

THE MYTH OF ATLANTICA

Why free trade isn't better trade

Atlantica is the proposed economic integration of the Maritime provinces, Newfoundland (but not Labrador), parts of Quebec, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire and upstate New York. This integration of Eastern Canada and the North-Eastern United States would erase border restrictions and regulations, creating a massive transportation corridor to send Asian goods and energy resources to the United States. Atlantica is a part of the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) agenda, aimed at creating a “free market” between Canada, The United States and Mexico.

While proponents of Atlantica are pushing for more trade, there are many examples of the shortcomings of the current Canada - U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the subsequent North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that show this may not be the best way to go. The softwood lumber dispute, the BSE (mad cow) dispute, and the U.S. decision to close the border to potatoes from PEI are just a few examples of how trade disputes have had negative impacts on Canadian industries. Communities across Canada have also faced severe manufacturing job cutbacks as companies move jobs out of Canada to access cheaper labour and lower costs.

Local impacts

In an effort to move Atlantica forward, the big-business lobby has been pressuring the government to relax trucking regulations, reduce corporate and fuel taxes and cut taxes on ships and coast guard fees so corporations will have more incentive to use a Halifax mega-shipping port. In addition to this, the big business lobby wants provincial governments to relax highway rules to allow more commercial traffic. New Brunswick has already begun a pilot project to allow “truck-trains” – massive trucks as large as Boeing 737 airplanes – on the highway between Saint John and Moncton. This would have a disastrous environmental impact as large ships and truck-trains would rumble down local highways cutting new paths through communities and farmlands. The increased traffic would result in wear and tear on Canadian roads and bridges, and maintenance and repairs would have to be paid for by Canadian taxpayers.

Lost autonomy

This “harmonization of regulations” is part of the larger agenda of the SPP. Essentially Atlantica is a tool that will weaken Canadian sovereignty in favour of “free markets.” It puts the movement of Asian goods and energy resources to the United States ahead of establishing our own rules and regulations. Most of the work on the SPP is happening within government working groups behind closed doors, but clear and concrete examples emerge within projects like Atlantica that reveal the Harper government’s agenda of closer ties with the United States and Mexico.

As a recent column in the Cape Breton Post points out, Atlantica has significant drawbacks: “There would be few financial benefits for (the Atlantic) region, but there would be more problems over roads, air quality and economic autonomy.”

Say no to Atlantica

The big business agenda of Atlantica will have a negative impact on Atlantic Canadians and is proceeding without public input. You can make a difference by writing to your local MP or community newspaper and telling them why you oppose this proposal.



To find out what you can do to challenge Atlantica and the SPP, visit www.canadians.org or call 1-800-387-7177.