

Canada-EU trade: And suddenly it was Christmas for policy geeks

by [Paul Wells](#) on Monday, April 19, 2010 11:47am - [49 Comments](#)

A coalition of ~~the usual suspects~~ groups dedicated to defending the rights of workers and the downtrodden have this morning released very nearly the entire draft negotiating text of a proposed Canada-EU trade and investment agreement.

Cool.

They've sliced it up into more digestible chunks and posted them here at www.tradejustice.ca, where I've just become the first person to download all the documents and start reading them. The groups — Council of Canadians, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, National Farmers Union, Sierra Club Canada, Canadian Conference of the Arts — just held a news conference on the Hill and are promising a sustained campaign against the so-called CETA (Canada-EU Economic and Trade Agreement) in the weeks ahead. In [the language of these groups](#):

The Canada-E.U. Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement negotiations are based on commitments to place corporate profit and power before social and economic justice, democratic control, and ecological sustainability. Negotiations are progressing quickly and with little public scrutiny until now.

The Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement is being negotiated as a “next-generation” free trade deal that goes beyond NAFTA and the WTO in shielding corporate activity from government controls. The draft agreement includes extensive chapters on services and investment, government procurement, intellectual property, and standards and regulations. It will also contain a controversial NAFTA-like investor-state dispute process that allows corporations from Europe to directly challenge and sometimes overturn Canadian laws that interfere with profits – even for public health or environmental reasons.

This campaign was always going to happen. It’s in the nature of the sweeping changes the EU negotiators are seeking (with Canadian negotiators seeking similar enhanced access to European markets, while trying to parry the European advances). For background, here’s a late-2008 [post that sums up everything](#) I’d written on Canada-EU trade talks up to that point; and a [piece from last summer](#) as the first intensive negotiations approached.

I’m seeking comment from European member states and the European Commission, as well as from Canadian advocates of a CETA (and, just because I enjoy smacking my head against a wall, from the Government of Canada too). I’ll let you know, here or in the magazine, what I find. Advocates of enhanced Canada-EU trade have preferred to low-bridge the whole process since negotiations began. I believe that option just evaporated.