



February 29, 2012

Premier Greg Selinger
204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Premier Selinger,

We, the Council of Canadians - Winnipeg Chapter, the Canadian Union of Public Employees Manitoba and the undersigned organizations, implore you to act in the best interests of the people of Manitoba and pledge to keep Manitoba out of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) currently being negotiated between Canada and the European Union.

We believe that if CETA is signed it will have a significant negative impact on democracy and on public control over key services at all levels of government, from the federal to the municipal. If signed, CETA will:

- open critical public services, including water and wastewater services, to bids by European multinationals, and lead to increased privatization
- threaten local job creation and “buy-local” policies
- cause Canadian prescription drug costs to skyrocket by at least \$2.8 billion annually, including \$79.8 million in Manitoba alone, as shown in a study commissioned by the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association
- open governments to challenges by European corporations over environmental and other regulations made in the public interest

We are especially concerned about the impact of CETA on local governments. If CETA is signed, municipalities will “... lose one of the few and perhaps the most important tool they now have for stimulating innovation, fostering community economic development, creating local employment and achieving other public policy goals from food security to social equity.” (Steven Shrybman – from a legal opinion on CETA prepared for the Centre for Civic Governance at the Columbia Institute)

Unlike the corporations, the people of Manitoba – and all Canadians – have been left entirely out of the CETA negotiating process. The offers made to the European Union by the federal and provincial governments have not been made public, and there has been no meaningful discussion with the people of Manitoba as to the balance of benefits and costs associated with CETA.

We have had no opportunity to see or influence what is being put on the table; and no participation in the decision about whether entering CETA is in the best interest of our province, its municipalities, and the people of Manitoba.

We need to know that our tax dollars are spent for the benefit of the people of Manitoba, and not for the benefit of European – or any other – corporations.

We need to know that when our municipal governments make purchasing decisions that support local economies and sustainability policies, they will not be risking lengthy and expensive litigation from corporations that were not selected for the contract.

We need to know that our public services will remain public, and not be turned over to private profit-driven interests.

We need to know that laws and regulations put in place by our elected representatives to protect our environment are safe from corporate interference.

We are the people of Manitoba. We elected you to represent us and to ensure a fair and equitable society that puts people before profit.

For these reasons, we and the over 100,000 members we represent, urge you to keep Manitoba out of CETA.

Thank you,

Council of Canadians - Winnipeg Chapter

CUPE MB

CCPA

Boreal Forest Network

Peace Alliance Winnipeg

Project Peacemakers

Manitoba Federation of Labour

Winnipeg Labour Council

Green Party of Manitoba

Winnipeg Water Watch

Provincial Council of Women of Manitoba

Growing Local Productions

UNPAC

CUPE Local 2348

CUPE Local 3909

CUPE Local 998

IATSE Local 63

Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

CityWatch

March 8, 2012

Council of Canadians – Winnipeg Chapter
canadianswinnipeg@gmail.com

Dear Winnipeg Chapter:

I am writing in response to your letter of February 29, 2012 in which you have raised concerns about the negotiations toward a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union.

Manitoba has joined other provinces and territories under the Council of the Federation in supporting negotiations toward a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between Canada and the European Union. Manitoba's economy is highly dependent on trade and we support efforts to expand and diversity markets for our exporters. Manitoba recognizes the concerns identified in your letter and has placed a priority on protecting and upholding our public services, environment and political principles throughout the course of our participation in the proposed CETA.

With regard to your concerns related to governments openly tendering for public services such as water and wastewater services, there will be no obligations that require them to openly tender such services or to privatize such services. Where a municipal government chooses to tender for such services, having a process that is open to both Canadian and European suppliers will ensure governments receive the best value for these services and we will ensure the proposed CETA preserves the ability of governments to use selection criteria, such as quality, price, technical requirements or relevant experience in the procurement process.

We are also working to ensure the proposed CETA preserves an ability to make strategic use of procurement in areas not subject to the procurement obligations (e.g., by entities not covered by CETA, contracts below threshold, excluded goods or services, or continued flexibility on aboriginal preferences and regional economic development.)

The area of pharmaceutical patents is under federal jurisdiction, but is an area of vital concern to the Government of Manitoba. We are aware of requests that have been made by the European Union in this area and have flagged to the federal government our concern regarding any changes that would upset the carefully crafted balance in Canada's existing patent protection regime between providing sufficient patent protection to encourage innovation and providing effective room for production by generic pharmaceutical manufacturers to ensure pharmaceutical products are available to Canadians at a reasonable cost.

With regard to concerns regarding proposed CETA provisions that provide European investors with the ability to take government actions directly to dispute settlement, we are working with the federal government to ensure that any provisions fully protect the government's ability to set policy in the public interest on health, safety, environmental, cultural and social issues and that foreign investors will be subject to the same laws and regulations as domestic investors, including those aimed at protecting the environment and ensuring high labour, health and safety standards.

The final approval and ratification of any CETA will be conducted openly by federal and provincial governments. To ensure that these negotiations properly respect democratic decision making in Canada there are a number of avenues available for consultation. In Manitoba, we continue to engage with all interested stakeholders to ensure that our decisions are well-informed.

I hope you find these comments helpful in assessing your concerns regarding this agreement. Thank you again for taking the time to provide us with your views on this issue.

