes that knowing some basic information about human nutrition, cooking, and suitable lifestyle choices is a necessary baseline for every Canadian citizen. Once this is accomplished, Canadians need to be encouraged to practice food health. Hopefully it will improve the quality of life for the population, save billions of dollars in healthcare costs and increase the productivity of generations to come.

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