

COOPER INSTITUTE ACTIVITIES REPORT 2015

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Second Annual Social Justice Symposium in Memory of Father Andrew Macdonald

The 2015 symposium, *Mixed Member Proportional Representation: Democracy for All People*, was held on November 21st. Over sixty people participants had the opportunity to identify the pros and cons of Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMP) for PEI, while recognizing that MMP is not the only proportional representation (PR) model possible.

The event began with a tribute to Andrew Macdonald, a founder of Cooper Institute by Chairperson Joe Byrne, who stated, “In Andrew’s memory, we continue to learn that the world is made better when we all work together: this is an opportune time to work for PR”. Roy Johnstone, with his fiddle music, created an atmosphere of honour for his friend, Andrew, as well as a spirit of joy in which to consider PEI’s future democratic processes.

The symposium began with group discussions on how MMP functions and some of its advantages and concerns.

Advantages: Voters are represented in the legislature. MMP leads to election of legislatures that represent the diversity of parties and the diversity of the community. MMP results in shared power, more collaboration and consensus. MMP provides the opportunity to vote for a representative in local area plus one from a party.

Concerns: Opponents have already created doubts about the community’s capacity to understand the workings of MMP. There is a belief that minority governments are ineffective. Can political parties be trusted to be democratic in developing the “party lists”? Community needs to know the pros and cons of other PR models and to realize that not every electoral change is PR.

After hearing the participants’ views, the symposium speaker Mark Greenan, provided provided an exceptional background for considering the forms of PR, which are appropriate for PEI. Mark organized the YES campaign in the 2005 MMP plebiscite in PEI. Some key points of his presentation were:

- Creating a proportional representation system is fundamentally a political process.
- Those who ultimately decide on electoral reform are not the advocates/reformers, not the citizens, not the people, but the politicians, the “political class”.
- Politicians have a conflict of interest when it comes to the electoral system.
- PR advocates must build public support so that politicians can see a political payoff for support of PR.
- Advocates can learn from best practices of not-for-profit organizations and youth movements.
- Advocates can present PR as an appropriate reflection of Islanders' concept of democracy.
- Advocates must present PR in a way that appeals to all points on the political spectrum; need to engage all political parties on the Island.
- Current politicians’ conversations about electoral reform must not be interpreted as support for PR.

The symposium concluded with an interesting and beneficial review of three MMP ballot samples and suggestions for the continuation of a campaign for proportional representation.

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PEI Working Group for a Livable Income

Cooper Institute has been a member of the ***PEI Working Group for a Livable Income*** (WGLI) since the coalition was founded, 13 years ago. The long-term goal of the WGLI is the establishment a system of guaranteed livable income for all Islanders and elimination of poverty. In the area of short-term goals, the WGLI advocates for policies and programs such as: livable wages; fair EI; adequate social assistance, disability pensions and Old Age Security.

Basic Income Guarantee

Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) is a major program/campaign of the WGLI. The group is committed to selecting PEI as one of the jurisdictions in Canada to initiate a 5 to 7 year model program of BIG. This would involve research to institute and perfect a system in which all people enjoy their right to a livable income. The BIG PEI Campaign works on three action paths: community engagement; policy makers' commitment; and national solidarity.

Community Engagement – In 2015, the WGLI organized community forums in three counties. The forums provided feedback on materials that had been prepared in advance about the nature of Basic Income Guarantee and how it might be implemented. The feedback is being used to revise the materials, which will be presented to the community again in 2016.

Media coverage is an important part of community engagement and in 2015, the Charlottetown Guardian featured three BIG opinion pieces, two letters to the editor and a number of media releases; CBC aired three interviews promoting BIG. Supporting organizations, such as the PEI Food Security Network, promoted BIG in the media. Items and commentaries can be found at cbigpei.wix.com.

Policy Makers' Commitment – BIG PEI received attention in 2015 during two election campaigns. The PEI election was especially interesting in that four parties expressed favour for BIG. The most clearly intentional statement was that of Liberal Party leader, Wade MacLauchlan, now Premier of PEI. He went so far as to call for a model program, not just a pilot: "We'd be actively interested in pursuing that (BIG) . . . I'd call it a model program and build in a commitment to evidence-based research and action-based research."

BIG PEI noted the absence of any clear indication of national directions for BIG during the federal election campaign. PEI candidates from three parties, in responding to the PEI Food Security Network's survey, identified BIG as an important component of a national food policy.

