

24 January 2018

The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of International Trade  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Champagne,

On behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada, I am writing to express support for the government's decision to create an Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise. Given MCC's experience with mining-affected communities around the world, we are convinced that this mechanism will help establish Canada as a global business leader, committed to defending human rights and holding corporations accountable for irresponsible conduct abroad.

MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist-Mennonite churches, engaged in emergency response, community development, and peacebuilding initiatives in more than fifty countries. Over the years, we have heard repeated stories from grassroots partners in places such as Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo about how Canadian mining operations are destroying agricultural land, contaminating water supplies, threatening Indigenous traditions, and contributing to conflict and violence, particularly against women.

In 2009, in response to calls from these partners, MCC embarked on a multi-year Mining Justice Campaign through which we joined civil society organizations calling for the establishment of mandatory corporate accountability mechanisms for the Canadian extractives sector. In recent years, this has included supporting policy reforms called for by the Open for Justice Campaign—an initiative driven by MCC coalition partners such as KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation.

After more than a decade of calling on Canada to enact greater transparency and accountability mechanisms, MCC joins our civil society colleagues in welcoming the recent announcement to establish a human rights Ombudsperson. If properly implemented, this position will help hold Canadian companies accountable for human rights violations overseas, provide remedy for victims of abuse, and prevent future harm for local communities.

As the Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise is developed in the coming months, MCC strongly encourages the government to ensure the office is equipped with the proper tools needed to address allegations of human rights abuse. To undertake thorough investigations with credibility, the Ombudsperson's office must be fully independent from both business and government; be properly funded and staffed; maintain transparency at every stage of the investigation and recommendation process; and,

most importantly, have the authority to summon witnesses and compel the disclosure of corporate documents. Finally, its recommendations must be taken seriously by the Government of Canada.

On behalf of MCC, I once again affirm Canada's recognition of its responsibility to address allegations of human rights abuses relating to corporate behaviour abroad and wish you well as you move forward on implementing this important mechanism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Cober Bauman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rick Cober Bauman  
Executive Director  
MCC Canada

CC: Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade  
Dean Allison, Official Opposition Critic for International Trade, Conservative Party of Canada  
Tracey Ramsey, Opposition Critic for International Trade, New Democratic Party  
Gabriel Ste-Marie, Opposition Critic for International Trade, Bloc Québécois