

Minister of Health



Ministre de la Santé

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0K9

MAY 17 2013

Ms. Diana Bronson
director@foodsecurecanada.org

Dear Ms. Bronson:

Thank you for your correspondence of February 7, 2013, concerning food security. I regret the delay in responding.

I am pleased to see organizations such as Food Secure Canada engaged on the issue of food security and appreciate receiving your comments about Dr. Olivier De Schutter's report.

Canada is recognized internationally as a country with an enviable standard of living. It consistently ranks near the top of the United Nations' Human Development Index. The great majority of Canadians are food secure.

Our own statistics tell us, however, that there are vulnerable persons and groups for whom regular access to food remains a challenge. This is an issue that the federal government takes seriously, and that is why we are taking concrete steps to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations in accessing safe and nutritious food.

An important factor linked to food security is the personal financial security of individuals. With access to a job and a steady source of income, a person's ability to afford and access healthy and nutritious food is greatly increased. That is why the Government of Canada has been focused on helping create jobs, supporting economic growth, and securing Canada's long-term prosperity. We will continue to work with our Aboriginal partners, the provincial and territorial governments, and other sectors to look at how to best address these factors and to help improve the lives of Canadians.

The issue of food security for Aboriginal peoples is linked to a variety of factors. One such factor is reduced access to country food. Country food—which includes plants, fish, and meat from animals such as seals—is central to individual and community health. It also retains significant symbolic and spiritual value, and is central to cultural and personal

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identity. Our government has always been deeply committed to programs and initiatives that promote increased access to healthy country and store-bought food for Aboriginal peoples.

Across the country, the federal government provides culturally sensitive, community-based programs that support vulnerable populations and promote nutrition and improved access to nutritious foods. While programs differ in target and scope, they have a common thread of empowering individuals and communities, increasing access to services and support, and improving coordination at the community level for delivering services.

For example, the Public Health Agency of Canada and Health Canada have several such programs, which include:

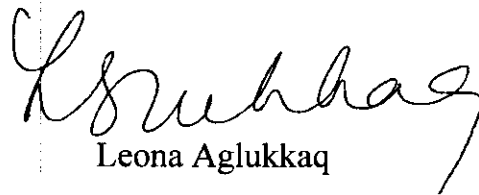
- community-based programs, such as the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program, Aboriginal Head Start, the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, which focus on vulnerable populations and promote nutrition and improved access to traditional and healthy store-bought food;
- committing \$2.9 million annually to culturally appropriate retail and community-based initiatives providing nutrition education through the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada program Nutrition North Canada. This program provides a retail subsidy on perishable healthy foods that have to be flown into isolated northern communities all year round. During its first year of operation, the program's retail subsidy helped lower the cost of a basket of healthy foods in the North by an average of 8 percent and funded more than 300 nutrition initiatives that were developed and delivered by Aboriginal communities; and
- increasing the availability and accessibility of nutritious foods, which is a key policy priority identified in *Curbing Childhood Obesity: A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights*, endorsed by Canada's federal, provincial and territorial health ministers in September 2010.

Recognizing that comprehensive and consistent information is central to understanding food insecurity in Canada and to developing policies and programming, the Government of Canada also invests in surveillance and monitoring of food insecurity through surveys such as the Canadian Community Health Survey, the Inuit Health Survey and the First Nations Food, Nutrition and Environment Study. Health Canada also developed the National Nutritious Food Basket, a tool to assist in food-costing studies.

Food security is a complex issue and is linked to a variety of factors. Addressing food security requires the contributions of multiple sectors working together. That is why our government is working with provincial and territorial governments, Aboriginal partners, and other sectors to address these factors and help improve food security.

Thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leona Aglukkaq', written in a cursive style.

Leona Aglukkaq