



Feb 1, 2016

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Palais Wilson

52 rue des Pâquis

CH-1201 Geneva, Switzerland

by email: cescr@ohchr.org

Re: Submission on the right to food in Canada

Dear members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

We are pleased to provide Food Secure Canada's input for your review on the state of the right to food in Canada. Food Secure Canada is a national membership-based alliance of organizations and individuals concerned with zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. Our membership spans from coast to coast to coast and includes farmers' organizations; food banks; international non-profits; Indigenous leaders; institutional food providers; food businesses; community food centres; health, nutrition, youth and research organizations; and many others.

The recent Canadian federal election has brought about a new government that has sent signals that it is willing to renew Canada's engagement with international human rights. In its reply to Food Secure Canada's questionnaire during the election, for example, the currently governing Liberal Party stated that "Access to sufficient, safe, healthy, adequate food is a fundamental human right" and also committed to "developing and funding a national strategy to reduce food insecurity in Canada."

In his [mandate letter](#) to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau included the development of a national food policy, a long-standing goal of Food Secure Canada's and a key recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food when he undertook a mission to Canada in 2012. More specifically, Prime Minister Trudeau asks that the Minister "develop a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food, produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country."

We believe this is a promising development, and it is important that the process of developing this national policy cut across different government departments and include the voices of civil society organizations, farmers, Indigenous peoples and those who are actually living in food insecurity. We see this as an opportunity for Canada to live up to its obligation to protect the right to food, and we urge you to discuss this matter with our government representatives as you undertake the periodic review. Likewise, it will be important to determine if a human rights framework will form the bedrock of our new food and poverty reduction plans.

We are delighted to re-submit the facts and recommendations of the report produced by Dr. Olivier de Schutter, then Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, following his visit to Canada in 2012. This report was prepared following extensive consultation with civil society and Indigenous organizations across Canada and presents a comprehensive review of the most important issues surrounding food security in Canada, including the issue of food access and the state's obligation to ensure the adequacy of income security programs in addressing widespread domestic hunger. We submit this report hopeful that the new federal government will be more responsive to its recommendations than the previous one. In addition, we have provided a copy of our commentary on the Government's report, which highlights certain weaknesses in the review provided on the right to food.

One of the key recommendations of the Special Rapporteur's report on Canada is the creation of a rights-based national food strategy, including a nationally funded children and food strategy comprising school-feeding food literacy and school garden programmes. Food Secure Canada is working to ensure that the proposed national food policy will include a strong reference to the right to food and the creation of a national healthy school food program.

Another urgent issue that has gained prominence since 2012 is the question of food insecurity in Canada's remote and northern regions, reaching as high as 70% in some parts of the country. The new Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs, Dr. Carolyn Bennett, has received a mandate to review the much criticized Nutrition North program and our northern partners remain eager to ensure that the review is comprehensive and participatory.

We thank you for your consideration of our submission and look forward to continuing our engagement with the new federal government on its protection of the right to food.

Respectfully submitted,



Diana Bronson
Executive Director
Food Secure Canada

