



Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools

Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools



**Education
Health Promotion
and Protection**



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Contents

Categories	1
Criteria	3
Maximum Nutrition	4
Moderate Nutrition	6
Minimum Nutrition	7
Rationale	8
Background and Tips	10

contents



Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools

The Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools are based upon *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*. They provide nutrition criteria, suggestions, and detailed lists of healthy options that can help inform decisions about the food and beverages served and sold during the school day. As changes are made, the standards offer a way to evaluate progress toward a healthy nutrition environment within the school. The food and beverage standards are not in any way meant to apply to, or to evaluate, student lunches and snacks sent from home.

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating is based on *Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating*, which outlines key healthy eating messages for all Canadians such as:

- Enjoy a VARIETY of foods.
- Emphasize cereals, breads, other grain products, vegetables, and fruit.
- Choose lower fat dairy products, leaner meats, and food prepared with little or no fat.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight by enjoying regular physical activity and healthy eating.
- Limit salt and caffeine.

NOTE: *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* is currently being revised. Updated information will be added when it is received.

CATEGORIES

The Food and Beverage Standards for Nova Scotia Public Schools groups food and beverages into three categories. Figuring out what goes into each category is not always easy because foods and beverages vary by brand and how they are prepared. However, the categories will help make it easier to decide which items to serve or sell during the school day, as well as where to categorize new foods and beverages that are introduced to the marketplace.

Use the Food and Beverage Standards for

- cafeterias, canteens, and vending services
- breakfast, lunch, and snack programs
- school fundraising with food/beverages
- school-based sports events
- after-school and evening programs provided by the school
- promotion or advertising of food and beverages in school

categories

“Maximum Nutrition” foods can be served or sold daily in schools.

- Food and beverages that are part of the four food groups of Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating
- High in essential nutrients for growth, learning, and health (e.g., vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate, essential fatty acids, fibre, and water)
- Low in saturated and trans fats
- Contain little or no added salt, sugars, or artificial sweeteners
- Minimally processed

“Moderate Nutrition” can be served or sold no more than two times per week or make up no more than 30% of choices at one location

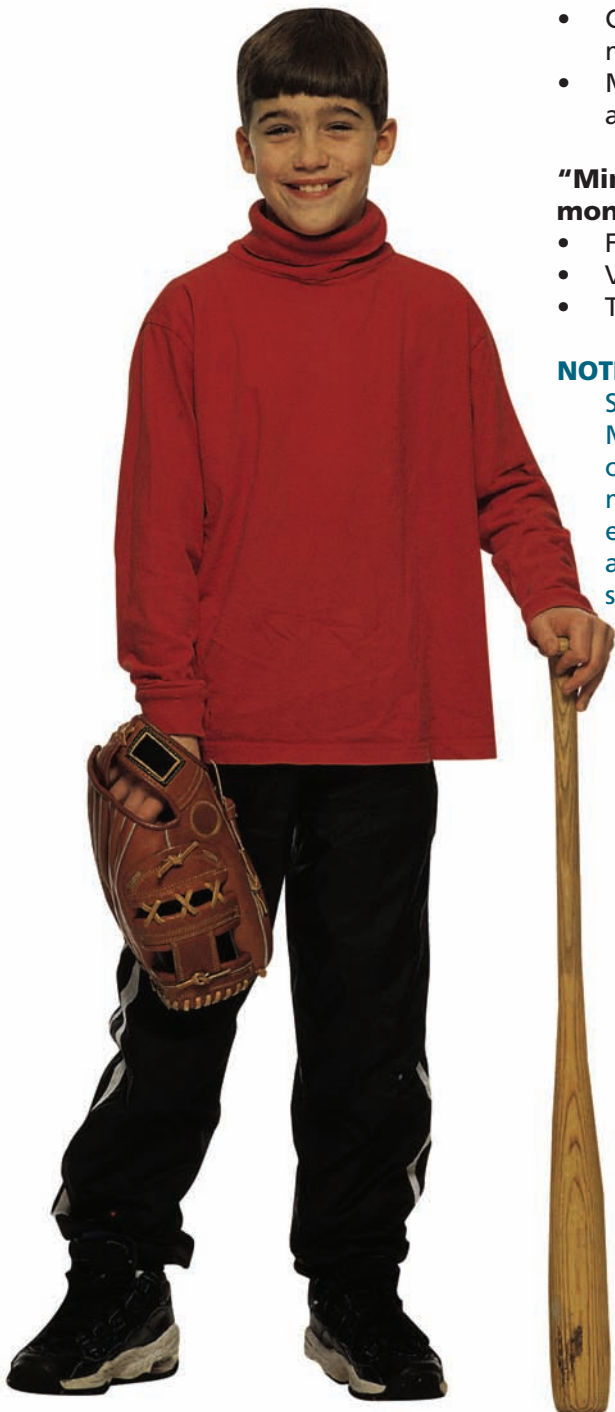
- Food and beverages that are part of the four food groups of *Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating*
- Contain essential nutrients for growth, learning, and health (e.g., vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate, essential fatty acids, fibre, and water)
- May be lower in fibre and higher in fat, salt, sugar, artificial sweeteners, and/or processing

