



CANADA WITHOUT POVERTY
CANADA SANS PAUVRETÉ

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May 22, 2012

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper PC, MP
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of Canada Without Poverty, I express our concern over the public confusion the federal government is sending regarding matters relating to poverty. In your response to our last letter to you, you referred our questions to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development. Yet, in response to findings by Olivier De Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, following his mission to Canada this month to investigate food security in Canada, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration said on May 16th:

"I think this is completely ridiculous. Canada is one of the wealthiest, most democratic countries in the world. We believe that the UN should focus on development in countries where people are starving and we think it's simply a waste of resources to come to Canada to give them political lecturing."

To further confuse things, it was not the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development but rather the Minister of Health who was the only member of Cabinet to meet with the Special Rapporteur during his mission to Canada.

The federal government listens to evaluations done by many international organizations that Canada supports, including those from the UN. In this light, the Special Rapporteur's findings constitute a service to our country. Moreover, this matter at hand – food security and the right to food – is not a foreign policy issue. At issue are those who have no food in Canada right now, as is evident by those figuratively and literally on the margins of Parliament Hill, including those who are homeless (with their right to housing also not being upheld).

Time is of the essence. Will you please clarify who speaks for the Government of Canada on matters of poverty in Canada?

Yours very truly,

Rob Rainer
Executive Director

Cc All parliamentarians
Canada Without Poverty's national network