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The Honourable Stéphane Dion, MP, PC  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
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26 September 2016

**Re: Strengthening Canada's International Social Innovation Leadership**

Minister Dion,

Following the strong mandate given by Canadians last year, the Government of Canada has signalled its intention to pursue strategies for inclusive growth. Ministers Duclos and Mihychuk have been mandated to create a national strategy on social innovation and social finance. Innovation, Science and Economic Development's proposed Innovation Agenda seeks to make Canada a leader in promoting social enterprise and social innovation.

Simultaneously, the government is renewing Canada's profile internationally. The message that inclusive growth can be a force for prosperity and stability is resonating around the world, with growing evidence from the OECD, the IMF and other bodies.

Canadian community-based leadership in social innovation and the social and solidarity economy globally represents an asset for inclusive growth that could reinforce Canada's leadership on the international stage.

We are writing to request a meeting with you or your officials to discuss Canada's international leadership in the social and solidarity economy.

Since 2008, the under-signed group of leading Canadian organizations representing social economy, social enterprise, co-operatives, social finance and community economic development has been collaborating to identify and support common priorities and policies that strengthen the social and economic fabric of our communities, both in Canada and with colleagues around the world.

The members of our organizations are innovation leaders for building inclusive economies. From the first community loan fund in Canada, to the first community development corporation, the dynamic co-operative and social enterprise sectors and many more, our sectors are at the forefront of creative solutions to equitable growth. Canadian innovations in the field have often been inspired by international models, adapted here, and then showcased to the world. The economic opportunities created by these innovations extend the benefits of growth and prosperity to vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, immigrant women and people with disabilities and can take root in geographic regions or which are too often bypassed by growth, both here in Canada and around the world.

Recent trends in the social economy, social finance, and community resiliency have expanded the scope of innovative practices tremendously, with examples ranging from new community based crowdfunding strategies to impact investing, from Québec's recent social economy framework legislation to the UN Task Force on the Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE). In fact, the UNTFSSSE has found that the social and solidarity economy could contribute to 66 of the 169 Sustainable Development Goals and play a crucial role in the realization of the 2030 Agenda by promoting inclusive and sustainable development through concrete social, institutional and technological innovations and practices.

These shifts are positioning Canada and Canadians in significant leadership roles in this global movement.

Consider the following:

- In October 2013, The Social Enterprise Council of Canada hosted the Social Enterprise World Forum in Calgary, with 1,200 participants from 30 countries. The Chair of the Social Enterprise World Forum, an annual event held throughout the world (this year's event is next week in Hong Kong), is David LePage, a Canadian, who also chairs the Social Enterprise Council of Canada.
- In her role as first Canadian Secretary General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, The Rt. Hon. Michaëlle Jean introduced support for the social and solidarity economy as part of OIF's economic development work, and the Centre de la francophonie des Amériques, located in Québec City, has also identified the social and solidarity economy as a key strategy for the vitality of francophone communities throughout the Americas.
- In 2015, the International Co-operative Alliance elected Monique Leroux, former President and CEO of Desjardins Group, as President. The International Co-operative Alliance is the apex organisation for co-operatives worldwide, representing 284 co-operative federations and organisations across 95 countries.
- In September 2016, Montréal and the Chantier de l'économie sociale hosted the third Global Social Economy Forum, welcoming nearly 1,500 participants from 62 countries. The position of Québec as a recognized global leader in the social economy was affirmed with the announcement of the creation of a new international organization based in Montréal in partnership with Seoul, Mondragón, and Barcelona: the International Centre for Innovation and Knowledge Transfer on the Social and Solidarity Economy.

- In October 2016, the third International Summit on Co-operatives – the largest gathering of co-operatives in the world – will be held in Québec City, drawing more than 3,000 participants from 93 countries.
- This week, Yvon Poirier, Board member of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network, spoke on behalf of the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy at the International Leading Group on the Social Solidarity Economy at the United Nations along with French President François Hollande, Canada's Minister for Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos and Montréal Mayor Denis Coderre.

We urge Canada to build on this leadership and advance the growing global movement for social innovation and the social solidarity economy.

- Reinforce Canada's rich social economy and co-operative leadership on the world stage by supporting the participation of Canadian organizations and institutions in international networks such as the United Nations Task Force on the Social Solidarity Economy, the OECD Forum on Social Innovations and others.
- Promote social and solidarity economy approaches in Canada's funding and partnerships for international co-operation and development.
- Position Canada's official representatives to intergovernmental bodies and initiatives to take a more pro-active role in advancing social innovation.

We would appreciate an opportunity to discuss these recommendations with you or your officials further, and to working constructively with Global Affairs Canada towards our shared goals.



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