In PEI, there was no indication in the Speech from the Throne nor was there in the Provincial Budget of any commitment to BIG. However, late in the year, BIG PEI met with the Premier; the Minister of Health & Wellness/Minister of Family & Human Services; and the Deputy Minister of Health and Wellness. In that meeting, the Premier assigned the Deputy Minister as the liaison between BIG PEI and the Government. She and a Director from her department attended the WGLI's regular November meeting. On another jurisdictional level, the Mayor of Charlottetown, Clifford Lee, was identified as one of the first Canadian mayors to support the establishment of BIG.

National Solidarity – Through efforts of Basic Income Canada Network (BICN), BIG PEI takes part conference calls with BIG groups in 9 provinces and territories. Among high profile supporters identified on the national level are the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary. The city council of Kingston has voted unanimously to support BIG. Rod Benne of Leaders and Legacy provides valuable media coverage of progress across the country. Senator Hugh Segal continues to speak out in favour of BIG. The Canadian Medical Association has endorsed BIG as having a potential for general health improvement.

PEI Coalition for Fair Employment Insurance

Cooper Institute and the PEI WGLI are members of the PEI Coalition for Fair EI. In 2015 the Coalition devoted its efforts to the Federal Election, with one demand: to "Scrap the Changes"; that is, to reverse all changes to the EI program especially those enacted since 2012. The Coalition submitted to the four political parties a request for their commitment to this. Only two parties responded in writing. However during the Campaign, the Liberal Leader, now Prime Minister Trudeau, announced in September that his government would reverse the EI changes made by the Harper Government since 2012.

"Scrap the Changes" means: decreasing the number of hours to qualify for EI; decreasing the amount people can keep working while on claim; increasing percentage of wages from the best 12 weeks; eliminating the 2-week waiting period; returning the 5 extra weeks for regions with a high unemployment rates; re-establishing the Boards of Referees for appeals, with worker and local representation; changing the definition of suitable employment; changing the job search requirements; eliminating the 3 new categories of unemployed persons; eliminating the division of PEI into 2 regions.

CHIRP International (Council for Health Improvement through Research and Practice)

CHIRP International is a PEI-based not for profit organization, founded in 2013, dedicated to highlighting for professionals and for the wider community, innovative health research and therapy. CHIRP identifies and favours the growth and accessibility of complementary medicine, which accompanies conventional health systems. CHIRP highlights the ground-breaking research and highly developed therapy practice evident in complementary medicine.

During 2015 CHIRP organized and sponsored energy therapy information half-day sessions for professionals and other interested people on the following research and practice: Assemblage Point Adjustment-the Core of Human Energy Fields; Therapeutic Touch; Emotional Freedom Techniques; How Allergies Affect Health—An Alternative Approach; Reiki; Quigong; Emotional Code; Relationship of Omnipresence/Creator/God and the Human Chakras and Energy Fields; and Addressing Healthy Weight Through the Aid of Chinese Medicine. CHIRP also co-sponsored a seminar and professional training for Parents and Caregivers of Adults and Children with Autism: Diagnosis and Treatment.

A member of Cooper Institute serves as president on the Board of Directors of CHIRP. For more information about CHIRP: <http://chirpintl.com/wp/>

PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation

Cooper Institute at its annual planning meeting in April, 2015 decided to give priority to work on proportional representation (PR). 2015 was the 10th anniversary of the last attempt to introduce PR to PEI.

By early June, an organizing committee had begun to meet and develop a process for the formation of the PEI Coalition for Proportional Representation. Very quickly nine community-based organizations and sixty individuals joined. The aim of the coalition is to engage Islanders with each other in productive, non-partisan evidence-based dialogue about PR to increase the community's capacity to understand and help implement PR in Prince Edward Island.

The Coalition held two formal meetings in the fall featuring an expert academic presenting on electoral renewal. These meetings opened up a critical discussion about which reforms serve to maintain and/or strengthen the current First Past the Post electoral system and which ones promote PR. The Coalition did not opt for a specific model of PR; however the wide-ranging discussion on the pros and

cons of various models of PR resulted in greater clarity about the criteria for proportional representation.

While this community process was taking shape, the Government issued its White Paper on Democratic Renewal and formed a team of newly-elected politicians to hear from the community. The PR Coalition members participated fully in this political process, spending untold hours preparing and presenting well thought-out submissions to the Special Committee on Democratic Renewal. The PR Coalition enjoyed some excellent media coverage of its work in both the formal and social media in the form of opinion pieces, media releases, and letters to the editor.

