

Province brings Ontario produce to daycare centres ^[1]

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Source: Inside Toronto

Format: Article

Publication Date: 9 Feb 2011

EXCERPTS

Children at the Thomas Berry Child Care centre enjoyed a healthy homegrown Ontario lunch to commemorate new provincial funding that will bring more Ontario produce into daycare centres.

"I'm very proud as both minister of youth services and as a mom to know we're making sure that Ontario kids are creating those lifelong habits that will make them healthy, happy and help them learn," said Laurel Broten, MPP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore at the event Tuesday, Feb. 8.

The provincial initiative is a product of the Greenbelt Fund's Broader Public Sector Investment Fund which aims to increase the amount of Ontario grown food in public institutions such as hospitals, schools, and long-term health centres by 50 per cent, starting with daycare centres.

Broten, who routinely takes her children to the Thomas Berry playground during off-hours and on weekends, said the initiative is a great priority for the government to ensure children get the best possible start in life by offering healthy meals at child care centres.

"Child care centres are one of the first places children learn their eating habits," said Broten. "The taste for these foods that kids get in their lives is so critical. To understand how healthy it is to eat produce that's colourful and healthy for you and is full of nutrition and vitamins is a key component of making sure that our earliest learners are ready for the afternoon, and are ready for what life awaits them."

She added that with programs like these where kids are encouraged to eat healthy foods with their peers, it will be easier for parents to get their kids to eat healthier if their friends enjoy it also.

"It creates that lifelong habit of healthy eating," Broten said. "Talking to the kids today, that's very much reinforced."

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Funding for the program totals \$6 million and is split into two rounds of grants, in addition to the \$80 million the province has already invested into local food, she added.

-reprinted from Inside Toronto

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