



Vancouver council urged to oppose TILMA agreement

Vancouver City Council chambers reverberated with many voices of people speaking out against the BC-Alberta Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) at the June 14 council meeting.

Sixteen people, including BCGEU vice president Lorene Oikawa and MLAs Shane Simpson (Vancouver-Hastings) and David Chudnovsky (Vancouver-Kensington) spoke about why TILMA is a bad deal for British Columbians.

Oikawa highlighted how TILMA's sweeping powers restrict democratically elected governments from acting in the best interests of their constituents. TILMA covers every level of government within the B.C./Alberta boundary, including municipal governments, school boards, and health and social service agencies.

"Trade deals favour shrinking exemptions, lower regulations

and deregulation in the name of harmonization," said Oikawa. "They call it leveling the playing field – we call it lowering the playing field."

She reminded council of their recent debates over liquor licensing – pointing out that these debates would be moot under TILMA. City council's capacity to make decisions about planning related to liquor distribution would be seen as "erecting obstacles to trade," and would likely be turned aside by an unelected panel of appointed 'experts'.

Oikawa also talked about how TILMA threatens access to child care and early childhood education. The City of Vancouver helps facilitate the development of childcare centres by providing capital grants and reducing lease payments for centres on city land. This differential treatment is actionable under TILMA. Even exemptions to TILMA are not written in stone, as the agreement is reviewed annually, with a view to reducing the number of exemptions.

At press time, Vancouver City Council was expected to vote in late June on a motion calling on the Province "to exempt municipalities from TILMA until full consultation with local governments and the public on the necessity and the consequences of TILMA are completed."