

October 17, 2016



Paul Magnette
Minister-President
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Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Canada's second-largest labour union, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), I commend your decision not to give full powers to the Belgian federal government to sign the CETA trade agreement between the EU and Canada on October 18, 2016. We have been campaigning against the adoption of CETA, in partnership with Public Services International, with our allies in the European and Canadian trade union movements, and with broad-based civil society coalitions all over Canada and Europe, such as the Trade Justice Network.

We are not opposed to trade, but we strongly object to a number of aspects of CETA. First and foremost, it continues to be negotiated in secret, without any attempt to include citizens. And negotiators continue to ignore and devalue the reasonable and legitimate criticisms that have been continually raised by citizens throughout Canada and Europe.

We share the concern of the Walloon parliament regarding the absence of a clear and definitive exclusion of public services from future liberalization; the creation of the disturbing investor court system, giving private foreign investors special legal privileges and the extraordinary power to sue democratically elected governments; the limitations to the capacity of national and local authorities to regulate in the public interest; and the absence of binding enforcement mechanisms to protect workers' wages and rights, to enforce health and safety standards, and to ensure environmental sustainability.

What all this means in practical terms is that CETA is a corporate-driven trade deal that will essentially create an international constitution for corporations that will subvert and constrict the power of democratically elected parliaments, and which will not benefit people. We want our political leaders to move away from the failed model of past trade agreements and establish trade that benefits people and the environment and that addresses growing income inequality.

Please accept our gratitude and full support for the principled and democratic position you and the representatives of your region have taken. You have become the voice of millions of Canadians and Europeans who are demanding to be heard.

In solidarity,

Larry Brown
President