

TILMA TIMES

March 2007

Democracy under Attack !

Beware of an economic storm...

TILMA has hit the provinces of British Columbia and Alberta.

TILMA is the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility agreement which comes into effect April 1, 2007.

The Saskatchewan government is considering signing on.

TILMA has been called a Bill of Rights for corporations.

For decades, powerful lobby groups such as the Fraser Institute and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce have been pushing for an agreement that puts corporations on equal footing with governments.

They say we need TILMA to increase labour mobility and to decrease barriers to trade.

But many experts argue inter-provincial trade barriers are

insignificant and labour mobility is not a major problem for most professions.

The true aim of TILMA is to create a totally free market economy, to eliminate government regulations that companies say impede the profits of private corporations.

The Chilling Effect...

TILMA contains an enforcement mechanism, similar to the one in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Governments, private businesses, or individuals can sue the provinces, for up to \$5 million for existing or future regulations and programs that "restrict or impair" trade and investment.

So what kinds of things restrict or impair trade and investment"?

Government procurement policies that encourage government to

buy locally; government local hiring policies; municipal bylaws on issues like pesticide bans or commercial sign restrictions; and economic development programs designed to boost local economies like the Northern Development Fund could all be seen as barriers to private profits.

Even the Saskatchewan *Trade Union Act* could form the basis of a TILMA challenge. Our superior labour relations legislation could be driven down to the level of Alberta's Labour Relations Code - which is weak and serves only the boss - if a corporation sues the Saskatchewan government.

It stands to reason that if governments know they can be sued for regulations and programs, they will be less likely to create them at all...a chilling effect on governance.

The dispute panels that rule on TILMA complaints are not democratically elected, they operate in secret, and their rulings are binding.

If we sign TILMA, we are putting private profits ahead of the public interest. We are allowing the corporate sector to dictate what governments can do for their citizens.

Who's Talking about TILMA?

You may be wondering what process occurred in B.C. and Alberta before the TILMA was signed.

Surely an agreement with such wide sweeping powers would have warranted a comprehensive analysis of its impacts on all sectors of the economy?

And surely such a comprehensive analysis would have been available for public consultation?

In fact, the agreement was signed with no thorough analysis and no public consultation or debate.

The government of Saskatchewan has promised it will hold broad-based, public consultations before making the decision to sign TILMA.

Let's make sure this happens!

To send a letter to the Saskatchewan Government about TILMA, and to read more about TILMA, visit the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour website:

www.sfl.sk.ca/trade.php

NDP Caucus Office: Fax 1-306-787-6247 or e-mail: caucus@ndpcaucus.sk.ca

TO: Premier Lorne Calvert
NDP MLAs

Dear Sir/Madam:

Re: Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA)

I am writing to you to voice my concern with the fact that the Saskatchewan Government is currently considering signing the BC/AB Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA).

There has been no public debate or consultation on this Agreement in Saskatchewan. What is TILMA? What are the advantages to the people of this province if you sign it? What are the disadvantages? What are the alternatives to signing TILMA?

We need answers to these questions BEFORE the Agreement is signed!

In light of the lack of information forthcoming to the citizens of this province, and in view of its potential for significant impact on this province's future democratic decision-making process - at all levels of governance - it is absolutely essential that the public be given, through open and transparent, province-wide consultations, the opportunity to provide you, our democratically-elected representatives, with direction on TILMA.

We also need a balanced analysis and input from progressive economists representing such bodies as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the Council of Canadians, the Canadian Labour Movement, and others.

Therefore, until the Saskatchewan Government has undertaken such consultations, and receives such analyses, I request that no further progress be made towards signing TILMA or any other inter-provincial trade agreement.

I thank you for your consideration of my request, and look forward to your written reply in this matter.

Sincerely,

Top 10 Signs You Know You've Been "TILMATIZED"

- #10 The name "Canada" is replaced with the name "Virgin Country" and is trademarked by Sir Richard Branson of NIKE fame.
- #9 Your local garbage truck is covered in American flags and the driver responds to the name "Bubba".
- #8 The Canadian Federation of Independent Business spokespersons can't stop smiling.
- #7 Your children are asked in the school cafeteria, "Would you like to supersize that"?
- #6 Due to deregulation, utility rates are so high that the only cheap thing left to burn will be Canadian currency.
- #5 Your Aunt has to clean her own hospital room while recovering from surgery.
- #4 Auto insurance premiums will be so high, that we will be forced to ride bicycles or we'll have to sell three of our four vehicles.
- #3 Due to privatization of telecommunications, passenger pigeons will be revived as an effective communication tool.
- #2 Federal and Provincial conservatives will have to amend party policies because they appear to be too "left-wing".

And the #1 sign you know you've been TILMATIZED....

- #1 Your children take you to the Dispute Resolution Panel of TILMA for "restricting investment" when you refuse to increase their allowance. They win, and you owe them \$5,000,000.00