

Consensus Starting Points: Framing a Canadian Discussion on Human Rights in the Global Operations and Supply Chains of Canadian Companies

Canadian businesses, civil society, labour and government are looking for the best path forward to prevent and eliminate adverse human rights impacts in the global operations and supply chains of companies based in Canada and / or doing business in Canada.

The civil society groups listed below agree upon and offer the following as consensus starting points. We encourage business and other civil society groups to use it as a basis for further dialogue.

1. Canada can and must do more to protect and promote respect for human rights by Canadian companies throughout their global operations and supply chains.
2. Action by the Federal Government is urgently required. Voluntary initiatives are insufficient. Legislation, if properly designed and implemented, will drive change in preventing and addressing adverse human rights impacts, contribute to a more level playing field for Canadian businesses, and ensure Canadian companies can attract and maintain investment.
3. Human rights are indivisible and interconnected. Therefore, Canada's approach must be comprehensive in scope, encompassing all human rights.
4. A Canadian approach that is built around mandatory human rights due diligence legislation provides the most promise. Public disclosure is critical, but on its own it is not sufficient to drive meaningful, broad and lasting change, as evidenced from other jurisdictions.
5. Legislation should include meaningful consequences for non-compliance, including liability for harm and effective enforcement mechanisms.
6. Canada's approach must be comprehensive in reach. Legislation must apply throughout the entirety of a company's business operations and supply chains, inside and outside of Canada. Legislation must apply to both companies headquartered in Canada and globally headquartered corporations doing business in Canada.
7. Government must lead by example by championing and applying effective human rights due diligence measures in its own operations and those of its crown corporations and agencies.

We were encouraged by the Government of Canada's initial round of consultations conducted in 2019 and we look forward to government leadership and further engagement with all stakeholders on these urgent issues.