“Minimum Nutrition” can be served or sold only once or twice a month as part of Special Functions

- Foods and beverages that offer minimal nutritional value
- Very high in sugar, fat, salt, caffeine, artificial sweeteners, and/or processing
- Tend to replace nutritious foods when available as meals and snacks

NOTE:

Special Functions will emphasize food and beverages of Maximum and Moderate Nutrition. However, because food is a significant part of many cultural or traditional celebratory events, some items of Minimum Nutrition may be served or sold during Special Functions. Special Functions are events that may occur once or twice a month and include special occasions and in-school celebrations (e.g., parent-teacher night, Remembrance Day, school bazaar, Spring Fling, Halloween, Christmas bake sales).



NUTRITION CRITERIA

Nutrition criteria are based on Health Canada's Nutrition Claims (http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index_e.html), the nutrition content of popular or staple foods (Canadian Nutrient File, http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/fiche-nutri-data/index_e.html), *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, standards set in other provinces, and knowledge and experience with food and beverage items in school.

The nutrition criteria are intended for use by a variety of individuals, including students, parent volunteers, principals, and food service workers and companies. Because of the many people who will use the criteria there are three pieces of complementary information to guide decisions: Food for Thought; Nutrient Criteria; and the Maximum, Moderate, and Minimum Nutrition Food Lists.

Definitions

Low fat = 3 g or less of fat per serving

Low in saturated fat = 2 g or less of saturated and trans fats combined

Source of fibre = 2 g or more of fibre per serving

(From Health Canada Nutrition Claims)

NOTE:

Heart Health Claims for sodium are based on 480 mg for single foods and 960 mg for entrees. The Dietary Reference Intake (DRI) Upper Limit for sodium for children 4–8 years is 1900 mg/day and for children 9–13 years is 2200 mg/day. For teens and adults the recommended daily upper limit is 2300 mg/day.⁴³



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Criteria

maximum

Maximum Nutrition

Grain Products: Food for Thought

- Choose items that list whole grains as the first or second ingredient, e.g., breads, cereals, crackers, and pasta made from whole wheat, oats, rice, rye, corn, barley.
- Choose items that say “low in fat,” “low in saturated fat,” “trans fat free,” “lower in salt,” or “source of fibre.”
- Choose items that do not contain artificial sweeteners.

Nutrient Criteria

Fat: No more than 3 g (less than 1 tsp) of total fat per serving
No more than 2 g of saturated and trans fat combined per serving

Fibre: 2 g or more per serving

Sodium: Less than 480 mg per serving

Vegetables and Fruit: Food for Thought

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are always a good choice in this category. Choose fresh, local items that are in season. Use frozen or canned items to increase variety when fresh choices are unavailable.
- Choose beverages that say “100% juice.”
- Choose products that list a vegetable or fruit as the first or second ingredient, not including water.
- Choose items that say “low in fat,” “low in saturated fat,” “lower in salt,” or “source of fibre.”
- Choose items that do not have added sugars or artificial sweeteners.

