OTTAWA (Reuters) - A U.N. official criticized Canada on Wednesday for allowing some of its people to go hungry, but the government shrugged it off, saying there are more pressing food concerns in other countries.

"Canada has long been seen as a land of plenty. Yet today one in 10 families with a child under six is unable to meet their daily food needs," Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to food, said in a statement.

"These rates of food insecurity are unacceptable, and it is time for Canada to adopt a national right to food strategy."

He said 800,000 households in the country are "food insecure". Canada has a population of 34 million.

Canada is the first developed country on which De Schutter has reported. U.N. spokeswoman Yoonie Kim said Canada has a standing invitation to U.N. human rights officials to visit.

Reacting to De Schutter's report, Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird told reporters the country's federal and provincial governments are focused on improving the lives of Canadians and their ability to provide for themselves.

But he said: "There are, what, 193 members of the U.N.? I think most Canadians would think that spending 11 days in Canada on this issue - his time would be better spent elsewhere."

(Reporting by Randall Palmer; Editing by Peter Galloway)