



For immediate release – 19 April 2010

Secret details released about Canada-European Union free trade talks

As the third round of Canada-European Union free trade negotiations begin, leaked draft details of the proposed Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) were jointly released today by the global union federation Public Services International and its European arm, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, together with union affiliates and civil service organizations in the Canadian Trade Justice Network.

This new information raises serious questions about the impact of a free trade agreement on social policy, environmental sustainability, public services, culture, intellectual property rights, food sovereignty and other areas of vital concern to European and Canadian citizens.

PSI general secretary Peter Waldorff says, “Although free trade may sound promising, such deals largely benefit huge multinational corporations which have identified public services, such as health care, education, and public security, as the next frontier for making private profit. This agreement’s draft text outlines an agenda focused on privatisation, deregulation and domestic restructuring. Public procurement policies and the right to regulate in the public interest are under threat.”

Provisions in the draft text would prevent municipal governments from applying local or ethical procurement strategies. A controversial dispute mechanism is also proposed, similar to the one used under the North American Free Trade Agreement that has allowed large multinationals to sue governments for compensation over public health and environmental policies that limit corporate profits.

EPSU general secretary Carola Fischbach-Pyttel adds, “We believe there is no need for a deal that allows corporations to challenge local government policies on purchasing or regulation. But as these negotiations gather speed, we call on the European Commission and the Canadian government to contribute to global welfare and decent work. We demand improved and not weakened social, environmental and labour protections in any agreement.”

Both PSI and EPSU register concerns that free trade negotiators will ignore lessons from the current financial and economic crises that demonstrate the danger of deregulation. Any deal, they say, must include strengthened financial regulation in Canada and the EU and support a financial transaction tax.

The text of the CETA document, plus analysis fact sheets can be found at:
www.tradejustice.ca (English) www.commercejuste.ca (French)

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Public Services International (PSI) is a global trade union federation that represents 20 million women and men working in the public services around the world. PSI is an autonomous body, which works in association with federations covering other sectors of the workforce and with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). PSI is an officially recognised non-governmental organisation for the public sector within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and has consultative status with ECOSOC and observer status with other UN bodies such as UNCTAD and UNESCO.