Nutrient Criteria

Fat: No more than 3 g of total fat (i.e., less than 1 tsp) per serving
No more than 2 g of saturated and trans fat combined per serving

Fibre: 2 g or more per serving

Sodium: Less than 480 mg per serving

Sugar: No added sugars

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Milk Products: Food for Thought

- Choose lower fat milk products: 2%, 1%, or skim (white or flavoured) fluid milk, yogurt, and soy beverages.
- Choose cheeses (including tofu and soy-based items) that contain less than 20% milk fat (MF) or butter fat (BF).
- Choose items that list milk as the first or second ingredient (this does not include cream).
- Choose items that do not contain artificial sweeteners.

Nutrient Criteria

- Fat: No more than 5 g total fat per serving
No more than 4 g saturated and trans fat per serving
- Sodium: Less than 480 mg per serving
- Sugar: Lower fat (2% or less); flavoured milks should contain 28 g or less total sugar per 250 mL serving

Meat and Alternatives: Food for Thought

- Choose lean or extra lean meats (e.g., lean ground beef versus regular), poultry, and fish.
- Choose meat alternatives such as lentils, beans, and tofu.
- Choose items that list a meat or alternative as the first or second ingredient.
- Try broiling, baking, roasting, grilling, poaching, and stir-frying to prepare foods with little or no added fat.

Nutrient Criteria

- Fat: No more than 5 g total fat per serving
No more than 3 g saturated and trans fat combined per serving
- Sodium: Less than 480 mg per serving

Entrees/Mixed Foods: Food for Thought

- Choose items that contain ingredients from the four food groups of the Maximum Nutrition list.
- Choose items that say “low or lower in fat,” “low in saturated fat,” “trans fat free,” “lower in salt,” or “source of fibre.”

Note: Please refer to the Maximum, Moderate, and Minimum Nutrition posters for the detailed lists of food and beverages that can be served and sold in schools.



moderate

Moderate Nutrition

Grain Products: Food for Thought

- Choose these items less often because they have less fibre than foods in the Maximum Nutrition list. When choosing, select items that list grains as the first or second ingredient and contain enriched white flours or mixed flours made from wheat, rice, oats, corn, barley, etc.
- When choosing, select items that say “lower in fat,” “low in saturated fat,” “trans fat free,” “lower in salt,” or “reduced in sugar.”

Nutrient Criteria

Fat:	No more than 5 g of total fat per serving No more than 2 g saturated and trans fat per serving combined
Fibre:	May contain less than 2 g per serving
Sodium:	May contain more than 480 mg but less than 960 mg per serving
Sugar:	May contain added sugar or artificial sweetener

Vegetables and Fruit: Food for Thought

- Try local fresh fruit and vegetables in season.
- Use frozen or canned items to increase variety when fresh choices are unavailable.
- When choosing, select items that list a vegetable or fruit as the first or second ingredient, not including water.
- When choosing, select items that say “lower in fat,” “low in saturated fat,” “trans fat free,” “lower in salt,” or “reduced in sugar.”

Nutrient Criteria

Fat:	Less than 5 g total fat per serving Less than 2 g saturated and trans fat combined per serving
Fibre:	May contain less than 2 g per serving
Sodium:	May contain more than 480 mg but less than 960 mg per serving
Sugar:	May contain added sugar or artificial sweetener

Milk Products: Food for Thought

- When choosing, select items that list milk as the first or second ingredient (this does not include cream).
- Choose these items less often because they are higher in fat compared to items in the Maximum Nutrition list: whole (3.25% MF) fluid milk, yogurt, and soy products.
- Choose these cheeses less often because they have more fat (i.e., more than 20% MF but less than 32% MF).

