

A PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS:

A CALL TO HALT NEGOTIATIONS ON A CANADA-COLOMBIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

We, the undersigned citizens of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

WHEREAS, bilateral negotiations between Canada and Colombia over a Free Trade Agreement are actively ongoing;

WHEREAS, the violence against workers and members of civil society by para-militaries in Colombia, who are closely associated with the current Uribe government, has been ongoing, with more than 2,200 trade unionists murdered since 1991, as well as a host of violence committed against indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, human rights activists, workers, farmers, labour leaders and journalists;

WHEREAS, the negotiations between Canada and Colombia are pursuing an agreement in a framework similar to NAFTA and this sort of agreement largely benefits large multinational corporations without providing real benefits to working families, who are financially worse off today than they were before the agreement was signed;

WHEREAS, under a NAFTA style Agreement, Canada and Colombia's ability to adopt autonomous and sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental public policies, such as healthcare and public education, will diminish;

WHEREAS, labour side agreements under NAFTA have not been effective in protecting improving labour standards, as has been the case in Mexico, where over 1 million agricultural jobs have been lost since NAFTA was signed;

WHEREAS, evidence given by senior Canadian negotiators before the Standing Committee on International Trade confirms that the type of labour protection clauses being sought seek a monetary compensation paid by the perpetrating party to itself as a penalty for using lethal violence against workers, which is insignificant and could encourage the continuation of violence;

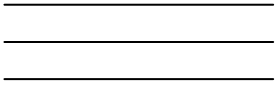
WHEREAS, all trade agreements must be built upon the principles of fair trade, which fundamentally respect social justice, human rights, labour rights, and environmental stewardship as prerequisites to trade;

THEREFORE, your petitioners call on the Government of Canada to halt the current Canada-Colombia free trade negotiations until such a time that a Human Rights Impact Assessment is developed and that the agreement be renegotiated along the principles of fair trade which would take into account the full environmental, social and human impact and sincerely respects labour rights and the rights of all the parties affected.

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Please return (postage paid) to: Peter Julian, M.P. for Burnaby—New Westminster (Aussi disponible en français)
Room 178, Wellington Building, House of Commons
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Peter Julian, MP
New Democratic Party
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

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