

## Member Update April 12, 2007

As of April 12, 2007 the results of support rallies and meetings with bureaucrats, MPs and MPPs from all parties is truly disappointing. No money or exit program in the Federal Budget. No money or exit program in the Ontario Provincial Budget.

A meeting was held in Ottawa with Minister Diane Finley, Minister Chuck Strahl and the executive of the Ontario Tobacco Board. Minister Strahl reports that he knows that there is a problem and does not have the authority to proceed to date with a levy with a solution. He stated he needs more time and more ministers' support. Minister Diane Finley says she is working hard for the farmers and our communities on this file. Minister Leona Dombrowsky states that the Ontario Provincial Government supports a levy on tobacco products and is waiting for the Federal government to lead. TAC met on Thursday April 5 to discuss the situation facing the industry with an all industry TAC meeting.

Will there be an exit program? What will be the 2007 crop scenario put forward? Will the Quota moratorium continue forward for 2007? How long will the financial institutions keep waiting for answers on a buyout? What will the fee be to sell tobacco under the present quota system if the crop is from 32 to 38 Million pounds? How can there be a crop agreement without a buyout program this spring? Will the companies put money into a direct contract system to switch to direct contracting? Will there be a future for growers to continue if the quota system is changed?

All questions with few answers to date to make informed decisions.

Our local Mayors are trying to hold a forum to address the exit program. We sincerely hope that they will be successful. To date, no one appears willing to have this forum. We continue to ask that the Key decision makers such as Tobacco Company Presidents, Federal and Provincial Cabinet Ministers, the OFCTGMB and TFIC to meet to decide what the direction will be for the future.

What to do?

Apparently, we are expected to lower our price for an exit program for the privilege of growing a smaller and smaller crop for less and less. The Tobacco companies are indicating that direct contracting will make no significant difference for the future. The Ontario Tobacco Board was told to go to Ottawa with a lower price to meet Minister Strahl in the expectation of the meeting being a negotiation meeting. Negotiations did not even happen.

Is it time for the Ontario Tobacco Board to admit that a continuation of the present situation of a gradual exit is not feasible? Is it time for the Ontario Tobacco Board to admit that quota remaining over a defined time period is unworkable? Is it finally time to ask for the immediate end and exit payment for the quota system? If the companies no longer want to support the Canadian grower, just how much time is left with the present system?

If so, then its time to get what the US and Australia growers received. It is time to get \$3.30 or \$4.18 over 10 years, for the total exit of the quota system instead of an undervalued TAAP 2, TAAP3, etc, etc. Why are Canadian farmers worth less? If both levels of government don't care about the farmers and our communities' tobacco problems, why should the companies?

Why is economic loss not part of our solution when we are facing the end of tobacco growing and the destruction of our equity through taxation and health policies?

**In Caledonia 2 investors got paid millions for loss of their investments by the Province of Ontario.**

In law cases such as **Texada Mines** and **Manitoba Fisheries** redress was given when a business was destroyed by government actions.

When can Canadian tobacco farmers expect Canada and their governments to live up to the WHO Framework Convention Tobacco Treaty's article 17 and 22?

We must have a buyout program for the remaining tobacco producers, sharegrowers and TAAP participants immediately.

How can farmers and our communities make informed and responsible decisions for our future until the Federal and Provincial governments live up to their responsibilities and give a definitive answer to our request for an immediate total buyout?

Yours sincerely,

Brian Edwards