No More NAFTAs!
No to CETA-TPP-FIPA-FTA…

The Council of Canadians
Le Conseil des Canadiens

Twenty years of a failed free trade agenda is too much. It's time to say "no" to corporate rights deals!

For 20 years we have been told by governments and corporations that free trade is good for us. They say increased trade will bring increased prosperity and a better society. They say the benefits of NAFTA, which was signed by Canada, the United States and Mexico 20 years ago this month, cannot be questioned. They were wrong then and they're even more wrong today.

Since NAFTA was signed we have seen unprecedented ecological destruction and a dangerous worsening of the climate crisis. There is persistent poverty even though we were told free trade and free-market policies would boost everyone's wealth. Inequality is growing between rich and poor countries, and between the rich and poor within countries, including Canada. Since NAFTA we have seen increased privatization of our health care, education and other social services such as water, transit and energy. We've witnessed an exodus of good-wage manufacturing and other jobs that have been replaced by part-time, precarious and underpaid work. Farmers have seen their farm incomes collapse as corporations consolidate their control of global food systems. We've been hit by dozens of corporate NAFTA lawsuits challenging public interest legislation such as Quebec's fracking moratorium or bans on toxic chemicals.

The system needs to change. We can't survive another 20 years of NAFTA and NAFTA-like agreements. But despite all this, the Harper government is rapidly moving the failed free trade model forward in these deals:

CETA: The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) is a proposed NAFTA-like pact with the 27 EU member states. The agreement will include chapters on regulatory cooperation, intellectual property rights (e.g. patents, copyright, Internet regulation), investment protection, public services, food standards and more. CETA will not lift Canada's environmental and other

standards (e.g. toxic chemical regulation) to European standards. It will freeze current regulations and public services, putting downward pressure on standards and encouraging privatization.

Major issues with CETA include: a freeze on public services, including health, water and energy, and powers to corporations to challenge the creation or expansion of new services in the future; an expanded investment protection chapter that will be more pro-corporate than the investor-to-state dispute process in NAFTA; a ban on "buy local" or "buy Canadian" policies by local governments; an extension on patent terms for brand name drugs that will increase drug costs in Canada by between $800 million and $1.65 billion annually.

TPP: The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) is 12-nation (and counting) free trade and corporate rights deal that is being led by the United States, but also includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea have expressed interest in joining the talks, which would eclipse NAFTA in the ways democracy would be constrained in the interests of multinational corporations.

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Major issues the TPP include: extending the length of patent terms on brand name drugs and expanding patents to “me too” drugs and treatment methods in ways that will drive up the price of medicine and health care; forcing U.S.-style copyright (e.g. 70-90 year protection terms) and Internet rules onto participating countries in ways that stifle and corporatize the web; attacking Canada’s dairy, poultry and egg farmers whose more sustainable Canada-based production is strictly regulated; expanding the opportunities for foreign investors to challenge public policies outside the court system using investor-to-state dispute settlement.

FIPA: The Foreign Investment Protection (and Promotion) Agreement with China is one of several dozen bilateral investment treaties the Canadian government has signed with other mostly developing countries. FIPAs give Canadian companies operating abroad and foreign companies in Canada extra-legal rights that protect them from public policies or decisions that might reduce their investments (or profit expectations).

Increasingly, these types of treaties are used by resource companies to sue countries when energy and mining projects are shut down by public opposition. For example, Canadian mining companies are using FIPAs to sue or threaten Costa Rica, El Salvador, Romania and Mongolia if their contested projects are not allowed to go ahead. Under NAFTA’s FIPA-like investment chapter, Canada is being sued by Lone Pine Resources for Quebec’s moratorium on shale gas production under the St. Lawrence Valley and river. These disputes are heard in private by paid, unaccountable trade lawyers whose decisions are binding on countries.

Major Issues with FIPA include: the amount of Chinese corporate investment in tar sands, fracking and other controversial projects where public opposition is likely to lead to a costly investor-to-state arbitration; the threat to First Nations and treaty rights from giving corporations these powers to challenge land use decisions, as expressed in a Hupacasath First Nation legal challenge to the FIPA; the global backlash against investment treaties, for example in South Africa, where the government is cancelling its FIPA-like treaties with European countries.

OUR CHALLENGE

The Harper government is moving all of these deals – CETA, TPP and FIPA – forward at a rapid pace. There are also free trade agreements with India, Honduras, Japan and South Korea that will extend this anti-democratic corporate rights regime. Our challenge is to make the links between all of these deals, to fight them in solidarity with environmental, labour, Indigenous and human rights activists, and to reject the Harper government’s rhetoric about the importance of these deals to the Canadian economy.

The so-called “free trade” model is broken. It’s time for us to come together and fix it.

Join the Council of Canadians today!

The strength of the Council comes from our supporters. We do not accept funding from corporations or governments, so your donations are vital to our activities. We work with community groups, seniors, students, unions and other organizations across the country to promote progressive policies on public health care, fair trade, secure energy, clean water and other issues of social and economic concern to Canadians.

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For more information about the Council of Canadians’ trade campaign visit www.canadians.org/trade or call us toll free at 1-800-387-7177.