



The WTO: What in the world it means to Canada's schools and hospitals

Just when you thought our precious education system and Medicare had been saved from the clutches of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), along comes the next global threat to our public services – the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The WTO is the world's most powerful international institution. Its stated goal is to push for more liberalized trade. But at its next meeting in Seattle this November the 134 member countries will be dealing with a call for more corporate involvement in public services.

The scary thing is that the mechanism to open up Medicare and education to private international corporations is already part of the WTO – through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

To get the GATS to allow wide-open trade in public services will only take a few well-placed resolutions at the upcoming meeting. And pressure is mounting for this change.

Recently, the leading U.S. lobby group pushing for increased trade in services told the U.S. government that it is keen to move into the health care business in foreign countries. What with an aging population many developed countries are health-care gold mines waiting to be exploited.

Even business in the European Union is itching to get in on the action. An EU official said that no services should be excluded from the GATS talks and that education and health were "ripe for liberalization."

So if multinational service industries have their way, we may soon see curricula for schools being devised in Florida, laws forcing municipalities to open up contracts to international bids, and private U.S. laboratory, hospital and clinic service providers attempting to crowd-in on Canadian medicare.

Canadians are intent on keeping our unique health care and education system intact. We won't stand by and watch our strongest public resources being traded away at the international bargaining table.

Here's what you can do to help keep Canada's health care and education free from international commercialization:

- ▶ **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.**



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.



502-151 Slater St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5H3
www.canadians.org