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BC Labour condemns TILMA as a Charter of Rights for Corporations and commits to fight it

VANCOUVER, B.C. – The Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA) may have been negotiated in secret and quietly signed by the provincial government, but it was no secret at this year's 50th Convention of the BC Federation of Labour.

Delegates spoke strongly against TILMA and its consequences for working people in British Columbia. In the end, the 1100 convention delegates voted unanimously to pressure the B.C. government to abandon the agreement; develop a community campaign to stop it; and work closely with municipal governments, school districts and social allies to help the public understand the negative consequences of the agreement for B.C. communities.

“The B.C. government is selling TILMA as a trade deal,” said CUPE BC President Barry O’Neill. “It’s not. It is a Charter of Rights for the business community.”

TILMA was compared to other international trade agreements, historically opposed by labour. “It will have an impact on everyone in this room. .What they couldn’t get in international agreements like NAFTA and the MAI, they are getting in this agreement provincially. .It’s a new order of government and its called TILMA,”.said O’Neill.

Delegates voiced their opposition to the agreement and outlined ways in which it undermines local government and is fundamentally undemocratic.

“Not only are we losing our rights as individual workers and citizens, we are losing our right to participate democratically,” said a delegate from ILWU Local 500.

Irene Lanzinger, Vice President of the British Columbia Federation of Teachers (BCTF) warned that TILMA will lower teacher certification standards in British Columbia to Alberta’s lower levels. “All of our standards will be set to the lowest common denominator.” She also warned of the proliferation of Charter schools in B.C. that would be allowed under this agreement because they are allowed in Alberta.

TILMA, it was heard, imposes the same restrictions on local governments it imposes on the provinces. School boards, universities and colleges are also affected. The ability of a municipality, for instance, to introduce by-laws that could potentially be seen to restrict investment will be ended.

“Under TILMA the only difference between Alberta and B.C. will be the colour of the license plate,” said O’Neill. “This is taking away the freedom of all British Columbians.”

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