Nutrient Criteria

Fat:	May contain no more than 8 g total fat per serving May contain no more than 5 g saturated and trans fat combined per serving
Sodium:	May contain more than 480 mg but less than 960 mg per serving
Sugar:	Flavoured milk with no more than 28 g sugar per 250 mL; artificial sweetener may be present

Meat and Alternatives: Food for Thought

- When choosing, select items that list a meat or alternative as the first or second ingredient.
- Choose these cuts of meat, poultry, and fish less often because they have more fat or saturated fat.

Nutrient Criteria

Fat: No more than 10 g total fat per serving
 No more than 4 g saturated and trans fat combined per serving

Sodium: May contain more than 480 mg but less than 960 mg per serving

Entrees/Mixed Foods: Food for Thought

- Choose these items less often because they use or contain ingredients from the four food groups of the Moderate Nutrition list.
- When choosing, select, items that say "lower in fat," "low in saturated fat," "trans fat free," "lower in salt," and "reduced in sugar."

Minimum Nutrition**Food for Thought**

- These items should be served or sold only once or twice a month as part of special functions and along with items of Maximum and Moderate Nutrition. They contain large amounts of sugar, fat, or salt relative to other ingredients.

Nutrient Criteria

- Food and beverages that contain more than 960 mg sodium
- Grain products and vegetables and fruit that contain more than 5 g of fat per serving and more than 2 g of saturated and trans fat combined per serving
- Vegetable and fruit juices that are less than 100% juice
- Milk products that contain more than 3.25% MF
- Cheese products that contain more than 32% MF or BF
- Fluid milk that contains more than 8 g total fat per 250 mL serving
- Milk-based beverages that contain more than 28 g of total sugar per 250 mL
- Meat and alternatives that contain more than 10 g total fat per serving and more than 4 g of saturated and trans fat combined
- Artificial sweetener that is present in any of the items from this list

minimum

rationale

RATIONALE

Total fat

The standards are designed to discourage excess intake. Fat is necessary for the growth of brain and nerve cells and to absorb fat-soluble vitamins like A and D. Fat is part of many healthy foods but is a concentrated source of calories. Vegetable oils (e.g., canola, sunflower) provide a healthier source of fat than that from animal sources and certain tropical plants (e.g., palm and coconut oils). Providing guidance around foods with healthy and moderate amounts of fat helps schools encourage a more balanced, rather than a fat-phobic, approach to healthy eating.

Saturated fat

The standards are designed to limit intake. Excess intakes can contribute to chronic diseases including heart disease.

Trans fat

The standards are designed to reduce the intake of trans fats. Health Canada has recommended that Canadians reduce their intake of trans fats due to their link with poor health and disease. Trans fats are created when vegetable oils are made into shortening or partially hydrogenated fats. These fats are then used in a variety of products (e.g., baked goods, crackers, candy) to make them look and taste good. Many food companies have removed or are in the process of removing trans fats from foods. Trans fats appear on Nutrition Facts labels along with saturated fat. If there is no nutrition label, check the ingredient list for the words such as "shortening," "hydrogenated," and "partially hydrogenated oil." This indicates that trans fat is present in the food. If it appears as the first or second ingredient, it indicates that there is a relatively large amount compared with other ingredients in the food.

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Sodium

The standards are designed to discourage excess intakes. Salt is often found in foods popular with children and youth; therefore, it can be quite easy for intakes to go beyond the daily upper limit.

Fibre

The standards are designed to emphasize foods that contain fibre and to encourage intake as part of whole grains, fruit and vegetables, and meat alternatives (e.g., dried beans, peas, lentils). Fibre is important to the health of the digestive system.

Sugar

The standards are designed to reduce intake of added sugars. There are many foods and beverages available that contain added sugars and have sugar as a first or second ingredient. Items that are mostly sugar provide “empty calories” that can displace healthier choices. The World Health Organization recommends that no more than 10% of children’s calories should come from sugar.

Caffeine

Standards are designed to limit intake because of the effects on behaviour. Caffeine is an addictive stimulant found in certain food and beverages including cola drinks, coffee, tea, “energy” drinks, and chocolate. Caffeine has the same stimulating or energizing effects in children and youth as it does in adults. It also has similar side effects that include irritability, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. The effects can be stronger in children because their bodies are smaller. This can make it more difficult for students to perform in school. Health Canada has set maximum safety limits for caffeine for children and youth based on body weight: children 7–9 years = 62.5 mg/day and 10–12 years = 85 mg/day. There are no set guidelines for teens, but it is estimated that the safe mark is about 2 mg/kg body weight.

