



June 4, 2012

Hon. Steven Harper
House of Commons, Ottawa

Premier Harper:

We have been shocked and saddened by the negative reactions of some of your Government Ministers toward Professor Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food. True, his observations did not constitute a complimentary document with regards to our Canadian policies regarding food security. Indeed, far too many Canadians have a poor nutritional status because they cannot afford to eat. We believe that Professor De Schutter based his observations on facts and that he deserved respect.

We, at the Common Front for Social Justice, have close contacts with many New Brunswickers who are hungry. According to the 2006 census, the latest values which are publicly known, almost one New Brunswicker in seven falls below the Low Income Cut-off before tax. Federal transfers in the social area were significantly reduced in the mid-1990s and have not been increased to keep up with the need as well as with inflation. A most welcome political decision on the part of your government would be to increase the portion of federal transfers targeted for social welfare. Such a gesture would go a long way to reduce malnutrition and poor health among New Brunswickers.

In July 2012, the N.B. Common Front for Social Justice will undertake another food cost survey across the entire province. Our past data indicates that since 2006, the price of food has gone up by 26.5%. Part time workers, minimum wage workers, social assistance recipients and elderly people in need of prescription drugs simply cannot afford to eat a nutritious diet.

We urge you to take a more respectful approach toward UN observers mandated to verify how Canada is meeting its international obligations in the area of human rights.

Aur a Cormier, Ph. D, CFSJ Provincial Councilor

c.c. Robert Goguen, MP
Dominic LeBlanc, MP
David Alward, Premier of N.B.
Bernard LeBlanc, Social Development Critic
Dominic Cardy, NDP Leader