The Special Committee presented its interim report to the PEI Legislature on November 28, 2015, making it clear that the future of proportional representation for PEI still hangs in the balance and presenting many unanswered questions. The assumption remains that a key part of the process is the holding of a referendum. The formulation of a referendum question remains the focus: What is the value of having the community enter into divisive debates about the correct questions? The need for more time for citizen engagement is recognized: Does this mean more of the same with engagement confined to having community talking to politicians? What is the role of an organized citizens' group in the democratic reform process? What is the effect of the Premier publicly stating at year-end on CBC that First Past the Post is the best option for PEI?

Forces at work in PEI and in Ottawa indicate that we are not on the threshold of fair party representation in legislatures according to the percentage of popular vote nor is there the political will to have legislatures which reflect the make-up of the community by gender, ethnic origins, age, sexual orientation, ability, etc. There is much community and political work to be done to avoid again delaying this objective and perhaps running the risk of burying it again for another 10 years.



Mark Greenan spoke about PR at Cooper Institute's 2nd Annual Social Justice Symposium in November

PEI Food Security Network

The PEI Food Security Network (FSN) is an education and action organization committed to achieving food sovereignty in PEI. It is dedicated to changing community attitudes and public policy to promote: environmentally appropriate practices for the production and distribution of food; the availability of affordable, healthy food; livable income for producers; the right to food; and PEI self-reliance in food. Cooper Institute has been an active member since 2008.

In March, members of the FSN presented a workshop, “Alternative Food Marketing: Encouraging Health Institutions to Buy Local Food”. Several dozen people, including people involved in food production & processing, chefs, and purchasers (for healthcare facilities) participated. Food activist and author Wayne Roberts and organic farmer Reg Phelan presented success stories, challenges and possibilities for local procurement. Some important next steps were identified, including research into how much local food is currently being supplied to healthcare institutions in PEI.

Later that month, the FSN hosted a screening of *Dirt! the Movie*, in recognition of 2015 as the Year of the Soil. It was also a well-attended event and there was good discussion afterwards about soil health as a key component of food security. Members of the FSN were treated to a “lunch and learn” event, at which Boyde Beck, Curator of History at PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, and Rebecca Bartlett, a GIS & Digital Resources Librarian illustrated the rise and decline of rural general stores in Prince Edward Island between 1864 and 1984.

The PEI FSN was asked to join a committee of the Home and School Federation, which is looking into possibilities for a school nutrition program. Two FSN members participated in an initial meeting.

The topic for the 2015 AGM was Basic Income Guarantee. Valerie Tarasuk, researcher from U of Toronto Jennifer Taylor, from the Department of Applied Family Science at UPEI and Michelle Jay of the PEI Working Group for a Livable Income gave an excellent overview of the status of household food insecurity in PEI and made a case for implementing a guaranteed income program. Their presentations (and reports from other events and workshops) are on our website: <https://peifoodsecurity.files.wordpress.com>

The network participated in the Leaders’ Forum on the Environment leading up to the provincial election in the spring, and later in the year supported Food Secure Canada’s Eat Think Vote! campaign at the time of the federal election. A survey was sent to all PEI candidates asking them for their position on a

national food policy based on the principles of food sovereignty. Results were then made public.

Towards the end of 2015, members of the FSN presented a submission to the Environmental Advisory Council as part of the Water Act Consultations, calling for the “joining up” of policies relating to food security, water protection and agriculture. The FSN also participated in the launch of the MoVE campaign that asks the federal government to make changes to programs to support the rights of migrant workers.



The FSN had a display at Charlottetown's Farm Day in the City

Save Our Seas and Shores PEI

SOSS-PEI is a coalition of groups which, with counterparts in other Atlantic provinces, Quebec and First Nations, is working to keep the Gulf of St. Lawrence free from oil and gas development. The PEI chapter includes ECO-PEI, Sierra Club, Cooper Institute, and the PEI Fishermen’s Association.

In July, in a powerful show of unity, First Nations and fishing industry representatives called on the Federal Ministers of Environment, and Fisheries to prohibit oil and gas development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence until it consults with the public and until it can determine that these activities would pose no risk to commercial fisheries. Several members of SOSS-PEI took part, making the point that our coastal communities depend on a healthy Gulf ecosystem.

