

## **CETA UPDATE: Canadian environmental, labour, student and cultural groups demand consultation on Canada-EU trade talks as more EU demands emerge**

Embassy Magazine reports today that “Canada Post, provincial liquor boards across the country and Ontario's new Green Energy Act are all being targeted by the European Union in its trade talks with Canada, confidential EU briefing notes show.”

On the Green Energy Act, the EU’s goal is “to convince the governments of Ontario and Canada to abandon the requirement to use domestically produced equipment to produce renewable electricity in order to benefit from high feed-in tariffs,” and “to avoid the Ontario initiative becoming a precedent for other provinces.”

On liquor, the EU is challenging provincial supports for local wine growers and insisting on more market access for EU wine and spirits. According to Embassy, provincial liquor board officials in B.C. and Ontario dispute any claims that European companies are being discriminated against.

And on postal services, the EU is challenging Canada Post’s “monopoly” on international mail delivery as companies continue to send bulk shipments of brochures and other documents to developing countries where they can be mailed at a lower rate, according to Embassy.

Remember, these demands are on top of reports last month in Embassy that Europe is seeking guaranteed rights to local and provincial government spending on goods, services and construction projects that goes well beyond what we have just signed away to the U.S. A deal with Europe on procurement would give EU companies more tools to privatize water, health and other social services currently delivered publicly in most cities and provinces.

### **NO CONSULTATION – GROUPS SEND LETTER TO TRADE MINISTER VAN LOAN**

These latest reports on the scope and potential restrictions the Canada-EU trade negotiations would put on Canadian public services and public policy highlight the need for more transparency, study and consultation from the Harper government – in cooperation with the public, not behind closed doors.

Civil society groups have been briefed by Canadian lead negotiator, Steve Verheul, following the October round of trade talks in Ottawa and the January round in Brussels. But these are one-way briefings and do not constitute proper consultation. The Harper government is trying to steamroller over any public or parliamentary input into these trade talks.

The Council of Canadians joined a group of 18 labour, cultural, student and environmental organizations this week in sending a letter to Trade Minister Peter Van Loan, “to express our concerns with the level of government consultation and the absence of public debate thus far on the proposed Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).”

The letter states:

“There have been no preliminary, independent studies or any broad civil society debate and consultation to assess the impact of a potential cross-Atlantic free trade agreement on public policy and public services, the economy, poverty, gender, culture, human rights and the environment...

“We note that in past trade negotiations, the public has been kept largely uninformed and unengaged until a full agreement was reached and we were presented with a final text. In the same spirit, we question why the Canada-U.S. Agreement on Government Procurement was only made public last week on the same day it went into effect...

“We look forward to your response and your suggestions on how to proceed from now on with this important negotiation.”

To read the full letter and see the list of signatories: <http://canadians.org/trade/documents/CETA/letter-VanLoan-CETA-Feb23-10.pdf>

## **RELEASE THE TEXT!**

In September 2008, as we were just hearing about a proposed Canada-EU trade agreement, the Council of Canadians issued an Action Alert demanding that the Harper government “release the text.” It is clear from the two DFAIT briefings to date, and the recent Embassy magazine articles on the agreement, that a text is almost complete and Canadians have had no opportunity to study it or gauge its impacts on important public policies and social programs.

You can still use that Action Alert to send a letter to the Prime Minister demanding that the government release the text now. It is not and has never been acceptable that the public only sees a trade agreement when it is signed. Feel free to use language from the civil society letter to Van Loan in your new letter to Prime Minister Harper: <http://www.canadians.org/action/2008/18-Sep-08.html>.

Thanks very much,

**Stuart Trew**

Trade Campaigner

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