Artificial Sweeteners

Health Canada has approved the use of artificial sweeteners in small amounts for school-age children. To help prevent children from getting used to sweet-tasting items of minimum nutritional value, the standards allow for their use in nutritious foods only. Artificially sweetened beverages like pop and other drinks do not contribute other nutrients and can have significant amounts of artificial sweeteners.



BACKGROUND AND TIPS

CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE TO HEALTHY EATING

Together, the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* provide the necessary energy and nutrients for growth, development, health, learning, and physical activity. For this reason it is important to include choices from each of the four food groups, as well as choices from within each food group every day.

NOTE:

Refer to *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* or visit the Health Canada website (www.bc.sc.gc.ca/) and click on Food & Nutrition and then Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating for an online guide and resources. An updated version of the food guide is coming soon.

GRAIN PRODUCTS

Whole grains (e.g., whole wheat bread, oatmeal, brown rice) are an important source of fibre, which is necessary for a healthy digestive system. Whole grain and enriched products provide a source of energy, iron, magnesium, and B vitamins.

For information on reading nutrition labels visit
www.healthyeatinginstore.ca/

Tips for Including More Whole Grain Products

- Serve bags of trail mix ready-to-eat whole grain cereals (e.g., toasted oat O's, shredded wheat, oatmeal squares, etc.) and dried fruit and nuts*.
- Use whole wheat pasta in macaroni and cheese and other pasta dishes. Start by using whole wheat and white noodles together.
- Use whole wheat pizza crusts and tortilla wraps.
- Introduce whole grain breads by making sandwiches with both white and whole grain breads.
- Serve muffins made with bran and fruit.
- Serve whole grain crackers with cheese and soups.

*Refer to allergy policies in your school board.



VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Vegetables and fruit contain a variety of important nutrients like vitamins A, C, and folate and the minerals iron and magnesium. A number of these nutrients are found in dark green, red, and orange vegetables and in orange fruits. For this reason, *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* recommends that they be chosen more often. This food group also contributes energy, fibre, and plant compounds (phytochemicals), which are thought to contribute to health and reduce cancer risk.

TIP: Hold student taste tests to increase exposure to and acceptability of new foods such as fruits and vegetables.

Tips for Including More Vegetables and Fruit

- Include a vegetable or fruit as part of daily meals or specials.
- Offer a fresh fruit or raw vegetable snack or canned fruit cup in the canteen. Try wedges of orange, melon, small bunches of grapes, banana, carrot coins, turnip and celery sticks, broccoli flowerets, etc.
- Set up a salad bar or fruit parfait bar—start with once per month or once per week.
- Serve a hearty vegetable soup, stir fry, or baked potato stuffed with healthy toppings such as salsa.
- Add vegetables like cucumber, peppers, mushrooms, and celery to sandwich fillings.
- Serve a hearty vegetarian pizza.



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and tips

MILK PRODUCTS

Lower fat milk products such as white and flavoured milks (e.g., chocolate, banana, strawberry), yogurts, and cheeses provide high-quality protein, vitamins such as B12, and the minerals calcium, zinc, and magnesium. In addition, all fluid milks have vitamins A and D added, which, in combination with the other nutrients, are essential for the growth and development of bones and teeth. Milk and yogurt with a fat content of 2% milk fat (MF) or less and cheese with 20% or less MF are considered lower fat choices.

Tips for Including More Milk Products.

- Serve milk-based soups and chowders.
- Include lower fat yogurt as a dip for fruit.
- Shred lower fat cheese such as mozzarella and include in sandwiches, salads, and wraps and on baked potatoes.
- Try a yogurt parfait bar with healthy toppings such as fresh or dried fruit and granola-type cereal.

MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

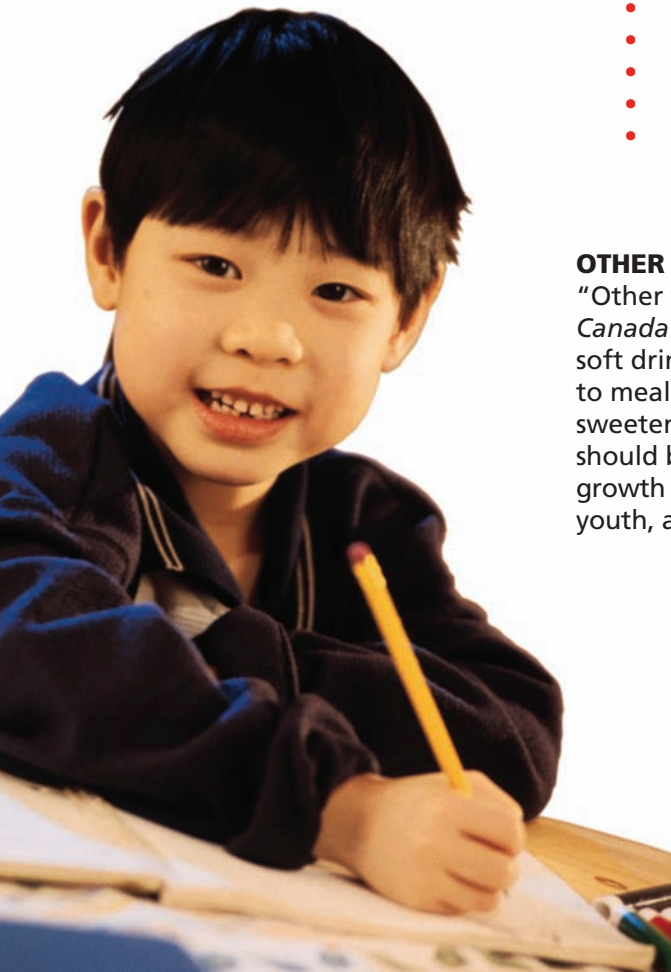
Meat, poultry, and fish, in addition to alternatives such as dried peas, beans, lentils, eggs, and nuts, provide protein for the growth and maintenance of body tissues. This food group also provides a source of B vitamins such as B12 (in animal-based foods only) and folate and the minerals iron, zinc, and magnesium. The fat content of meats varies widely, with highly processed meats (e.g., salami, bologna, wieners) and highly marbled cuts containing the most fat. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* recommends choosing leaner meats, poultry, and fish and more meat alternatives more often.

Tips for Including More Meat Alternatives

- Serve hummus and pita wedges as a snack.
- Offer hard boiled eggs or egg salad.
- Include tofu in stir fries.
- Serve lentil or split pea soups.
- Add dried beans and peas to soups and chili.
- Offer soy nut or almond butter as an alternative to peanut butter.

OTHER FOODS

"Other foods" are items that do not fit into any of the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* (e.g., butter, salad dressing, candy, soft drinks, chips, coffee, tea, ketchup). They can add taste and enjoyment to meals and snacks but tend to be high in fat, salt, sugar, and/or artificial sweeteners. Most have little nutritional value. These foods and beverages should be used in moderation because they provide few nutrients needed for growth and development. As well, they can fill up the stomachs of children and youth, as well as adults, leaving little room for nutritious foods and beverages.



SERVING SIZES

Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating provides information on serving sizes that may or may not be the same as those listed on food packages. The portion or amount of food that should be eaten at meals depends on age, body size, activity level, and whether the person is male or female, among other factors. The portion sizes of food and beverages have increased over the years (e.g., super size). Research tells us that people tend to eat and drink more when food and beverages are served in bigger containers or portions. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* provides some examples of portion sizes for each food group. A serving of each different food within one food group is approximately equal (in the nutrients that are key to that food group) to every other food in that group. This does not mean that a school meal has to provide the "exact" serving size, as described in *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* for each food group; rather it serves as a guideline.



