**Impacted communities are advised to “Approach with Caution” – Canadian civil society groups raise alarm about Canada’s Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE)**

Earlier this year, members of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability (CNCA) learned that the office of the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE) was planning to travel to Colombia and Brazil without having consulted with local communities or human rights defenders prior to booking the trip. As a result, the CNCA felt it necessary to produce information for impacted communities so that they could make informed decisions about engaging with the ombudsperson.

CNCA members were particularly concerned because the CORE’s itinerary included a visit to a controversial project site, at the request of the company, with no evidence of prior consultation or input from affected communities about how such a visit might impact their safety, security and respect for their rights. The CNCA wanted to make clear to its global partners that the CORE that we now have in Canada is neither the office that civil society celebrated in January 2018, nor that Canadian groups and impacted communities have demanded for over a decade.

***Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise: Approach with Caution* is available in** [**English**](http://cnca-rcrce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/core-caution-E-1.pdf)**, [French](http://cnca-rcrce.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Aborder-avec-Prudence-Ombudsman-canadien-de-la-responsabilit%C3%A9-des-entreprises-Avril-2020-8.pdf),** [**Spanish**](http://cnca-rcrce.ca/fr/recent-works/prosiga-con-cautela-core-canada/) **and** [**Portuguese**](http://cnca-rcrce.ca/fr/recent-works/cautela-ombudsman-canadense-para-responsabilidade-empresarial-core/)**.**

*Note: As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the CORE postponed its planned trip to South America. The CORE office is not yet open to receive complaints, no date has been set for its opening. The CNCA has requested the CORE take this opportunity:*

* *to advocate for the robust powers it requires to undertake effective and fair investigations of community complaints, and*
* *to establish rights-based protocols to guide decision-making for its future international missions.*

Background:

April 8, 2020 [marked one year](http://cnca-rcrce.ca/recent-works/relaunch-press-release-one-year-later/) since Canada’s Minister of International Trade Diversification [announced the appointment](https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/04/minister-carr-announces-appointment-of-first-canadian-ombudsperson-for-responsible-enterprise.html) of Sheri Meyerhoffer as his special advisor, to be known as the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE). The appointment revealed that the Canadian government had reversed its January 2018 public [announcement of an independent office with robust powers to investigate](https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/canada-is-moving-towards-effective-corporate-oversight-with-new-human-rights-watchdog). Instead, the minister announced a time-bound external legal review to examine *how* to provide the CORE’s promised investigatory powers, including the power to compel documents and summon witnesses. The minister stipulated that the CORE’s powers would be made public within four to five weeks.

No such announcement was made, and a full year after the CORE was appointed, the CORE remains a powerless advisory post, little different from the previous discredited Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor. It can do little to deter Canadian complicity in corporate abuse or ensure Canadian garment supply chains and mining, oil and gas operations respect human rights and the environment.