Unifor presentation to the
Senate Standing
Committee on Foreign
Affairs and International
Trade regarding Bill C-30:
The Canada-European
Union Comprehensive
Economic and Trade
Agreement
Implementation Act.

Submitted: April 13, 2017
Good morning honourable members of the Committee.

My name is Jerry Dias, and I am the National President of Unifor. With me is Angelo DiCaro, national staff representative and our union’s lead researcher on trade issues.

Unifor represents 310,000 workers in Canada, employed in nearly every major sector of the economy.

We’re here today to discuss CETA; perhaps the most comprehensive and contentious trade agreement ever negotiated by Canada.

Unifor has been a long-standing critic of CETA.

We’ve followed its negotiation, from the sidelines, since talks began in 2009.

Having never been invited to participate in discussions, or consulted, we spent a lot of time piecing together scraps of information about the deal from leaked texts and anonymous quotes.

And what we found was troubling:

- Lopsided trade imbalances that could cost us jobs;
- Increased threats to our public services;
- Patent rule changes that would increase drug prices;
- Restrictions on how ALL governments purchased goods and services;
- A widening of import quotas, impacting our dairy industry;
- Special dispute settlement provisions only available to private investors.

There’s a lot that can be said about these items, individually. And this is just a short-list.

But what I find particularly troubling is that we are here today discussing changes to our laws that would implement CETA.

Frankly, it’s still not clear what exactly CETA is or how it will benefit Canada.

In fact, there has been no proper public consultation held to discuss the final CETA text.

The Standing Committee on International Trade held 19 hearings between November 2013 and June 2014; inviting witnesses to comment on an “Agreement-in-Principle” negotiated by the former Harper government.
After the full text was eventually released in September of 2014, the CETA underwent a major transformation.

The controversial Investor-State Dispute Settlement system was revised in the winter of 2016.

Although trade experts believe the new model didn’t differ much from its original form, no public discussions were held on the so-called Investment Court System.

Prior to signing the deal, Canada and the European Commission developed an “Interpretive Declaration” – in response to public protests, including in Europe.

Again, never subject to parliamentary scrutiny.

Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, Britain - Canada’s largest trading partner in the EU - voted to leave the union. The UK is the largest export market for Canadian goods, representing almost half (43%) of all exports to Europe. Now they are no longer a part of the CETA.

Despite all of these fundamental changes, the federal government has taken no further assessment of the deal.

No re-assessment if and how it will benefit our economy.

No assessment of its risks to Canadians.

No independent assessment of how it will create jobs and prosperity.

In fact, the most recent study of CETA found that the deal would likely increase income inequality and lead to tens of thousands of job losses within its first seven years.

Rather than discuss that, we are here figuring out how best to implement the deal.

It doesn’t make a lot of sense to me.

At a time when trade has become a lightning rod for public unrest; the federal government’s approach to CETA fully disappoints.

CETA consultation has not lived up to the government’s own high standard of public engagement as conducted for the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In fact, the CETA doesn’t live up to this Chamber’s own standards – outlined earlier this year – for the development of strategic, inclusive and effective trade accords.

CETA is a deeply flawed agreement. It may be an ambitious, “gold-standard” agreement – but measured to the standards of private investors and profit-seekers; not working Canadians.
I urge this Committee to reject the implementation of CETA.

At the very least, I recommend the House of Commons undertake a proper consultative review of the CETA’s final text – one that must include an analysis of investor-state dispute reforms, the Joint Interpretive Instrument, and the impact of Brexit.

I very much appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you, and look forward to your questions.