In the fall, shortly after the federal election and change in government, actor Ethan Hawke and members of SOSS joined several First Nations representatives Water Ceremony near Antigonish. This event garnered much media attention, far and wide.

Save Our Seas and Shores PEI was one of the many groups that made presentations to the Environmental Advisory Council as part of the PEI Water Act consultations. SOSS urged the Council, as it moves forward with the development of a water act, to consider the interconnectedness of the Island’s streams and rivers, estuaries, coastal areas and the waters of the Gulf of St Lawrence, and to ensure protection from the risks associated with oil and gas development.

Cinema Politica

Cinema Politica hosted 10 film screenings in 2015, partnering with This Town is Small, Council of Canadians, Island Peace Committee, Citizens' Alliance of PEI, WUSC, Breaking the Silence and others. A new initiative for 2015 was the two-day Social Justice Film Festival, presented by the Island Peace Committee and sponsored by Cinema Politica Charlottetown.

In March Cinema Politica marked International Women's Day with a screening of *Gulabi Gang*, and in April, with the Sierra Club, Cinema Politica celebrated Earth Day 2015 by showing two documentaries – *Bone, Wind, Fire and Disruption*. All of the documentaries – which in 2015 were about climate change, resistance, Syrian refugees, activism – provided insight into current issues and much food for thought. Look for Cinema Politica Charlottetown on facebook.

Don't Frack PEI

Don't Frack PEI, formed in 2013, addresses the concerns of Island residents about the threat of Hydraulic Fracturing (fracking). Cooper Institute is represented on the organizing committee and supports a permanent ban on fracking, the elimination of dependence on fossil fuels, and the development of technologies that favour renewable energy sources.

Don't Frack PEI started the year with a community meeting in Souris, hosted by the Souris & Area Branch of PEI Wildlife Federation. It was an enthusiastic meeting with explanations of the nature and dangers of fracking, the history of moratoriums in neighbouring provinces, the necessity for the Islanders to know the issue and demand that no fracking can take place without the community's consent, which is the meaning of "social licence". There was an open discussion of alternatives to oil and gas.

The AGM, held in Charlottetown, featured a presentation by Jim Emberger, spokesperson for New Brunswick Anti-Shale Gas Alliance. With well-researched data, he made it clear that fracking is unsafe, that it is not a job creator, and does not generate substantial revenue.



The death in March of a member of the organizing committee, Muriel Siemers, was a loss to Don't Frack PEI. She generously shared with Islanders her wide experience taking stands on threats of various dangerous extraction industries, including fracking.

Don't Frack PEI participated in the leaders' forum on the environment during the PEI election. There were no clear commitments to place a permanent ban on fracking in PEI. The group also participated in the Water Act public consultations late in 2015. The presentation went into detail about why a PEI Water Act must include a permanent ban on fracking and how essential it is to engage the Mi'kmaq people in all aspects of protection of water. In this as in all of its presentations, Don't Frack PEI insists on "Energy for the Long Run" (Sun, wind, water and geothermal). See more at dontfrackpei.com.

Trade Justice PEI

Late in 2015, the "anti-CETA" coalition decided to adopt a new name. The coalition, which includes members of Cooper Institute, Breaking the Silence, the Food Security Network, National Farmers Union, Council of Canadians and several labour unions, decided that *Trade Justice PEI* was a more apt name.

Although CETA remained high on the coalition's list of concerns in 2015, it was the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that became a focus as it became obvious that parties including the United States wanted to have it signed early in 2016. There is concern for our local dairy industry, and for the future of supply management, as a percentage of the Canadian market will be opened up to US milk products if the agreement is ratified.

Trade Justice PEI wrote several letters to the editor and opinion pieces about the impact of CETA, the TPP and other agreements on democracy, making the point that such trade deals are not so much about actual trade as they are about granting corporations more and more power.

In September, as part of an international day of action, the group illustrated this in a very creative way by presenting a short skit (written by group member Doug Millington) at the Charlottetown Farmers' Market about the perils of CETA.

Josie Baker, Ron Kelly, Jordan MacPhee and Rob Thompson perform "CETA Ball"



In Focus

The InFocus project, which ran from 2013 to 2015, was a project of the Canadian Association for Community Living and the DisAbled Women's Network Canada. Its goal was to develop strategies to ensure that people with disabilities are safe and healthy in their communities. In PEI, Cooper Institute was the lead organization for the project.

