

## **GRADE 5 STUDENTS TO MINISTERS: “WE LIKE SPINACH, AND CANADA MUST RECOGNIZE OUR RIGHT TO EAT IT.”**

**Toronto, ON - May 18, 2018:**

Grade 5 students from Burrows Hall Junior Public School will be protesting for their right to nutritious food outside the Scarborough Civic Centre on Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup> by taking part in a ‘plant-in’ flash mob.

More than 30 students will come together at 10 am to plant vegetables in a coordinated effort to raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating in childhood development.

The children are raising the alarm over the lack of a national school food policy. According to a UNICEF report, Canada ranks 37<sup>th</sup> out of 41 wealthy countries for access to nutritious food for children. The situation for Canadian children is dire.

In response to Canada’s low ranking, Action Against Hunger piloted a national mobile garden program, dubbed Generation Nutrition, at Burrows Hall Junior Public School last May. Each class planted fruits and vegetables in 40 mobile garden boxes with the help of horticulture experts at The Growing Connection. At the end of the school year, the students learned how to turn their produce into nutritious meals with the professional chefs at George Brown College. Students were sent home with school-grown produce throughout the year and were able to snack on the literal fruit of their labour during recess. The mobile garden boxes were adopted by students’ families over the summer and brought back to the school in September for the cycle to start anew.

“The kids, teachers and parents all absolutely love this program,” says Carmen Oliveira, the Special Education Resource Teacher and Primary Division Chairperson at Burrows Hall Junior Public School. Oliveira adds, “it has become the centre of attention in our school yard for all the right reasons. Now, every recess, I’m surrounded by students in the various grades asking for spinach, lettuce and herbs to eat. I’ve come to realize that we’re not teaching kids to love spinach – they’re teaching us that they already do. They don’t need convincing, they just need access.”

Access can be hard to come by in Canada, where one third of primary students and two thirds of secondary students go to school each day without a nutritious breakfast<sup>1</sup>. After learning about food justice issues as a part of the program, the students wanted to make their voices heard.

The Grade 5 students came up with the idea of a flash mob ‘plant-in.’ They will be planting new garden boxes as a public protest to show their commitment to healthy eating, and to demand that Canadian legislators show theirs.

“The success of our Generation Nutrition program has been tremendous,” explains Mira Lyonblum, Action Against Hunger’s National Programs Manager: “more and more teachers and parents are asking me for this much-needed program, and with the support of our government, more kids can get a healthy foundation that will shape the rest of their lives.”

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<sup>1</sup> Breakfast Club of Canada, <http://www.breakfastclubcanada.org/our-needs/>

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### **About Generation Nutrition**

For more information on Generation Nutrition:

<https://actionagainsthunger.ca/gen-nutrition/>

WATCH – What is Generation Nutrition?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOGMxEPnx2o>

WATCH – Generation Nutrition on CBC News: Tiny chefs discover 'it's the taste that counts'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S8y9wt67b0Q>

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### **About Action Against Hunger**

Action Against Hunger saves the lives of severely malnourished children while helping communities become self-sufficient. Recognized as a world leader in the fight against malnutrition, Action Against Hunger has pursued its vision of a world without hunger for more than three decades, combating hunger in emergency situations of conflict, natural disaster, and chronic food insecurity. With more than 8,000 staff in more than 50 countries, our innovative programs in nutrition, food security, livelihoods, water, sanitation, and hygiene, reach more than 14.7 million people each year, restoring self-sufficiency to vulnerable populations throughout the world.

For more information, visit us online, on Facebook, or on Twitter:

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