

# **Minister says TILMA offers many benefits**

In her letter of Jan. 9, "Citizens left in dark on broad reaching deal," Karen Abramsen asks: "Do the citizens of Kelowna know what their government is up to?"

I am pleased to let all British Columbians know the province's plans, especially with respect to the Trade Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) signed with Alberta last year.

Unfortunately, critics of the Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement signed this year with Alberta are trying to spread fear and misinformation based on speculation and false assumptions.

In fact, TILMA will have far-reaching benefits, and we have the numbers to prove it.

The province has just released a study commissioned from the Conference Board of Canada: a highly respected, independent, non-partisan agency with expertise in economic trends and public policy. Their conclusion is clear: TILMA could reap an additional 78,000 new jobs and \$4.8 billion in GDP for B.C. alone.

Contrary to Abramsen's claims, TILMA does not require harmonization of regulations. Nowhere in the agreement does it say this. Nor does Alberta or British Columbia have a veto on any decisions made by the other province. Furthermore, nothing in the TILMA requires either B.C. or Alberta to lower standards.

In fact, the bias is to improve the quality of consumer, health, environmental and other similar standards.

TILMA was not negotiated in secret. Each of the joint cabinet meetings in the three years leading up to the agreement issued news releases. Consultations were held with ministries, local governments, business groups and academic institutions. All regulatory bodies were consulted, including those responsible for labour mobility.

TILMA's benefits will be felt by individuals who work, invest or own businesses. The positive hit on the economy and the thousands of jobs that will be created will certainly benefit workers and consumers.

The Conference Board, in a separate study entitled "Death by 1,000 Paper Cuts," concluded that interprovincial barriers are real and they do cost money. That study encouraged agreements among provinces that will reduce non-tariff barriers - agreements like TILMA.

Both the Impact Assessment of TILMA itself and "Death by 1,000 Paper Cuts" are available on the Ministry's website at [www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev](http://www.gov.bc.ca/ecdev).

**Colin Hansen,  
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