

CANADIANS SHOULD NOT BE LULLED INTO RATIFYING THE 'NEW' NAFTA

The trade deal is flawed: inequality would grow and the environment deteriorate further

Civil society organizations from Mexico, the United States and Canada call on Canadians and their elected representatives in Ottawa to set up a special parliamentary inquiry prior to any ratification vote on the "new" NAFTA. This would ensure that decision-makers are fully familiar with all aspects of the deal, and can make any necessary changes to guarantee that the Canadian public, not multinational corporations, are the primary beneficiaries of the deal.

Growing inequality within our countries and between them has been a direct result of the original NAFTA. For some thirty years, our social organizations have been working together combining research with alternative proposals for a just and fair trade deal for all three countries. We believe that a central focus of this agreement should be measures which shrink and then eliminate this ever-widening inequality gap.

We have been closely analyzing these current negotiations with an eye to being able to call for substantive changes in the rules that have underwritten NAFTA for the past 25 years and that have proven to be toxic for all our North American peoples. We have now been presented with a 'new' NAFTA. It does contain some favourable changes. For example, Investor-State, the continental labor panorama (though apparently excluding any reforms in the Canadian context), and the scaling back of proposed generous treatment to have been accorded to the pharmaceutical giants. Something is something, but it is far from being enough.

The most recent negotiations have resulted in the same corporate-friendly framework which threatens to worsen the conditions of life for working people in our three countries. For example, even in its updated form, the text under discussion does not contain a chapter that asserts the rights of First Nations' peoples, nor can you find any substantive inclusion of obligations governing the protections required for an environment in crisis. Small farmers are now facing a definitive end to a long-standing way of life. Canada's law-makers should also take note that this 'new' text contains elements that represent an assault on the sovereign right of each of our countries to be able to implement measures in accord with agreements arrived at in international forums.

By means of this tri-national document we are strongly requesting that Canadians and their Parliamentarians conduct a thorough and minute revision of a flawed text. In Mexico and the United States, a significant portion of the 'vox populi' had previously put forward their important perspectives and contributions, but were ignored. We are hoping that Canada, the last country to debate the merits of ratifying the 'new' NAFTA, will do things differently by ensuring that the faulty text under consideration will undergo a rigorous examination coupled with extensive public input.

Endorsed by:

- Authentic Workers Front (FAT, Mexico)
- Convergence of Social and Civil Organizations - Mexico Better Without FTAs
- Council of Canadians (Canada)
- Environmental Studies Group (GEA, Mexico)
- Greenpeace (Mexico)
- Human Rights Centre Fray Francisco de Vitoria (Mexico)
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP, United States)
- Institute for Policy Studies – Global Economy Project (IPS-GEP, United States)
- Mexican Action Network on Free Trade (RMALC, Mexico)
- National Association of Rural Production and Commercializing Companies (ANEC, Mexico)
- National Association of Transformative Industries (ANIT, Mexico)
- Network in Defence of Digital Rights (RED3D-Mexico)
- Seeds of Life (Mexico)
- The Organization, Development, Education, and Investigation Project (PODER, Mexico)

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