



The WTO: What in the world it means to Canadians' rights

If the shadowy figures behind the World Trade Organization (WTO) get their way, your voice won't count for much. That seems a pretty dramatic prediction. But just listen to an anonymous WTO official, quoted in the Financial Times, talking about the inner workings of the most powerful international institution in the world:

"The WTO is the place where governments collude in private against their domestic pressure groups. Allowing NGOs [non-government organizations] in could open the door to all kinds of lobbyists opposed to free trade."

The 134-member WTO will be meeting in Seattle this November to further consolidate its strength.

The WTO openly aims at keeping anti-free trade organizations at bay. This is done by exerting considerable legal muscle.

Backed by multinational corporations, the WTO has already overturned domestic laws designed to protect clean air, endangered species, food safety, cultural diversity, public health and human rights.

That list could soon grow to become an all-powerful investment treaty similar to the now discredited Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) – a deal critics charged was "a charter of rights and freedoms for corporations."

We've already had a taste of the WTO's legal strength when a WTO panel recently struck down Canadian attempts to protect our magazine industry from split-run U.S. publications. Our government has since rolled over on the issue and allowed unprecedented foreign (i.e., U.S.) ownership of the Canadian magazine market.

The Canadian government continues to want it both ways. On the one hand it cries out against WTO intrusion in domestic affairs, while on the other it supports the extension of the WTO mandate to include MAI-like provisions that affect investment, social programs and competition policy.

If Canadians really want to retain some measure of domestic control, isn't it time we speak out about a system that's putting more and more control in the hands of multinational corporations and less and less in the hands of ordinary citizens?

If you want to help protect Canadians' rights from being controlled by the WTO, here's what you can do:

▶ **Call, write or fax your Member of Parliament and Minister of International Trade Pierre Pettigrew.**

Ask them to oppose any new deals at the WTO.
(To get your MP's name and phone number, call 1 800 267-7360.)

Write to: Pierre Pettigrew
Minister of International Trade
507 Confederation Building
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0A6
Tel. (613) 995-8872
Fax. (613) 995-9926
Email: PettiP@parl.gc.ca

- ▶ **Inform and mobilize your community.**
- ▶ **Write a letter to your local paper.**
- ▶ **Organize an event.**
- ▶ **Talk about the Seattle WTO negotiations and the corporate threats to Medicare, public education, environmental protections and labour standards.**
- ▶ **Lobby your provincial elected representative and ask your city council to adopt a resolution opposing any new deals at the WTO.**



A SHADOW ON OUR FUTURE

For more information on the campaign to stop new WTO deals and how to join call **1 800 387-7177**. Or log on to **www.canadians.org** for updates on campaign activities and a calendar of campaign events in your area.



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