



# KINGSLEY VOICE

COLUMN

## Mayor Olivia Chow pays a visit to King



Natalie Caporusso

The Kingsley Voice had the amazing opportunity to interview Mayor Chow during her visit to R.H. King Academy on January 7th.

By Jumaina Ahmed

On January 7, R.H. King Academy had the honour of welcoming the Mayor of Toronto, Olivia Chow. Over the December break, Mayor Chow came across an article on Mr. Rutherford, a beloved member of staff here at King, who recently passed away.

"It was very touching to see how he dedicated his life to get the students to eat well, teach students about nutrition, and how to cook," Mayor Chow told the Kingsley Voice. "So I thought, wow, what an inspirational person, and what a school."

Chow was touched by Mr. Rutherford's work as a teacher and decided to pay a visit to the place where he spent the last two years of his career. "I wanted to celebrate this amazing teacher, which is why I'm here," she says.

Mayor Chow also expressed her condolences to Mr. Rutherford's wife, Dorothy Kane, who also made a meaningful visit to R.H. King on the same day to meet with the Mayor, staff, and to help hand out morning snacks to honour her late husband. Mayor Chow was able to sympathize with her and shared that she had also lost her husband, the late Jack Layton, back in 2011.

The Mayor was especially touched by Mr. Rutherford's work at King because of her extensive history with the nutrition program in Toronto. Every morning, King students are greeted by nutritious breakfast foods in front of the office, a feature that would not be in place partially without the past efforts of people like Mayor Chow. In 1985, Chow first held the position of school trustee where during her time she introduced an invaluable

initiative that helped hundreds of thousands of students in Toronto: the school breakfast and lunch program. She recognized the importance of nutritious, filling meals for children and decided that something had to be done so students' hunger did not get in the way of their learning. During her time as a city councillor, Chow pushed to make the program national. Now, as Mayor, she still feels the same dedication to ensuring students in Toronto don't go hungry. She shared her plans for the 2026 Toronto budget, which will have an extra six million dollars for the student nutrition program.

Beyond this, Mayor Chow sees a number of other issues that young people in Toronto are facing including employment, university costs and housing costs. "So, it's really the cost of living, and how to make life affordable for stu-

dents," Chow says.

Another pressing issue faced by young Torontonians is the cost and quality of the public transit system. Mayor Chow pointed out that bus services have now been increased. However, even with more frequent buses, Chow worries that Torontonians still deal with congestion on the roads. On Line 1 and Line 2, the subways arrive every two and a half minutes, a minute faster than before Chow came into office.

An improvement after Mayor Chow came into office was that fares have not increased. The last fare increase was in 2023 when she noticed that there was a decrease in service. "I thought, 'That's ridiculous.' That was before I got elected," she adds with a smile. In the future, Mayor Chow wants Torontonians to ride free on weekends. Many

students rely on the TTC daily to get to and from school and to commute to extracurriculars and other activities. The mayor shared her plans to cap fares at 47 rides per month, making every ride after that free. "The more you ride, the less you pay," Mayor Chow says. She hopes for that number to be lowered to 40 in the future so students would be able to take the TTC to get to their after school and weekend plans for free. This decision will be of great benefit to students in Toronto as it could help them to take part in more exciting opportunities around the city.

Mayor Chow has hopes for the kind of city Toronto can be for young people. She wants a city that is caring and affordable. She emphasized the importance of feeling safe. She pointed out that Toronto is relatively safe compared to other major North American cities, but safety comes in many forms. She doesn't only wish for safety from violence in public, but she also hopes for Torontonians to live in a city that is free from sexual assault and partner violence. She spoke about how she was able to make ways to reduce the wait times when seeking an emergency response.

"If you ever needed to call 911, it used to be on hold for a minute plus! It's now 15 seconds. It's a 75% decrease," she explains.

Mayor Chow ended off by highlighting the need for a Toronto that is good-hearted. "The most important thing is that we create a city that is kind and caring - which I know Torontonians are! We're generous," she says.

## The importance of the nutrition program



Ahnaaf Hassan

Mayor Olivia Chow hopes to play a crucial role in creating and maintaining school nutrition programs.

By Najiha Rahman

After reading an article in the Toronto Star about Mr. Rutherford Kane that noted his

dedication to the Food and Nutrition Program at R.H. King, Mayor Olivia Chow felt inspired to visit the school. The article reminded her of her

earlier work in government and the values that guided her throughout her career. As a school trustee, the goal of providing food for students

was always a goal in her mind.

"There simply wasn't the money for it though, so I had to think: who did the money come from? The federal government," she says. This was her inspiration and drive to serve as a Member of Parliament. "I pushed to make the program national."

Now, as mayor, Chow intends to make sure the children of Toronto are fed. In 2024, Dr. Na-Koshie Lamptey, formerly the Acting Medical Officer of Health, said that the food program existed in 75% of Toronto's schools which showed progress but also highlighted the work that still needs to be done. Recognizing the ongoing issue of food insecurity, Mayor Chow declared a food insecurity emergency in December 2024 and called on the provincial government to increase its funding for school food programs. That same month, City Council approved 23 additional school nutrition programs that began in January 2025 and reached 8,000 more students.

However, in 2026 all Toronto schools are still not secured with a food program. Chow recognized this and

King's work in this area is part of what prompted her visit.

R.H. King is an outstanding exception in the world of food at school. King is equipped with not only a dedicated pantry program that supplies families with non-perishable ingredients, but also a strong food and nutrition program that includes classes and councils dedicated to having students cook for one another. The school has snacks available to students at all times in the office. Additionally, King was even able to renovate their kitchen this year and now houses updated stoves, sinks, and fridges.

"Not all schools are as fortunate as R.H. King," Chow notes. Many schools in Toronto are not given the same amount of opportunity. "But if you're hungry, you're not learning." This philosophy is what drives Mayor Chow.

On January 7th, during her visit to King, she announced her vision to the school that her upcoming budget will have an extra six million dollars for the student nutritional program. "My budget allows for every child under 18 years old to not go hungry," she said.