



**CCCBC welcomes decision by Government of Canada
on Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise**

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCBC) welcomes the announcement by Global Affairs Canada on 17 January 2018 that the federal government is establishing the position of Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise. It is to focus on corporate social responsibility by Canadian corporations working abroad, and will include not only authority to investigate complaints but to recommend federal sanctions.

The CCCBC for a number of years has called attention to concerns and complaints involving Canadian-based and/or Canadian-registered companies which operate in other countries. These complaints in part have come from Catholic Bishops in Latin America, the Philippines and Africa, who shared their concerns and frustrations with the Bishops of Canada on a number of occasions, including at meetings of the CCCBC Plenary Assembly.

In August 2017, the CCCBC President wrote to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Global Affairs, urging the Canadian government to establish an objective and impartial means, such as an ombudsperson, to monitor and investigate complaints of abuses by Canadian mining companies. In March 2015, the President of the Conference issued a public letter supporting the Episcopal Council of Latin America (CELAM) in its appeal before a tribunal of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights regarding the ethical and moral implications of the international operations of extractive industries in Latin America, including a number of corporations based or registered in Canada.

Pope Francis, as well as a number of Canadian Catholic groups, including the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, has advocated for better protection of surrounding communities, Indigenous rights, local workers and the environment from being harmed by commercial projects often involving international investment. During his current visit to Peru and Chile, the Holy Father is scheduled to meet with Indigenous People from the Amazon region, where there have been a number of complaints about the operations of Canadian-based and other extractive industries. On 1 May 2013, the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, Pope Francis launched an appeal to end what he referred to as the conditions of slave labour, pointing out as a recent tragic example a garment factory fire in Bangladesh which produced clothing for North American retailers, including Canadian interests.

The Catholic Bishops of Canada hope and pray that the appointment of an Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise will be an important step forward in furthering that “*self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter*” as well as “*action*” and “*international policy*” which are necessary “*to developing comprehensive solutions*” for “*sustainable and integral development*” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter On Care for Our Common Home, *Laudato Si'*, nos. 47, 15, 60, 13).

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