

AUSTERITY and its **ALTERNATIVES**



Gendered Impacts of Trade and Austerity

Canada's 'Progressive' Trade Agenda

Nadia Ibrahim (Trade Justice Network), Laura Macdonald
(Carleton University), Scott Sinclair (CCPA)

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Canada's 'Progressive Trade Agenda' (PTA)

Is Canada's new trade policy progressive? Does (or could) it represent an alternative to austerity?

- What is “progressive trade”? Four ways of conceptualizing: Evaluate the extent to which the Canadian government has committed to (or taken meaningful steps towards advancing) these objectives;
- To what extent are women's organizations (and government officials) considering the gendered impacts of trade policy?
- What is the impact of advancing gender equity through trade policy (e.g. including gender equity language in trade agreements)?



Argument

- Link between neoliberal trade policies and austerity
- PTA represents an effort to re-package neoliberal policies to make them more palatable, to forestall more right-wing populist anti-trade;
- efforts to distance the current government from the previous administration, and to develop a form of “progressive neoliberalism” (Fraser 2017)
- Does the PTA open up space for contestation? (Prügl 2017)



Feminist Analysis of International Trade

- Trade is not gender-neutral
- Liberal perspectives: trade is generally positive for women but for this to happen we need to remove barriers to participation in market;
- Socialist-feminist approaches: emphasize potential negative impacts on women (see Lilia Domínguez-Villalobos and Flor Brown-Grossman 2010; Soledad Salvador 2012).
- Also emphasis on differential impact on different women depending on class, race, ethnicity, location, sector, etc. – need for careful gender-based analysis



Towards a Truly Progressive Trade Agenda?

- Help marginalized groups (including women) to participate in the benefits of trade;
- Ensure formerly marginalized groups participate meaningfully in trade-policy making and negotiations;
- Provide adjustment assistance and support to groups adversely impacted by trade and trade agreements;
- Policy flexibility.



Liberal Government – Progressive Trade Agenda (PTA)

- Calls for examination in global trade and trade agreements of such issue as: “labour, environment, human rights, gender equality, transparency, anti-corruption, and new investment trade policy concepts, including investment arbitration procedures and Parties’ right to regulate domestically”
- Also “Canada’s positions are informed before and during negotiations by consultations with a broad range of stakeholders (e.g. non-governmental organizations, small and medium-sized enterprises, **women-owned businesses**, Indigenous peoples and northern communities), complemented by improved transparency regarding the negotiation process and related activities. (emphasis added)” - Address by International Trade Minister Chrystia Freeland at the Conference of Montreal, June 15, 2016



Gender in PTA

- Gender chapter in Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement (2017) – modeled on Chile-Uruguay agreement (2016)
- Push for inclusion of gender chapters in re-negotiated NAFTA, other FTAs (Israel?)
- Inspired by Sweden's feminist foreign policy
- WTO “Joint Declaration on Trade and Women's Economic Empowerment”
- Most of these purely aspirational
- Liberal party branding



PTA: Perspectives of Civil Society

- Stand-alone gender chapters are a symbolic recognition of gender equity; but is that all they are?
- PTA as an “exercise in public relations”
- Gender chapters focus on a small group of women
- Gender chapters create “nuts and bolts”
- Advancing gender equity requires gender mainstreaming
- Lack of gender based analysis
- Lack of meaningful consultation
- Women’s movement’s engagement in trade has declined over time
- Difficulty engaging members and the broader public



How to Improve Trade Policy to Advance Gender Equity

- Gender mainstreaming within agreements (not just gender chapter) and within Canadian government (GAC, International Trade, etc.)
- Gender chapter with common standards based in international standards (like CEDAW and SDGs), effective enforcement mechanisms
- Gender based analysis of trade deals before and after agreements, ongoing analysis/evaluation
- Labour chapters with teeth



How to Improve Trade Policy to Advance Gender Equity

- Protection of public services
- Targeted government procurement policies
- Preserve future policy space (e.g. child care)
- Prior and ongoing consultations with women's organizations, other experts/stakeholders
- Development of appropriate indicators and data for assessing and predicting gendered impacts of trade agreements



How to Improve Trade Policy to Advance Gender Equity

- Support for women-owned SMEs, identify barriers to exporting
- Gender ombudsperson/ambassador/committee
- Corporate Social Responsibility – consider gender impact of Canadian investment abroad (e.g. extractives sector)
- Strengthen domestic social policy including support for care work;
- Support women's, independent labour and human rights organizations
- A fundamental rethinking of the current approach and objectives of a trading relationship?



How Progressive is the PTA?

- **Consultation:** improvement over Harper government (and earlier Liberals) – but little consultation with women’s organizations;
- **Impact on marginalized groups:** no discussion of transition assistance; lack of GBA+ analysis of gender impact; concerns about service sector; importance of domestic social policy
- **Policy flexibility:** continued commitment to ISDS; civil society raising issues about implications for progressive social policies; procurement policies



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