

French politicians should not ratify CETA

Open letter - For immediate publication

Ottawa – Monday, July 15, 2019 - As France begins its ratification process of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union, we, civil society organizations and individuals from across Canada and Quebec, echo [our French counterparts' call](#) on members of the National Assembly and Senate to vote against this agreement. CETA does not offer enough and appropriate safeguards to fight against major social problems of the 21st century: climate change and social inequality.

On the contrary, the current agreement promotes deregulation and gives even greater power to transnational corporations. CETA creates an investor court system (ICS) which permits corporations to sue states when regulations allegedly affect their profits. ICS exists despite strong opposition from elected people and the population. While the tribunal underwent cosmetic changes to make it more acceptable, the essentially anti-democratic nature of these tribunals remains intact.

CETA contains a regulatory cooperation chapter (Chapter 28) that effectively weakens food safety, public health and consumer protection standards, bringing them to the lowest common denominator. This is in the interest of companies who wish to reduce costs, not in the interest of the public, whose health and safety could be compromised.

The chapter puts in place a cooperation forum that meets regularly. This forum brings together high-level representatives from Canada and the European Union, as well as "other parties," primarily corporate lobbyists. Their task is to "examine planned regulatory initiatives" so as to bring them into line with the desires of the companies involved.

CETA promotes export-driven agribusiness, which goes against the imperative to support environmentally sustainable local production. This is why Canada chose, for example, to benefit its pork and beef producers at the expense of its artisanal cheese makers.

On the agricultural front, both sides lose. Governments will undergo pressure to accept products produced under looser regulations. For example, would Europeans be able to refuse Canadian GMO salmon when it is not labelled for country of origin? And what will be the benefit? In Canada, the trade deficit has already increased since the deal's implementation.

The opening of public markets is also worrisome. How will the local economy fare when big corporations can bid for contracts at every level of government? There are low thresholds for opening a call to international competition, making it hard for small businesses, cooperatives, and social economy businesses to compete against large multinationals.

CETA doesn't contain effective tools to counteract today's environmental problems. Its Trade and Environment and Trade and Sustainable Development chapters don't have binding mechanism to force countries to protect the environment when implementing this agreement. In contrast, it promotes the continuation of an export-based economy at large scales of production that requires high fuel consumption.

Furthermore, it prevents governments from giving themselves the means to take on the essential ecological transition with public investments, nationalizations and regulations that support sustainable local economies. Shamefully, CETA's environmental provisions don't oblige countries to implement the Paris climate deal and there is no mechanism to suspend CETA should a Party decides to stop complying with the obligations of the Paris Agreement.

Therefore, there are numerous reasons to renounce CETA. CETA, which is claimed to be a "progressive trade deal," fails to challenge the fundamentally flawed trading model, despite the new challenges in front of us.

Canada and the E.U. should continue to support a type of economy which profits more than just the privileged few. In Canada, CETA was ratified rapidly without a truly democratic debate nor genuine civil society engagement. If French politicians refuse to ratify CETA, it would represent a significant step towards a new economic approach that takes into account citizens, quality of life, and nothing less than the survival of our planet.

Canadian supporters

- Council of Canadians
- Maude Barlow, Honorary Chair, Council of Canadians
- National Farmers Union (NFU)
- National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
- Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
- Sierra Club Canada Foundation
- Tony Clarke, President, Polaris Institute

- Trade Justice Network
- Trade Justice Prince Edward Island
- United Steelworkers Canada

Québec supporters

- Michèle Asselin, director, Association québécoise des organismes de coopération internationale (AQOCI)
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- Nancy Bédard, president, Fédération interprofessionnelle de la santé du Québec (FIQ)
- André Bélisle, president, Association québécoise de lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique (AQLPA)
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- Christiane Bernier, citizen
- Jean-François Boisvert, secretary, Coalition Climat Montréal
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- Stéphane Brousseau, Enjeux Énergies et Environnement
- Dominic Champagne, spokesperson, Pacte pour la transition
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- François Geoffroy, spokesperson, *La Planète s'invite au Parlement*
- Léa Ilardo, spokesperson, *La planète s'invite à l'Université*
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- France Latreille, director, Union des consommateurs
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- Katherine MacDonald, president, Vigilance OGM

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- Abdul Pirani, Council of Canadians- Montréal
- Pascal Priori, coordonnateur, Alliance pour l'interdiction des pesticides systémique
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- Germaine Roy, Citoyens Écolos
- Odette Sarrazin, Regroupement vigilance hydrocarbures Québec (RVHQ)
- Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, writer and columnist, candidate for Bloc québécois
- Anne Schlenker, Council of Canadians - Montreal
- Jonathan Théorêt, directeur, Groupe de recherche appliquée en macroécologie (GRAME)
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- Luc Vachon, président, Centrale des syndicats démocratiques (CSD)
- Claude Vaillancourt, président, ATTAC-Québec

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