Vancouver, February 12, 2015

Honourable James Moore

Minister of Industry

House of Commons

Ottawa, Ontario

Canada K1A 0A6

Dear Industry Minister James Moore,

The Vancouver Community Network (VCN) is writing to inquire about Industry Canada’s 2015-16 plans for the Youth Internship (YI) program. As you know, VCN is in the currently contracting to run the program for the 2014-15 term and already have many youth people, non-profits just learning of the service and current Intern Host Organizations asking about the program for next year. This is just one of the reasons for VCN and many other organizations offering the program across Canada, that it is vital to receive confirmation that funding for the program will be renewed for another year.

For over 20 years, VCN has provided free services to all people living in Metro Vancouver in accessing and utilizing the Internet and Internet Communications Technologies. Since 2003, VCN has been administering the YI program, placing hundreds of interns at various community sites within Lower Mainland Vancouver and partnering with diverse local organizations to deliver the program, as well as connect learning to community-wide empowerment.

The program is a key contributor for VCN in its work to continue community development and work to tackling the ‘digital divide’. At several host sites, interns help and support vulnerable and senior community members to access computer resources, educate members on computer programs, and increase understanding on how to navigate the Internet. Whether it is working with seniors at the 411 Senior Centre to street-involved people at the Lookout Society’s Living Room to neighbourhood houses that serves new immigrants, to people living with disabilities at Neil Squire Society, interns are working to build the technical capacity as well as the confidence of people with diverse backgrounds.

In addition to supporting efforts to bridge the ‘digital divide’, for young people across the city, the program is an essential gateway for them to access entry-level opportunities and first hand experience in their respective fields. Especially in today’s economy, paid professional development opportunities for students and recent graduates are becoming harder and harder to come by. The YI program enables young people to gain income as well as professional experience related to their field of interest, positioning them for longer-term employment.

VCN believes that the continuation of the YI program will not only be integral to the success of the Digital Canada 150’s goals but also in meeting the goals of the national Youth Employment Strategy. To this end, VCN is writing to urge you and the federal government to commit to long-term funding of the YI Program. We hope that we receive word soon and protocols will be signed in the coming months so that VCN and similar organizations will have time to put focus on delivering the program for the next cycle.

Please do not hesitate to contact our Executive Director, Tracey Axelsson, with any questions you may have at (778) 724-0232 (ext 601). We hope to hear from you soon.

Kind regards,

Board Member