

Danger in Trans Pacific Partnership

"The TPP comes to Yellowknife" (Oct. 21) is a well-researched article that brings to light the many views on trade agreements and levels of understanding of their impacts.

Creating awareness of these impacts was a reason the Council of Canadians NWT Chapter invited Brenda Sayers from Hupacasath First Nation to come to Yellowknife.



GUEST Comment

Lois Little is co-chair of the Council of Canadians NWT chapter.

As the *Yellowknifer* article said, Sayers led a court challenge to one of these agreements, the Canada-China Foreign Investor Promotion and Protection Agreement (China FIPA), for its power to nullify indigenous rights. Invalidating indigenous rights is a common feature of these international trade agreements whether it be the China FIPA,

the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), or the Canada-European Trade Agreement (CETA).

The *Yellowknifer* article highlights the blind trust that some have in the federal government to do the right thing for Canada. The Council of Canadians believes that the TPP, CETA, and other free trade – a.k.a.

corporate rights – agreements are not good for Canada. We share the view of the UN's Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order, that these agreements violate international laws and the sovereignty of democratic states.

As an example, the TPP allows no new environment standards. If any public or indigenous government passes a new law related to water protection or climate change, and a corporation from one of the 12 TPP countries believes that new law cuts into their profits, Canada will be slapped with a compensation suit. A secret corporate tribunal completely separate from our domestic courts will rule on that suit. Similarly, because the TPP has no carve-out provisions to protect health regulations, any legislative efforts to improve our health system to respond to for example, an aging population, could also make Canada vulnerable to a compensation suit.

As the *Yellowknifer* article rightly points out, Canada is already the most sued country under NAFTA, having paid out about \$200 million with the possibly of \$300 million more in pending compensation suits. The money paid out to corporations comes out of the public coffers.

Environmental and health-system impacts are only two concerns in the 6,000-page TPP agreement.



NNSL file photo

About 30 people turned out to hear Brenda Sayers speak about the Trans Pacific Partnership on Oct. 12. She says people need to get much more involved to make their voices heard.

Other impacts include: job losses and lower wages; higher prescription drug costs; inability of any government to favour local/regional suppliers (e.g., no more "buy local" campaigns); constraints on food, plant and seed safety regulations and local food systems; less protection of sensitive information such as financial and health data; longer copyright terms and higher education costs; and requiring Crown corporations such as the CBC and Canada Post to operate solely for profit or face a compensation suit.

All of these impacts will be felt in the NWT.

It's hard to believe our government could trade away its democratic powers. Perhaps that's why Canadians are so blindly trusting that these agreements are the right thing. The rights and freedoms we all have can easily be removed or limited by agreements that put corporate rights above ours and our governments. Wallonia, a tiny region in Belgium where corporate power is not absolute power – understands this and has refused CETA.