In 2015, "The Right to Be Safe" workshops were held, for women and for men with disabilities. Participants talked about what they need in order to be safe in the community, and they had a chance to work on personal safety plans.

Also in 2015, a workshop was held for 45 service providers. The workshop featured a presentation on disability rights and the roots of exclusion, and provided information about including and accommodating the needs of people with disabilities. There was much discussion about the need for a holistic approach to serving clients with disabilities, and about the need for better, accessible information to be made available so that people know what programs and services exist in the community.

Seeds of Community

In 2015 Cooper Institute conducted two streams of the Seeds of Community program: the community stream and the farmers' stream.

The *community stream* extended the reach of the seed library. In the winter, for the third year in a row, Confederation Centre Public Library in Charlottetown hosted a Seedy Saturday, where community members brought seed to share and swap with other gardeners. The first annual Seedy Sunday was held at the Summerside Rotary Library, and was well attended by a crowd of eager gardeners and farmers. Workshops on Seed Saving were also held in Charlottetown, Summerside, and Montague. With the help of community volunteers and library staff, the seed library is available on a self-serve basis to the public at the Charlottetown (Confederation Centre) Library.

The goal of the *farmers' stream* was to build networks and capacity for PEI farmers to grow, sell, and share high-quality seed at a scale that is useful to farmers. Throughout the year, a group of small organic farmers gathered to create a vision, to plan, and to receive training to help them achieve their goals. The first packets of Prince Edward Island - grown organic seed were sold by Pembroke Farm in the spring. The work of this team of farmers continues into 2016.

This initiative was possible thanks to the support of the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security.

Temporary Foreign Workers

Cooper Institute, in partnership with the PEI Coalition for Fair EI and Katie Mazer, PhD Candidate in Geography and migration researcher, held a public forum in O'Leary in March called "***Going West: How Government Policies are Forcing Workers to Leave Home***". The forum addressed how both PEI workers and Filipino workers are forced to migrate "west" to support their families. The event was well attended and included both migrant workers and local community members. The guest speaker was Connie Sorio, a member of the executive committee of Migrant Canada and the International Migrants Alliance. Connie is a community activist and advocate for the rights of temporary foreign workers in Canada. She works with KAIROS.

In 2015 Cooper Institute also produced a Leadership and Self-Advocacy toolkit for migrant workers, with the help of the Community Legal Information Association of PEI.

Cooper Institute was one of the founding members of the Coalition for Migrant Workers Rights Canada. In October of 2015, this group launched the MoVE Campaign: Mobility, Voice, and Equality for Migrant Workers on October 28th with press conferences held across the country. Cooper Institute hosted the PEI press conference, supported by four groups: United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Council of Canadians - PEI Chapter, Women's Network PEI, and the PEI Food Security Network. MoVE calls for open work permits for migrant workers, removal of the 4-year limit, and permanent immigration status on arrival for all migrant workers.

Cooper Institute continues to conduct research into migrant worker issues and to engage in public education, case support, and collaborative community work. Thanks to the Campbell Webster Foundation for its continued support of this work.



Workshop facilitators pose with migrant workers in O'Leary

Organizational Support

Members of the Cooper Institute collective work with and support many organizations in various ways:

Société Saint-Thomas d'Aquin

Parkinson Society Maritime Region (PEI)

International Women's Day 2015

Breaking the Silence

P.E.I. Supported Decision-Making Coalition

Voluntary Resource Council

National Farmers Union

Partners for Change

PEI People First

Atlantic Council for International Cooperation

Latin American Mission Program (LAMP)

Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water

ALERT

Canadian Council for Refugees

Volunteer Seniors in Action

The Voluntary Resource Centre received support from the New Horizons for Seniors program in 2015 to offer the "Volunteer Seniors in Action" program. Cooper Institute was engaged to develop and facilitate a five-week program with local seniors exploring issues related to seniors' involvement in community groups.

The 5 themes were: Rekindling the Spirit of the Founders; Recruiting, Training, and Retiring Volunteers; Sharing our Message; Working in Coalitions; and Finding Resources. Each week included a guest speaker who is a senior volunteer with an organization from a different aspect of the community sector. The guest speakers included: Ann Sherman from the Rotary Club of Charlottetown Royalty; Ann Wheatley from PEI Citizen Advocacy; Leo Broderick from the Council of Canadians; Don Mazer from the Coalition for the Protection of PEI Water; and Angie Arsenault, Lucas Compton, and Gordie Whitlock of Generation XX in Summerside.

