



March 3, 2017

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne  
Minister of International Trade  
Government of Canada

Dear Minister Champagne:

On behalf of the Maquila Solidarity Network, a non-profit organization with more than 20 years' experience promoting labour and women's rights in the global garment and related consumer products industries, I am writing in support of the creation of an office of the extractive sector ombudsperson that promotes mandatory corporate accountability standards for Canadian extractive companies operating abroad.

We look forward to seeing the long-awaited fruits of the 2005 National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries and we would hope your government will take immediate concrete steps to catch up to the advancements being made in many other countries on business and human rights and environmental standards for companies operating abroad.

We have reviewed the model legislation developed by the Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability (CNCA) and encourage the government to implement it without further delay. We also support the CNCA's calls to ensure that this office includes a comprehensive mandate that ensures independence, integrity and fairness in the evaluation of cases brought forward by impacted communities, effective investigation that is legally mandated and considers protections for communities, individuals, and companies, informs the public in a transparent and timely way, provides clear recommendations and avenues for remedy, and is committed to providing adequate follow up to ensure that recommendations are carried out in a meaningful way.

We believe that such a mandate paves the way for the kind of business that Canada claims to be committed to carrying out globally.

We have recently heard reports that the Government of Canada is seriously considering creating such an office. However, we have also heard rumours that the mining industry is pushing for the extractive industry ombudsperson office to be expanded to cover other sectors.

We believe that this would be a major step backward and would seriously delay the efforts of the Canadian government to ensure Canadian companies are held accountable for any abuses associated with their operations overseas. Since 75% of mining companies are Canadian and their reputation for being associated with, and benefiting from, human and environmental rights abuses globally has been well documented, we see the value in pushing forward with the creation of the office of the extractive ombudsperson and monitoring its effectiveness before opening up the same model to other sectors.

Any attempt to open this more than a decade-long process to other sectors would create an obstacle to the democratic process already unnecessarily prolonged under the previous Conservative government and would only serve to effectively stall, if not thwart completely, any hope of effective corporate accountability for Canadian companies. Once an ombudsperson office for the extractive sector is well established and functioning, we would certainly welcome discussions in the future on the possibility of expanding the ombudsperson's office to cover other sectors.

We look forward to the government's commitment to creating an effective and strong extractive industry ombudsperson's office and then from there, considering how such a model might be applied to other relevant sectors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lynda Yanz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lynda Yanz  
Executive Director

cc: Canadian Network for Corporate Accountability