



The April 2001 Summit of the Americas in Quebec City put the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) on the map for many Canadians. Governments are negotiating yet another free trade deal that will extend the trade and investment rules of NAFTA across the Americas - despite the demonstrated costs, including widening economic disparities and environmental degradation.

This new deal threatens the right to health, an internationally recognized human right that includes the right to affordable medical care and the right to a healthy environment. In Canada, the FTAA could jeopardize universal Medicare. Also threatened are the laws and regulations that protect public health through a clean and healthy environment.

The FTAA threatens Canadians' and other hemispheric citizens' right to health in several ways:

Policies favouring corporations undermine effective governance

The draft FTAA incorporates the infamous investor-state rules of NAFTA's Chapter 11. Chapter 11 gave foreign companies new, far-reaching powers to challenge government regulations that lower profits - including regulations aimed at protecting public health. For example, attempts by provincial governments to broaden the range of publicly insured health care

services, or to include services that are currently provided by the private sector (like pharmacare), would almost certainly permit private operators to sue for loss of profits. Governments would likely be forced to compensate private health care companies for loss of potential business, leaving taxpayers to foot the bill - and making it difficult to introduce much-needed new services.

Using Chapter 11, corporations have successfully challenged Canadian restrictions on a toxic gasoline additive, a Mexican municipal ban on the construction of a waste disposal facility that threatened to contaminate local drinking water sources, and Canadian restrictions on the export of PCBs

Prying open services for privatization

The draft FTAA includes rules that are based on the World Trade Organization's GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) and NAFTA, which open up markets for foreign corporate service suppliers. Once foreign health care providers enter the Canadian market, the services chapter of the FTAA may make it very costly to bring those services back into the public domain - and make it difficult to expand public Medicare to include prescription drugs and home care.

Restricted access to medication

The draft FTAA goes beyond the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) which governs patents and gives pharmaceutical companies exclusive 20 year monopolies. The FTAA provisions would make it more difficult for governments to grant generic drug makers licenses to produce affordable medicines.

Across the Americas, citizens are mobilizing to demand that their governments reject the FTAA. Over ten million Brazilians recently voted in a popular plebiscite on the FTAA – and over 98% voted against the agreement.

In Canada, we join the international call to stop the FTAA and urge the Canadian government to:



STOP negotiations of the FTAA and all trade agreements that put profits before public well-being - and remove Chapter 11 from NAFTA, which allows investors to sue governments for public policies that curb profits, even those that protect public health or the environment;



LOOK at the economic instability, the grotesque rich-poor disparities and the social and environmental damage caused by economic and trade liberalization;



LISTEN to Canadians who demand that universal Medicare and environmental protections be preserved - and to citizens throughout the Americas who reject the FTAA and demand respect for human rights and national sovereignty.

For more information contact the members of Common Frontiers.

The members of Common Frontiers are::

Americas Policy Group of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Canadian Federation of Students, Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, Council of Canadians, KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Maquila Solidarity Network, Oxfam-Canada, Rights and Democracy, Sierra Club of Canada, United Steelworkers of America

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