

George Katrougalos
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Dear Mr. Katrougalos,

It was with great hope that we read your recent statements about the United States-European Union Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). You reportedly commented, "I can assure you that a Parliament where Syriza holds the majority will never ratify the deal. And this will be a big gift not only to the Greek people but to all the European people."

We agree with you that the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) provision in TTIP is a serious concern. We also agree that this 'free trade' deal would make it easier for genetically modified food to enter Europe and for important regulatory protections to be weakened.

It is our hope that your government's vow to reject TTIP will also extend to rejecting the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). We think that this is likely the case given Syriza MP Thanassis Petrakos has previously stated, in reference to CETA, that "A Syriza-led government will veto the agreement."

The Canada-EU agreement includes the same investor-state dispute settlement provision as TTIP. And, as you undoubtedly know, even if investor-state were to be removed from TTIP, European countries would still be vulnerable to these lawsuits given the large number of U.S. corporations that have offices in Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver and other Canadian cities. As such, ISDS must be opposed in both TTIP and CETA, the two deals need to be fought together.

In Canada, genetically modified ingredients are now in most of the process food available on Canadian grocery store shelves. The four GM crops that are grown here now are canola, corn, soy and sugar beets. In 2012, 97.5 per cent of our canola crop was genetically modified. We are concerned that CETA establishes a biotechnology working group that would seek to shorten the timelines for the approval of GM crops for cultivation in the EU, strengthen 'science-based' regulation and revise the 'low-level presence' policy for non-GMO imported commodities.

The Council of Canadians has been opposing CETA since the joint Canada-EU study assessing the costs and benefits of a 'free trade' deal was released in October 2008. It is our intention to continue to work to defeat the deal during the ratification process expected in 2016.

A public statement of your opposition to CETA would assist in this effort.

I would also be very open to meeting with you in Athens or here should you visit Canada in the near future.

In solidarity,
Maude Barlow
Chairperson, The Council of Canadians, Canada