

AUG 22 2007

August 14, 2007

Ref: 70069

Ms. Penny Tees
President
BC School Trustees Association
4th Floor, 1580 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V6J 5K9

Dear Ms. Tees:

Thank you for your letter of July 18, 2007 in which you ask the Government hold public hearings on, and exempt school districts from, the British Columbia-Alberta Trade, Investment and Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA). As the Minister responsible for TILMA, I am pleased to respond to your concerns.

TILMA is an extension of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT) which was signed by BC in 1994. The AIT includes a number of provisions already apply to school boards similar to those found in TILMA. For example, school boards are subject to a requirement to conduct non-discriminatory procurement and to avoid discriminating in favour of local goods and services.

In response to your request for hearings and legislative debate, TILMA is a continuation of the AIT and the signing of both Agreements did not require any legislative change. Only when introducing new legislation or amending existing legislation is open debate required in the legislature. The first two pieces of TILMA-related legislation have already received a first reading in the BC legislature. The opportunity to debate this legislation openly and democratically will take place upon subsequent readings.

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TILMA requires consultations and negotiations to extend coverage to the broader public sector, including school boards, by April 1, 2009. During the two-year transitional period, existing measures of school boards are not covered by TILMA. Officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Finance have a meeting scheduled for September 28, 2007 to consult on procurement issues with the British Columbia School Districts Secretary-Treasurers' Association. In the meantime, Ministry of Economic Development officials would be happy to respond directly to any questions or concerns you might have about the application of TILMA to school boards. If you would like to schedule a direct consultation regarding the TILMA, please contact Guy Gensey at by telephone at 250-952-0453 or by email at guy.gensey@gov.bc.ca.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address your concerns about the TILMA.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Hansen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Colin Hansen
Minister

cc: Honourable Shirley Bond
Minister of Education and Deputy Premier

British Columbia School Trustees Association

British Columbia School Districts Secretary-Treasurers' Association