Sincerely,

Original signed by:

Peter Bjornson
Minister

c. The Honourable Greg Selinger



April 19, 2012

Dear Minister Bjornson,

Thank you for your March 8 response to our questions regarding the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). While we appreciate you taking the time to reply, we would like clarification on a number of your responses.

While we share the provincial government's interest in promoting healthy trade, we stress that those who negotiate trade deals on behalf of Manitoba must work relentlessly for the benefit of its people, ensuring that local needs are met first. Our primary concern with CETA is that it favours corporations over communities and puts business profit before people. Building strong, local, sustainable economies that serve the people of the community before big business interests must be the first priority. **Please explain in what way the European market is closed to Manitoba goods, giving specifics of which goods cannot currently be exported to Europe and how they would gain new access under CETA.**

We know from leaked documents that while Europe has specifically protected their public water and sewage, water has not been included in Canada's list of exemptions. There is no protection for the creation of new public services; no way to restore public services where privatization has not served the people. This leaves our treasured water on the bargaining table. Your letter states that on behalf of all Manitobans, the provincial NDP has committed to "protecting and upholding our public services, environment and political principles." **If Manitoba water and sewage services are not explicitly exempt from CETA will the Manitoba NDP refuse to sign on to CETA?**

What will the government of Manitoba do if language on pharmaceuticals and investor/state is not modified despite your "flagging"? We too have flagged the problems of the investor/state and pharmaceutical language. We did this because it must be changed. We want to know what your plans are if the language doesn't change. **Considering the Manitoba NDP's commitment to health care, will this issue alone provide enough reason for the Manitoba NDP to refuse to sign on to CETA?**

You state that you are "working with the federal government" to ensure that any dispute settlement process provisions will protect the provincial and municipal government's ability to set policy. **If the province cannot come to a resolution with the federal government regarding provisions for dispute settlement, will the Manitoba NDP refuse to sign on to CETA?**

We understand that all of the provincial offers have been long submitted. Despite Council of Canadians – Winnipeg Chapter's request to see the Manitoba NDP's provincial offer, this document has not been released. **We again request you to make public this offer so that Manitobans may understand how you are negotiating on behalf of all citizens.**

Our previous letter requested that you provide cost/benefit analysis for Manitoba signing onto CETA. That was not included in your response. **Please explain the cost/benefit or provide a rationale for not requiring such due diligence.**

We are surprised to hear that you have been engaging “with all interested stakeholders.” As part of a national advocacy group with a 30 year history of concerned citizens speaking out strongly for the community, the Council of Canadians - Winnipeg Chapter has not been invited to a meeting with you or any other representative of the Manitoba NDP concerning CETA. Additionally, we have not yet found any Manitoban community advocacy groups who say they have met with you or anyone from your office regarding CETA. “Interested stakeholders” are not limited to business representatives. Everyday people will bear the brunt of this trade deal and should top the list of stakeholders consulted. **It would do much to assuage our concerns if you would provide us with a list of those groups with whom you have met on this issue.**

Please, in the future, don't hesitate to contact us. We can mobilize our members quickly and efficiently. Our large, progressive, grass roots membership is eager to contribute to public policy in a positive way and there are, as you have pointed out, “a number of avenues available for consultation.”

We are delighted to offer our help in opening and exploring these avenues.

For instance: we can gather and submit suggestions and statements on the current negotiating text; support the Manitoba NDP in a decision to insist on meaningful public consultation before Manitoba endorses the federal deal; and organize town halls to go over CETA in detail, with room for actual amendments, as one way “to ensure that the negotiations properly respect democratic decision making in Canada.” **Please let us know how we can help you keep Manitoba out of CETA.**

Your letter indicates that Manitoba is joining Provinces and Territories under the Council of the Federations to support the negotiations towards CETA. However, there are now nearly sixty municipalities including Toronto and Hamilton that have passed resolutions concerning CETA and thirty-three of those ask that local governments be excluded from CETA. These resolutions represent well-founded, nationwide concerns that municipalities will be ill-served by CETA.

We are glad to know that you are working to protect the ability of government to make strategic use of procurement and we want to know that this protection will extend to municipal governments. **Can you clarify for us why the Manitoba NDP would seek to protect Manitoba Hydro's rights to use procurement in a strategic way and for local development purposes, but not seek the same protection for the City of Winnipeg?**

This is a unique time in Canadian history. The recent Federal budget has given us a glimpse of what social regression may lie ahead. Hard won steps towards a progressive and just society are being reversed and we are slipping backwards down the hill. The CETA deal is a deal for corporations, not for people.

We are asking you to be open and honest, so let us be blunt. We are asking you to take a bold and courageous step. We are asking the Manitoba NDP to stand up to a federal Conservative majority government in the face of a powerful corporate lobby for an international trade deal of unprecedented scope and consequence.

It is time to bring together all like-minded Canadians, unite those who recognize the devastating direction our country is taking and lead the way to change!

To paraphrase a well-worn sentiment: *If not the Manitoba NDP, then who? If not now, when?*

Sincerely,

Council of Canadians – Winnipeg Chapter

We encourage you to read the attached document for a thorough review of the current situation with special attention to the importance of protecting water, and a clear explanation of exactly what CETA is and what it will do once signed.

<http://canadians.org/trade/documents/CETA/CETA-water-brief-Jan12.pdf>