

TFIC MEMBER UPDATE

Jan. 25, 2007

Meetings are being held with federal and provincial MPs and MPPs to defend \$3.30 lump sum payment for the exit of tobacco farmers from a legal profession in Canada. TFIC and the tobacco board held a joint Board of Directors meeting on Mon Jan 22/07 to discuss strategies and timing of future grower demonstrations. Should we be going to Ottawa or Toronto with buses? When is the best time to do so?

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis has engaged former federal cabinet minister Joe Fontana who represented London for 16 years in the federal government to help get the message through to the decision makers. Mr. Fontana is going to be working behind the scenes getting our message to the key bureaucrats and members of all parties of the need of an exit program.

Tillsonburg Mayor Stephen Molnar hosted a meeting of affected municipalities on Jan 17, 2007. A memorandum of the need for an exit for tobacco farmers and aid for the municipalities was drafted with the various municipalities going back to councils for endorsements. Minister Diane Finley attended the meeting but had no news to report about timeline or decision announcement for our tobacco problem. Her speech focused on the reasons we have a problem getting attention. Her reasons were: all sectors of agriculture are in trouble; the stigma of helping "tobacco"; this is just a local issue with about 8 MPs affected; and the need for the province to participate in a program. Minister Finley indicated that a number of proposals are being considered: the TFIC Blueprint, the Tobacco Board's proposal, her own proposal, the companies' proposal and the bureaucrats themselves have a proposal. Tom Shenstone has indicated that the federal government is finally engaged with the province and other ministries on the tobacco program. No time frame has been indicated for a decision.

For those farmers that have already voiced their concerns, keep calling your MP and MPP to make sure they get the message that answers are needed now on their support on the \$3.30 lump sum payment and timing of an exit program. We are asking our governments to provide an exit program that is equal to the already precedent setting values established by the US and Australia buyout programs. We will not lower our expectation of being treated fairly and equally. Canadian farmers are not worth less than those in the US or Australia!!

For those of you that have yet to take personal action, the time is now.

Phone, fax, email and speak to your representatives about where they stand on the \$3.30 value of an exit for tobacco farmers. Remember, they were elected to represent the needs of your riding to government.