OTTAWA — The UN food envoy on Wednesday served up harsh criticism of Canada in his first mission to a rich country, pointing to an "unacceptable" level of hunger.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Olivier De Schutter was wrapping up an 11-day fact-finding mission that took him to poor inner-city neighborhoods and remote aboriginal communities that have to fly in food at high cost.

He told a press conference in Ottawa that 800,000 households or up to three million people out of a total population of 34 million in Canada are "food insecure" or "simply too poor to eat decently."

A shift in eating habits also has resulted in high obesity rates. More than one in four Canadian adults are obese, and almost two thirds of the population is overweight or obese, he said.

"My concerns are extremely severe," De Schutter concluded, urging Ottawa to develop a plan to both alleviate hunger and fight obesity.

"Canada has long been seen as a land of plenty. Yet today one in ten families with a child under six is unable to meet their daily food needs. These rates of food insecurity are unacceptable, and it is time for Canada to adopt a national right to food strategy."

The Canadian government was equally critical of De Schutter.

Immigration Minister Jason Kenney told reporters: "Canada sends billions of dollars of food aid to developing countries around the world where people are starving."

"It would be our hope that the contributions we make to the United Nations are used to help starving people in developing countries, not to give lectures to wealthy and developed countries like Canada."

"And I think this is a discredit to the United Nations," Kenney said, noting that Canada ranks sixth out of some 200 countries on the world social development index.

"I think (De Schutter's mission to Canada) is completely ridiculous."

De Schutter, who was appointed in 2008, met with Canada's Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq later in the day. He will present his final report to a forthcoming session of the Human Rights Council in 2013.

Aglukkaq in a rare outburst dismissed De Schutter's conclusions, saying she found him to be "ill informed, and a bit patronizing."

She said De Schutter "does not understand that (aboriginals) continue to live off the land, even today," and that pressure from environmental and animal rights activists to stop hunting and fishing is curtailing their access to good food and nutrition.