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## **Kwan calls for public hearings on TILMA**

NDP MLA Jenny Kwan says that there has been no public forum in which to debate TILMA, the contentious BC/Alberta trade agreement. 'British Columbians have questions and concerns about the impact TILMA will have on our province,' says Kwan MLA for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant. 'The government doesn't seem to think that debate is needed, forcing citizens to develop their own forums for discussion.' The Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement is getting increasing media attention since the New Year. (*Island Tides* began reporting on it in November, see our online archive at [www.islandtides.com](http://www.islandtides.com).)

TILMA, says Kwan, 'will have a dramatic effect on our province and our economy, but the Campbell government doesn't want to talk to British Columbians about the deal. The Premier's approach has been to avoid any informed public discussion and debate.'

Without any public notification or debate, the agreement was signed last April and will come into effect on April 1 this year. In fact, only on January 8 did the government release a 2005 Conference Board Report entitled 'An Impact Assessment of the BC/Alberta Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement.'

'Having looked at the report,' says Kwan, 'I'm not at all surprised that the Premier tried to keep it under wraps for as long as possible—it shows that they failed to adequately consult with British Columbians before the deal was signed.' Kwan notes that the report, commissioned by the Ministry of Economic Development, shows that key groups were excluded from consultations on TILMA. Consumer groups, professional associations, workers, and government representatives from key sectors, including health and the environment, were never invited to provide input on the Agreement, she says.

Municipal Affairs critic Charlie Wyse adds that consultations have not taken place with border communities that could be dramatically affected by the deal. 'In its report, the Conference Board highlighted the potential losses for BC businesses along the border,' said Wyse.

'The Campbell government's 'independent' report showcases the potential benefits of the agreement without a true accounting of the potential costs to BC communities. The Premier must commit to holding public hearings on TILMA, to shine a light on this deal and the impact it will have on British Columbians,' Kwan adds. ✍

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