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Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Solidarity Network  
c/o Tatamagouche Centre, 259 Loop Route 6, Tatamagouche, NS, B0K 1V0  
(902) 657-2231

[www.breakingthesilenceblog.com](http://www.breakingthesilenceblog.com)

Honourable Mary Ng

Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

K1A 0A6

Mary.Ng@international.gc.ca

Mary.Ng@parl.gc.ca

Honorable Minister,

We are writing on behalf of the Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence Network (BTS) to urge you to provide the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) with the powers needed to investigate companies accused of human rights abuses and environmental damage. Without the power to compel documents and testimony from companies, including those who choose not to cooperate, the CORE cannot fulfill its role as a human rights watchdog for corporations.

Three years ago, the Government of Canada committed to creating an independent CORE with those powers. We have learned that your office confirmed in November to the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA), of which we are a member, your decision to move forward without granting the CORE these powers. We join organizations across the country in expressing our disappointment at this decision and urging you to reconsider.

Since 1988, BTS has worked in solidarity with Guatemalans struggling for political, social and economic justice. In 2004, BTS began providing human rights accompaniment to communities in Guatemala experiencing grave human rights abuses associated with Canadian mining projects. For years, Canadian mining companies operating in Guatemala such as Hudbay Minerals, Goldcorp and Pan American Silver (formerly Tahoe Resources) have been denounced in Guatemala, Canada and internationally for grave human rights abuses committed around their projects, including murder, threats, intimidation, sexual violence, contamination and scarcity of

water. Existing voluntary measures have not stopped human rights abuses and environmental damage associated with Canadian mining.

BTS members from across the Maritimes have met with Members of Parliament countless times over the years to call for an independent and effective Ombudsperson for the extractive sector. Together with over 6,000 Canadians, many of our members signed an e-petition calling on the Canadian government to ensure the CORE has independence and the power to investigate human rights abuse allegations, because we know that voluntary measures are simply not enough.

We also join calls for Canada to enact a comprehensive mandatory human rights due diligence law requiring Canadian companies to prevent human rights abuses and environmental harms in their global operations and supply chains or face real consequences if they fail to do so.

It has been three years since your government committed to creating an independent and effective Ombudsperson for the extractive sector and we're still waiting. Communities in Guatemala and globally have waited too long already for your government to hold Canadian corporations accountable for human rights abuses and environmental degradation.

In closing, we reiterate our calls for the Canadian government to fulfill its commitment to providing the CORE with the powers to compel documents and testimony from companies accused of human rights violations.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Anderson

Community Council

Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence  
Network

Maira Peters

Community Council

Maritimes-Guatemala Breaking the Silence  
Network