



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

March 16, 2007

The Editor
Maple Ridge News
[340 words]

Re: TILMA about investment and not trade

I am writing in response to Sheila Smyth's letter in the March 14th edition of the Maple Ridge News.

Her commentary about the B.C.-Alberta Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) is misleading. Simply put, the TILMA's benefits will be realized by everyone. The positive hit on the economy and the thousands of jobs created will certainly benefit workers and consumers.

To suggest that TILMA will result in "deep integration" with the United States is nothing short of alarmist. Nothing in the TILMA requires a municipality or the province to change laws to match those of another province or country, or to match the desires of a business or any other person.

TILMA was not negotiated in secret as suggested. In fact, consultations were held with ministries, business groups, academic institutions, local government bodies and regulatory bodies such as those responsible for occupational accreditation.

To relate the TILMA to the NAFTA is not necessarily a bad association. The NAFTA is widely recognized as a great success for Canada. A recent report by the RBC found that "Few countries have provided as shining example of how to adapt and prosper in a post-freer trade world than Canada. The harshest critics of those agreements stoked fears that would be ultimately dispelled. Life not only went on for the Canadian economy in a freer-trade world, Canadians prospered."

It is important to note that we have more impediments to economic activity across our provincial borders than Europe has across the borders of sovereign countries and these impediments cost all of us.

The TILMA eliminates unnecessary overlap and duplication in provincial regulations to facilitate trade, investment and labour mobility. The TILMA will lower costs for workers, businesses and consumers in B.C. and Alberta. As a result, B.C. and Alberta will be more attractive to workers, businesses and investors who will fuel the future growth in our economy, employment opportunities and consumer choice.

Further information about TILMA, including the complete text of the agreement, is available in the Ministry of Economic Development web site at www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev.

Sincerely,
Colin Hansen
Ministry of Economic Development