

NAFTA: Manufacturing job loss in Canada*



What's happening?

After 15 years under NAFTA Canada is a much more unequal society. Free trade boosters still credit the agreement with increasing employment and prosperity, but though 'compensation' for a few corporate CEOs has rocketed up, NAFTA has in fact contributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs and exerted a downward pressure on wages. Here's the real story on jobs and NAFTA:

- In the last 6 years, we have lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs. That's like 150 good jobs disappearing every day. And it's getting worse.
- The job loss is hitting many different industries all over the country: auto, food processing, forestry products, textiles, metals, furniture etc. The details are different but the story is the same: decline in orders lost to cheaper imports, missed investment, job cutbacks and plant closures.
- Too many of the new jobs being created today are low-paying, insecure jobs with fewer benefits, particularly for women.
- Canada is increasingly becoming a society of haves, and have-nots with the gap in wealth growing every year.

A new government must act decisively to 'manufacture' good jobs

NAFTA, massive corporate tax cuts and do-nothing industrial policies promoted by Ottawa are destroying Canada's manufacturing sector - this at a time when corporate profits are at an all time high. Free trade policies have hurt both Canadian workers and workers in poorer countries. Mexican workers were promised that joining NAFTA meant that their wages would become 'first world' within a generation, but it hasn't happened. This year hundreds of thousands of impoverished workers and landless farmers have repeatedly taken to the streets demanding that Mexico renegotiate NAFTA, or pull out. In Canada recent opinion polls show that a majority here also want to reopen NAFTA and get a better deal. A new Canadian government should:

- Renegotiate NAFTA to ensure more and better jobs, economic development and social justice – or get out of the agreement.
- Regulate foreign investment, ensure that new investment goes into strategic sectors, and target the creation of a new generation of 'green jobs'.
- Re-invest in Canada's social programs eroded during 15 years of NAFTA, and protect worker's pensions from disappearing because of the actions of fly-by-night corporations.
- Provide a just income for the unemployed.
- Say no to any other 'free trade' deals in the works, especially with Colombia where trade unionists are being targeted in a state-sponsored campaign of annihilation.

What you can do

- Ask the candidates what they will do to ensure more and better jobs
- Send an op. ed. to the media and/or write a letter to the local newspaper
- Spread the word at local union, community or church gatherings.

*One of a series of 'one-pagers' prepared by Common Frontiers. To see them all go to www.commonfrontiers.ca