



News Release

Food Insecurity presents a serious and growing challenge in Canada's northern and remote Aboriginal communities, finds Expert Panel

Ottawa (March 27, 2014) – A new expert panel report on food security in Northern Canada, has found that food insecurity among northern Aboriginal peoples requires urgent attention in order to mitigate impacts on health and well-being. ***Aboriginal Food Security in Northern Canada: An Assessment of the State of Knowledge***, released today by the Council of Canadian Academies, addresses the diversity of experience that northern First Nations, Inuit, and Métis households and communities have with food insecurity.

Aboriginal households across Canada experience food insecurity at a rate more than double that of non-Aboriginal households (27% vs. 12%, respectively). Recent data indicate that Canadian households with children have a higher prevalence of food insecurity than households without children. A 2007-2008 survey indicated that nearly 70% of Inuit preschoolers aged three to five lived in food insecure households, and 56% lived in households with child-specific food insecurity. Preliminary evidence also indicates that more women than men are affected. The Panel concluded that lasting solutions require collaboration and the continued involvement of those most affected by food insecurity: people living in the North.

“To fully understand the issue of food security, consideration must be given to the many factors that influence life in the North, such as environmental change, culture, governance, and economies,” said Dr. Harriet Kuhnlein, Chair of the Expert Panel. There are no silver-bullet solutions — that is why cooperation among all the key actors including local communities, governments, businesses and institutions is essential.

The evidence-based report provides data on the various rates of food insecurity, explores how different factors affect food security, and describes the health and social effects of rapid social, environmental, and economic transitions — including the nutrition transition. Other findings include:

- There is no single way to “solve” food security issues in the North. A range of holistic approaches, including poverty reduction strategies, is required.
- There exists a strong body of research and traditional knowledge with respect to food security and northern Aboriginal health, but several knowledge gaps persist.
- The food security measurement methods used to date have been valuable, but their ability to respond to the complex issue of food security in the northern Canadian Aboriginal context is limited.
- Geographic, cultural, environmental, and economic diversity necessitates programs and policies that are responsive to locally-identified needs and are enabled by traditional knowledge and community strengths. Northern communities are a key source of resilience and innovative ideas.

“At the forefront of the panel’s discussions were the people who are most affected by food insecurity. This expert panel was committed to conducting an assessment that fully considered the complex range of

issues that are a daily reality for northern communities and have significant implications for food security,” said Elizabeth Dowdeswell, President of the Council of Canadian Academies.” The panel’s report provides clear evidence and insights that can assist in building effective solutions for both the short and long-term.”

-30-

For more information or to download a copy of the Panel’s report, visit the Council of Canadian Academies’ website, www.scienceadvice.ca.

About the Council of Canadian Academies

The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit organization that began operation in 2005. The Council supports evidence-based, expert assessments to inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels of experts from across Canada and abroad. The Council’s blue-ribbon panels serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council’s Member Academies: the Royal Society of Canada; the Canadian Academy of Engineering; and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. The Council’s vision is to be a trusted voice for science in the public interest. For more information visit www.scienceadvice.ca

For more information please contact:

Cathleen Meechan
Director, Communications
Council of Canadian Academies
613.567.5000 x 228
cathleen.meechan@scienceadvice.ca