

May 23, 2025

The Honourable Maninder Sidhu
Minister of International Trade
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

FUTURE OF THE CANADIAN OMBUDSPERSON FOR RESPONSIBLE ENTERPRISE

Dear Minister Sidhu,

The Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability ([CNCA](#)) welcomes you to your new role as Minister of International Trade.

We are writing to ensure that the Government of Canada intends to honour its commitment to strengthening and reinforcing the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). In light of the now-vacant post of the CORE, we respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss this matter.

Formed in 2005, the CNCA unites over 40 civil society groups calling for federal law reform to ensure that Canadian companies protect human and labour rights and the environment wherever they operate. [Our members](#) include human rights, environmental, labour, faith, solidarity and international development organizations collectively representing more than 3 million Canadians.

For over a decade, CNCA members advocated for the creation of an office to investigate complaints of abuse linked to the overseas activities of Canadian companies. In 2018, we [stood with](#) then trade minister François-Philippe Champagne when he announced the creation of the CORE and he [vowed](#) to equip the office with the “tools and resources” required for companies to comply with the complaint process. **These tools and resources were never delivered**, even after then Ombudsperson Sheri Meyerhoffer [stated](#) that the office “should be granted the ability to compel documents and testimony from the companies it investigates.”

In 2023, the Standing Committee on International Trade [recommended](#) that the government undertake a review of the CORE, to ensure the Ombudsperson’s ability to review complaints “adequately and in a timely manner.” In her [response](#), your predecessor, Mary Ng, welcomed the recommendation and committed to conducting a review “starting in 2024 and over a 6-month period.” The review was launched in September 2024 and the CNCA submitted [comments](#). **The government has yet to publish the results of the review.**

We note with deep concern that the term of interim Ombudsperson Masud Husain ended on May 20, 2025, **leaving the post vacant**. To our knowledge, complainants were not notified in advance, adding to a disturbing lack of transparency surrounding the office. Over the past year, the office has not produced any new quarterly or annual “reports on inquiries and complaints” (despite [claiming otherwise](#)), and [no new investigations](#) have been announced. In this context, existing complainants are left unexpectedly without an ombudsperson to oversee their file.

Furthermore, pending complainants are left wondering whether the office is taking new complaints – or whether the office will even remain open. **We urge you to provide an update on the status of the government’s review of the CORE and its plans for the future of the office.**

The demand for an effective CORE is high, as demonstrated by the significant and growing number of complaints that the office has received over time. **Canadians have invested significant time and resources into the creation and maintenance of this necessary mechanism.** Last year, Mary Ng [acknowledged](#) the “important role that the CORE plays as part of Canada’s broader responsible business conduct policy framework” and the “public interest in the activities of the office.”

As you assume your new responsibilities as Minister of International Trade, we encourage you to equip the CORE with the promised tools and resources and ensure that complainants are treated with respect, including through prompt handling of their complaints. **We would greatly appreciate meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss this further.**

We look forward to your reply to this letter.

On behalf of the CNCA,



Aidan Gilchrist-Blackwood
CNCA Network Coordinator

The CNCA Steering Committee:



Cc:

- Adam Chambers, Member of Parliament for Simcoe North and Conservative Shadow Minister for International Trade
- Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, Member of Parliament for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot-Acton and Bloc Québécois responsible for international trade
- Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, Member of Parliament for Lac-Saint-Jean and Bloc Québécois member responsible for human rights
- Heather McPherson, Member of Parliament for Edmonton Strathcona
- Elizabeth May, Member of Parliament for Saanich-Gulf Islands
- Senator Julie Miville-Dechêne
- Nicole Lunstead, Deputy CORE, Office of the CORE
- Raihan Butt, Director, Responsible Business Conduct Division, Global Affairs Canada

Annex: CNCA Member Organizations

Above Ground	Centre international de solidarité ouvrière	Mennonite Central Committee Canada
Africa-Canada Forum		
Americas Policy Group	CoDevelopment Canada	Mining Injustice Solidarity Network
Amnesty International Canada	Committee for Human Rights in Latin America	Mining Justice Action Committee
Amnistie internationale Canada francophone	Cooperation Canada	MiningWatch Canada
Asia-Pacific Working Group	Coordination du Québec de la Marche mondiale des femmes	Nobel Women's Initiative
Association Québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale	Development and Peace – Caritas Canada	Oxfam Canada
British Columbia Teachers' Federation	Éduconnexion	Peace Brigades International – Canada
Canada Tibet Committee	Friends of the Earth Canada	Public Service Alliance of Canada
Canadian Jesuits International	Grandmothers' Advocacy Network	Regroupement pour la responsabilité sociale des entreprises
Canadian Journalists for Free Expression	Human Rights Watch	SeaChoice
Canadian Labour Congress	Inter Pares	Steelworkers Humanity Fund
Canadian Union of Public Employees	KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives	Solidarité Laurentides-Amérique Centrale
	Maquila Solidarity Network	Unifor
	Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network	United Church of Canada