

## Comments to Hamilton GIC on TPP

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today about The Hamilton and District Labour Council represents over 40,000 unionized workers in our city, but what our Council is bringing concerns forward about today affects ALL workers in the city and all Hamiltonians.

Let's be very clear from the start. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, as most trade deals, is not about free trade. We've bandied the concept of "free trade" around since NAFTA. NAFTA wasn't a free trade agreement and neither is the TPP.

If it were a free trade agreement, the text of the agreement would be simple: We agree to remove all tariffs and duties on goods and services between our countries. Instead the TPP includes over 5500 pages on exactly how this "free trade" is supposed to be achieved. It seeks to dress free trade under the guise of an investor-controlled filtering system. In plainest terms, the biggest companies will enjoy bigger profits as a result of tariff-free mobility of goods.

But we, in Hamilton, have seen the other end of so-called free trade. We have seen our manufacturing sector dry up since NAFTA. We have seen tens of thousands of jobs, that supported entire Hamilton families, lost to United States and Mexico. We are still seeing the impact of NAFTA in U.S. Steel's shirking of their responsibilities towards the retirees of USW 1005 with cuts to pensions and benefits.

Let's not, for one minute, live under a myth that businesses create jobs, therefore we should funnel all our money to multi-national corporations whose prime directive is increasing profits to meet their fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders. The economic demand of citizens creates jobs. People with money to spend creates jobs. The economic engine of our society assumes families have to spend money. For that to happen, they have to have jobs that allow them such privilege.

We have economists who have told us that a living wage is required to not be

part of the working poor. Such a wage will not be paid by a company who can off-shore thousands of jobs to treaty partners who pay a tenth of the wages to their citizens.

Let's not try to hold up the conscience flag to these corporations however. Their deeds are not those of an ethical dilemma, but rather a legal obligation to maximize profits.

Trade agreements are the pyramid scheme of international finance. The bigger the company you are, the more you will be able to leverage the agreements for profit.

Income inequality has skyrocketed since NAFTA. Manufacturing jobs have disappeared. Precarious work has become the norm for families looking for income security. Canadian jobs and Hamilton jobs are at risk due to the TPP's labour mobility clauses because, as McMaster University's Economics Professor Arthur Sweetman expressed in 2015, *"It's clear this will allow a larger number of people into the country and allow them to work in Canada without any real control."* And further, that *"In the past, similar reciprocal agreements have generally led to more people coming to Canada than going abroad."*

Indeed to call Canada a "partner" in the agreement is a complete misnomer. The past Harper government gave up huge concessions on agricultural supply management and intellectual property right just to be allowed to sit at the table. Upon sitting down we realized we had no right to amend or even fully participate in the discussions; we simply had to sign and hope for the best.

Trust in trade deals shouldn't come to Hamiltonians lightly. Our history begs for us to be responsible stewards for the people of this city. While this Council may not have a direct ability to cast a vote in Ottawa about the future of the TPP, being one of the 10 biggest cities in our country ought to hold weight with our Members of Parliament. Please help to send a message to the Trudeau government that the Trans-Pacific Partnership does not work for Hamiltonians, nor does it work for Hamilton.