Beginning in October 2015, the program participants gathered each Thursday morning for five weeks for an inspiring inquiry into the voluntary sector, ending with a shared meal. The learnings from these sessions will be presented to the community in 2016.

About Coalitions

Cooper Institute is fortunate to be able to carry out our work in collaboration with many groups and people, also committed to social justice. This style of work promotes cooperation and provides opportunities for sharing knowledge and strategies. It is an environment in which we learn with, and from, each other. And it is an efficient use of time and energy. In this way we are privileged to be in daily direct with workers, including temporary foreign workers. We are united with equality-seeking women, who fight for reproductive rights and full healthcare for women. We are with people with disabilities. We are with environmentalists and with food producers who value the ecosystem and who work toward people-centered food systems. We appreciate and thank all our associates. Together we can contribute to the creation of new and just solutions.

Cooper Institute Funding

Support for Cooper Institute's work in the community comes mainly from private sources. Some of these are foundations; we also receive fees for services from other organizations, depending on their ability to pay. We are especially thankful to the many individual donors who make generous contributions every year and invite other interested people to donate in the following ways: pre-authorized monthly donations; an annual contribution; a memorial for a deceased family member or friend; a bequest in your Last Will and Testament. Cooper Institute is a registered charity. (Charitable Registration #10114 4541 RR0001)

Members of the Cooper Institute Collective:

Josie Baker

Irene Burge

Marie Burge

Joe Byrne

Eddie Cormier

Irene Doyle

Marie Hendricken

Maureen Larkin

Leah MacLeod

Reg Phelan

Selvi Roy

Debbie Theuerkauf

Ann Wheatley



Photo credit: Nick Arsenault

Missing from photo: Selvi Roy

CORPORATE CONTROL REAL AGENDA OF TRADE AGREEMENTS

We have heard much about all the benefits that International Trade Agreements such as CETA (Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement) and TPP (Trans Pacific Partnerships) will bring to the Canadian economy. CETA is the trade deal with the European Union and TPP is a trade agreement between Canada and 11 other countries bordering the Pacific Ocean. But the truth is that these agreements are not primarily about trade. They are about strengthening corporate control. Corporations are using traditional trade as a way to get control over our economy, our environmental policy, our health systems, and our social programs.

The secrecy around the talks should be a warning that something is wrong. In the case of CETA the government had been negotiating for five years but the complete text was not officially available to the public until the end of September, 2015, just before the federal election. TPP was also negotiated in secret. It's absolutely astonishing that a deal this huge would be negotiated entirely in secret. Almost 800 million people live in countries that are party to this deal, yet we were only able to see the official text in mid-October just before the Federal Election.

There is much confusion about the current status of CETA and TPP. The former Prime Minister Stephen Harper signed off on the CETA trade deal in June, 2015 but that doesn't mean it is passed into law. CETA has to be *ratified* by the Canadian parliament and all the European parliaments before it goes into effect, which may take up to two years. So there is still time to lobby for changes in the deals. The plan is for countries participating in the TPP to sign the agreement in New Zealand on Feb.4, 2016. But then it has go through a process of ratification in all countries. Our Liberal government has *promised* parliamentary hearings before it decides to ratify it or not. Community groups are asking for country-wide consultations.

The governments have their spin doctors working at full throttle and they continually pound out the message that these trade deals give Canada access to the largest market we have ever had. They claim the trade deal is a win-win situation. Except they don't tell you what we have to give up to attain this enormous market access. In the case of TPP, according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, with the exception of Canada's dairy industry, tariffs have never been lower. Any gains from further reductions would be relatively modest.

One of the ways that these trade agreements increase corporate control over countries and their citizens is through the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). These ISDS's are a central part of most current international trade agreements. They put corporations on the same level as States and allow foreign firms to sue countries, not only for nationalization, but for any public policy decision, such as access to drinking water and environmental protection, that might affect their profit margins.

They are able to prevent local bodies from making decisions in favour of the local economy or environment. For example, if PEI changed its land laws or set up a publically funded transit

system, and a Corporation challenged that such policy decisions would affect their bottom line, the province could be brought before the trade tribunal and sued if the tribunal rules in favor of the Corporation. These international trade deals, such as CETA and TPP, if passed will bring significant changes to our economies. The complexity of the agreements and the secrecy that has been their hallmark make it difficult for ordinary citizens to be engaged. However we must be diligent in unwrapping these agreements and exposing their real agenda.

