

**Tobacco Farmers In Crisis**  
**Member Update September 2007**

Dear members,

Lobby efforts have been used over the past 3 years to educate and bring the crisis facing the tobacco farmer and our community to both our federal and provincial elected representatives. To date, the results and observations are as follows:

1. The Ontario government position as stated by Minister of Agriculture Leona Dombrowsky is that the Ontario Tobacco Board is in negotiations with the federal government with the cost of such a program being borne by a levy on the product. There is no indication from the Federal government that they support a direct levy to pay for an exit program.
2. Minister Diane Finley continues to tell us that she is working hard on this issue and more time is needed.
3. The financial institutions have for the most part given both levels of government an opportunity to address the need for a program. The question is obvious; just how much longer will they wait before farmers will be given notices to pay up or face the consequences? Lenders are required to act within a certain period of time to maintain their security position.
4. The quota moratorium demanded by Minister Finley has been in effect since May 2006. This moratorium was put in place to allow time for a program to be implemented. How much longer will it be before the moratorium is challenged by financial institutions and farmers who must pay up on their debts?
5. We are facing a provincial election on October 10. What is the position of the candidates and their parties on a tobacco exit program?
6. We have a minority Federal government that is constantly facing the threat of a call for election by the opposition.
7. The tobacco companies indicated that a fundamental change must happen here in both the price they pay and the way they buy tobacco or they will no longer be interested in Ontario leaf.
8. The latest news is that JTI has decided to close its facilities in Tillsonburg.

TFIC has met with all parties to express the need for an exit proposal. We have met bureaucrats, cabinet level policy advisors and advisors within the PMO on your behalf. We can assure you that every MP, MPP, senior Cabinet Minister, all Premiers and the Prime Minister are all well aware of the tobacco farmers' issues.

To date no plan has been announced, no time line has been announced, no strategy has been put forward by either level of government. The Simcoe paper quotes John Tory, PC party leader, as saying that tobacco will be a priority for his government if he is elected as Premier.

We are disappointed that Minister Diane Finley has not been able to champion a fair and equitable exit program for tobacco farmers in spite having an all party agreement that an exit strategy is required. As we all remember, action on the tobacco file was her number one priority when she asked for our vote in the last federal election. We fully expect Minister Finley to honour her campaign statements within the mandate given her.

The provincial election period is an important time for you and your family to get concrete answers from the candidates and their party leaders as to where their position is on the exit program for tobacco and when they would act should their party form the next government.

TFIC has lobbied for 3 years in a respectful and sincere manner. Educating the public, journalists, bureaucrats, MPP's, and MP's was critically important and has been done. Results to date in the form of a time line or announcement of any significance are disappointing. A decision needs to be made by TFIC members to either stay the course or look at alternative actions that may be required to help achieve our goal of a fair and equitable exit program.

Many tell us that there is no visible sign of a crisis outside the walls of the family home. Crop agreements keep being signed to maintain a growing scenario for the few who still want to grow. Nothing threatens the status quo position of the incumbent government seats in the upcoming elections.

We would like to express our deepest thanks to Mark Bannister and John Kanters for their time and commitment to TFIC over the past 3 years. Mark and John have asked to step down as Directors of TFIC and we wish them well in their future endeavors. The initial term of Directors of TFIC was for 3 years, making this next annual meeting an important one for choosing new Directors for a 1 year term

**Unless something changes, we do not believe that anything will be delivered for those of you who do not want to grow tobacco any longer.**

Sincerely yours

The Board of Directors of TFIC