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Russian Deputies Complain About High Porridge Prices in State Canteen

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Nor will the higher price be much of a burden on lawmakers' wallets.

As food prices soar around the nation, a lawmaker in Russia's lower house of parliament has spoken out on a deeply troubling issue: the rising cost of porridge in the parliament's cafeteria.

Sergei Ivanov, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, on Wednesday called on his colleagues to wage the war against inflation every day, beginning in their very own backyard.

"In our cafeteria, the price of a bowl of porridge has risen 150 percent," news agency Interfax quoted Ivanov as saying. "We can't even make sense of that — before it cost 20 rubles, now 53 rubles."

The deputy's announcement caused such a stir that a spokesman for the Office of Presidential Affairs decided to set the record straight.

"We don't live in a vacuum," spokesman Viktor Khrekov told Interfax, explaining that if wholesalers raise their prices, the cost of food in the State Duma's cafeteria must automatically rise too.

The average price of food products soared 15.4 percent last year and is expected to continue rising as Russia's ban on a group of Western food imports and the steep devaluation of the ruble take their toll.

In a separate interview with radio station Govorit Moskva, spokesman Khrekov said that the Office of Presidential Affairs considers its prices "quite low," as — being a state enterprise — it can keep markups to a minimum.

And in truth, even the new price of 53 rubles ($0.80) is quite a deal. In the popular Russian cafe chain Coffee House, a bowl of wheat or rice porridge will cost you 145 rubles ($2.10).

Nor will the higher price be much of a burden on lawmakers' wallets. State Duma deputies earned 420,000 rubles ($6,200) a month as of September last year, newspaper Argumenty i Fakty reported.

This is more than 13 times the salary of the average Russian, who earned about 32,000 rubles ($500) a month at that time, according to state statistics service Rosstat.

The Duma deputy's complaints reaped withering irony on Russian social media. "That's it, a revolt is coming," one user wrote on Twitter.

Others marveled at the extraordinarily low porridge prices the Duma had enjoyed to begin with.

"In my journalism faculty (which is near the State Duma, incidentally), porridge even a year ago was way more expensive. And for some reason this didn't bother the deputies," journalist Alyona Vershinina wrote on Twitter.

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