May 16, 2012

The United Nations’ special rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier de Schutter, just completed an 11-day investigation into food security in Canada, and his conclusions are stark: “What I’ve seen in Canada is a system that presents barriers for the poor to access nutritious diets and that tolerates increased inequalities between rich and poor, and aboriginal (and) non-aboriginal peoples”.

Mr. de Schutter found that 800,000 households in Canada don’t have the ability to ensure that they’re putting proper food on the table. He has called for a national food strategy emphasizing local food production, reforming food subsidies for the North, ensuring a living wage for low-income people, and pulling together the separate attempts being made across the country to defeat hunger.

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney was unequivocal in his response to the rapporteur’s findings, saying, “I think this is completely ridiculous”. He commented that “the UN should focus on development… in countries where people are starving. We think it’s simply a waste of resources to come to Canada to give political lectures”.

For his part, Mr. de Schutter replied, “it’s not because the country is a wealthy country that there are no problems. In fact, the problems are very significant and, frankly, this sort of self-righteousness about the situation being good in Canada is not corresponding to what I saw on the ground, not at all”.

During the special rapporteur’s visit, the government did not grant him an official access to any cabinet ministers. Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq, who was promoting the seal hunt, did agree to meet with him at the last minute on Wednesday, however. According to Mr. Aglukkaq’s spokesperson, “the minister was increasingly frustrated that someone would write about food security in the North without going there”. Mr. de Schutter’s itinerary included Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and the Island Lakes Region. He did not visit the North.

The UN Right To Food Mission Is Visiting... Canada? - May 6, 2012

The United Nations has never sent their Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food to a wealthy nation before. Usually, Olivier de Schutter, the Special Rapporteur, visits developing countries. But today Mr. De Schutter touches down in Canada, where he will investigate our food system. He will visit Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and the Island Lakes Region, and speak with various civic groups, from May 6-16th.

And why does our food system need investigating? According to Diana Bronson, the Executive Director of Food Secure Canada, “over two million Canadians do not have enough food to eat, and many people who live on government assistance cannot afford a healthy diet”.

The Special Rapporteur’s meetings will include civil society groups concerned with the right to food across Canada, as well as with Aboriginal peoples who are particularly affected by the issue. He will be investigating issues of access to food for marginalized groups - in a press release, he said, “Challenges remain to ensure that food is adequate, accessible and affordable for marginalized groups, be they poor urban populations or Aboriginal peoples”. He will meet with First Nations groups in Manitoba and Alberta.

http://www.cbc.ca/strombo/social-issues/the-un-right-to-food-mission-is-visiting-cana... 21/05/2012
During Mr. De Schutter’s visit, Food Secure Canada will recommend a comprehensive national food strategy to ensure that all Canadians have access to healthy food. The FSC’s plan is called ‘The People’s Food Policy’, and you can read it right here.

To promote the Special Rapporteur’s trip, Food Secure Canada is tweeting from @FoodSecureCAN, and following the Right to Food mission with the hashtag #Right2FoodCAN.

Canada ratified the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1967, which includes the right to food in the phrase “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care”. But the right to food is not entrenched in our constitution or laws, and as The Tyee points out, writing it into our laws could be “problematic in the Canadian context, because social rights, like welfare for example, are provincial responsibilities”.

Mr. De Schutter will present his preliminary observations on his visit at a press conference on May 16th at the National Press Theatre in Ottawa.

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COMMENT WITH FACEBOOK
Wouldn't it make more sense to make it easier for small, innovative, local producers to raise their crops AND animals, with more access, transparency, and with less red tape. I believe if the government and the large agri-corporations had the interest of people not only profits at heart I think we would see big changes fast. Let's make local food not only sustainable but desirable for producers and consumers alike.

Reply 5 · Like · May 6 at 12:36pm

Time for Canada to wake up and ensure food security for all. Time to get rid of the need for food banks and breakfast programs in schools. Time for sound economic policies that ensure opportunities for everyone. Please help to put pressure on all levels of government to develop a comprehensive national food strategy.

Reply 3 · Like · May 6 at 11:40am

It does not surprise me that the Canadian government would not admit and accept the fact they have a serious problem. I fully support what the U.N investigation has revealed. The Canadian government should focus on the people here first and deal with the problems of families relying on food banks to survive. No one should not be without food in this country.....I have given up on our very government in serving the people....

Reply · 2 · Like · May 16 at 9:59am

The fat cats in government just can't understand what it is to be poor and hungry. What a shame.

Reply · May 16 at 3:13pm

"It's not because the country is a wealthy country that there are no problems. In fact, the problems are very significant and, frankly, this sort of self-righteousness about the situation being good in Canada is not corresponding to what I saw on the ground, not at all". Bravo, Mr. De Schutter, Bravo. Are you listening Health Canada and CFIA? How about you give it a try.

Reply · 1 · Like · May 16 at 3:28pm

An ongoing and all-too-often invisible issue in this country.

Reply · 1 · Like · May 16 at 8:52am

I'm a single mom on disability. It's very hard to eat healthy on the amount we are getting. And a visit to the foodbank usually yields canned foods and packaged things that are often expired. We try to eat local, but often it's more expensive than the imported, lesser quality produce. Also with Ontario's economy the way it is, I'm finding it impossible to find a part time/occasional job to supplement my disability income, but I'm unable to work full time.

Reply · Like · May 16 at 3:33pm

Whether he went to the North or not he probably met people from there and he's not wrong!

Reply · May 6 at 11:40am

I'm a single mom with disability. It's very hard to eat healthy on the amount we are getting. And a visit to the foodbank usually yields canned foods and packaged things that are often expired. We try to eat local, but often it's more expensive than the imported, lesser quality produce. Also with Ontario's economy the way it is, I'm finding it impossible to find a part time/occasional job to supplement my disability income, but I'm unable to work full time.

Reply · Like · May 6 at 5:37pm


Living in a remote location 3,000 Kilometers from anywhere, is possible. But access to everything in 9 984 670 square kilometres is difficult.

If you want access, you'll find it. It just won't be a your door. But it is simple. If you live far away from everything and live in a place with no access to anything, you are far away from access and everything.

Reply · Like · May 6 at 11:14pm

The policy book reeks of unscientific, socialist, cheap food policy. Yay! That will fix everything! Fans should take a gander at the other "humanitarian" efforts of the UN over in say, India. (Google: the great carbon credit con India). Yeah, they're do-gooders alright.

Reply · Like · May 6 at 12:06pm

What do you mean by socialist cheap food policy? Don't you think everyone should have access to healthy food? There is cheap food available, but it's not healthy. It's cheaper to buy a McDonalds meal than go to the market and get fresh vegetables and real meat without hormones, etc. People who live here are of course better off than in India or Sudan or elsewhere, but it doesn't mean that it's ok to leave people in poverty and hunger, no matter what country you are in.

Reply · 1 · Like · May 16 at 3:37pm
COMMENT WITH CBC MEMBER CENTRE

globreset wrote:Posted 2012/05/07 at 5:43 PM ET

In 2012, it astounds me that so many have a problem with a simple idea. Why is trying to create a fairer society an evil thing? What's wrong with every person having access to food, shelter, medical care and education? If you think that's a bad idea, have you ever been homeless? I've been homeless twice. Have you ever needed food assistance? Try going to a food bank and not getting turned away. If the worst happens and you lose literally everything, your attitude will change instantly.

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