

# Canada's Parliament Rejects Trump's Agenda on Trade

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*Canada's parliament has unanimously rejected the Trump agenda on trade and the Trump reaction on his departure from the G7 meeting recently held in Charlevoix, Quebec.*

The motion contained six items:

- recognition of strong trade ties between the U.S. and Canada.
- that the government stand with the workers of Canada, particularly in aluminum and steel and potentially with autoworkers.
- “strongly oppose illegitimate tariffs” on steel and aluminum
- stand with the government to impose retaliatory tariffs
- support Canada's supply management system for agricultural products.
- “reject disparaging ad hominem statements by U.S. officials”.

As frequently as I criticize many aspects of Canada's government, particularly with foreign policy, this motion receives my full support. It is a motion primarily designed for domestic consumption, but contains some serious elements that could/will come into play as Trump and his team weave their own kind of economic theory around their allies.

The two elements that go beyond simple political rhetoric are the statements on supply management and retaliatory tariffs. Having made these statements unanimously they will be awkward – though in the world of politics not impossible – to go back on. They are however essential and necessary if Canada is to maintain both its perceived place in global affairs and its intention to put Canada's workers first and foremost above and beyond Trump's ‘art of the deal’.

Significantly, 75 percent of Canada's trade is with the U.S., representing 25 percent of GDP. The latter figure – while not the best way to measure an economy – perhaps is more important than the first, as Canada is in process of reaching trade agreements with other groups of countries (Europe, Asian fringe). Whichever way it goes, this new trade war is a loss for both sides – workers in particular. At the same time it can open opportunities to diversify and support Canada's economic standing and perhaps demonstrate that we are not a U.S. puppet in all areas.

Given all that, most trade agreements are not really about the workers of the world but about the corporations of the world and their ability to harvest the wealth of both the workers (labour, taxes, interest, wages) and the environment. Perhaps the position about standing with Canadian workers will expand to include working conditions and wages so that more of that trade wealth is directed where it properly belongs, with the workers who actually create it.

The U.S. is creating a peculiar line of economic defense around itself. Normally in the broader world it uses Thomas Friedman's aptly described hidden fist of the military to support its economic power and control. That has never been a concern for Canada, so until Canada stops fully supporting U.S. military actions around the world – or supporting ignorant actions such as the motion condemning Russia with the Skripal affair (note how that has conveniently left the mainstream radar now that the Skripals have apparently recovered in reasonable health against the deadliest nerve gas known) – this economic tariff spat between Canada and the U.S. will have little impact on global affairs. Another false flag, another enemy created, another misinterpretation of foreign affairs and not too arguably Canada will fall in line again with U.S. intentions around the world.

Perhaps that is it in a nutshell. It is a local spat between two siblings. It will have little effect on international affairs. Canada will polish a bit of its reputation by standing united against Trump's rhetoric and erratic actions, but will settle in nicely again into the U.S. embrace once the main theatrics have run their course.

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