

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis



UPDATE

Issue No.3 · January 2006

A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



Brian Edwards, TFIC President

As one year ends and the next begins, we find ourselves looking back at what we have achieved - while considering how best to build upon our experience. With any lobbying campaign, at any level of government and on any issue, it takes time to achieve success. Establishing your credibility; effectively identifying and communicating your concerns; developing rational, reasonable solutions which the public and politicians can accept and champion is an ongoing process.

TFIC's approach to date has proven measurably successful but our work is far from over. We are committed to ensuring that tobacco farmers remain well represented, well informed and well heard.

We recognize that a sense of urgency accompanies the New Year and that many tobacco farmers are increasingly feeling the stress of a difficult past, a challenging present and an uncertain future.

We have seen a stressful and disappointing auction for growers to date that does not relate back to the increased energy, labour, irrigation and related growing costs and this weighs heavily on everyone's shoulders.

The Tobacco board has now presented a framework for a fair and equitable exit program for producers, sharegrowers and including TAAP program growers for a potential top-up. This is very similar in principle to the TFIC Blueprint for Action that has been given to all MPs, Ontario MPPs, every Premier and key Cabinet Minister in all provinces, Health Canada, public health associations and anti tobacco groups.

TFIC has ongoing discussions with public health groups including: Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada, Non-Smokers Rights Assoc., Canadian Council for Tobacco Control, Canadian Lung Assoc., Canadian Dental Assoc. and Canadian Cancer Society about our program in an effort to obtain support of all stakeholders for a tobacco supply exit program.

In July TFIC met with Imperial Tobacco Canada representatives and discussed their \$400 Million US style buyout of quotas with several restrictions by governments such as a freeze on tax increases and full participation by all companies as caveats. This \$400 Million dollars equates to about \$1.47 per lb BPQ compared to TFIC's \$4.18, The Board's \$3.30 and Physicians for a Smoke Free Canada \$3.00 proposals.

The Chairman of the Ontario Tobacco Board has asked TFIC to support their Principles for a full exit program that were outlined in their recent letter to all growers.

TFIC welcomes the recognition of the need of a full, fair and equitable exit program.

TFIC is committed to attaining \$4.18 per LB for every tobacco grower since 2002 as stated in our Blueprint for Action. We still feel \$4.18 is justifiable over a 10 year timeframe.

We need to continue to press the Government of Canada to live up to their obligations to tobacco farmers under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

The Federal Minister of Agriculture and Ontario Minister of Agriculture have given their commitment for discussions to take place for a buyout program and TFIC will continue to press for this to take place.

We have been asked by the Chairman of OFCTGMB to continue working with health groups to press forward the message that their help is needed right now for farmers.

As a Canadian Association of Tobacco Growers, we welcome tobacco growers from Quebec, the Quebec Marketing Board and continue to receive new members from Ontario. We continue to lobby for a just settlement for all growers who have exited since 2002, including those who were exited under the TAAP reverse auction price of \$1.05 for quota plus provincial monies just 7 months ago. The Tobacco Board stated at the mass meeting that before crop negotiations can start, growers need to know what the comprehensive exit plan will be. **Unless growers know the details of the program, how can the price and size of a 2006 crop be determined?**

And finally, let us never forget the sacrifices made by those before us, nor be deterred by those who would destroy everything our families have spent generations honestly building.

Sincerely,

Brian Edwards, President

OUR ACTIVITIES

Government Affairs

As a direct result of our planned activities and scheduled mail-out campaigns, TFIC was able to secure continued access to the decision makers at both the federal and provincial levels of government. Since our last update to our members (September 2005), TFIC has met with the following politicians and bureaucrats:

September 15, 2005 – Meeting with Howard Hampton (Ontario NDP MPP and Leader of the NDP)

September 15, 2005 – Meeting with Shelley Martel (Ontario NDP MPP and Health and Long-Term Care Critic)

September 16, 2005 – Meeting with John Wehrstein, Assistant to Diane Finley (Federal Conservative MP / Agriculture Critic)

September 19, 2005 – Meeting with Lloyd St-Amand (Federal Liberal MP)

September 20, 2005 – Meeting with John Cruickshank, FarmGate 5

September 21, 2005 – Meeting with Dave Mackenzie (Federal Conservative MP)

September 23, 2005 – Meeting with Chris Philips, Senior Advisor to the Hon. Tony Valerie (Federal Liberal MP and Government House Leader)

October 3, 2005 – Meeting with Diane Finley (Federal Conservative MP / Agriculture Critic)

October 5, 2005 – Meeting with Brad Duguid (Ontario Liberal MPP)

October 7, 2005 – Meeting with Rose-Marie Ur (Federal Liberal MP)

October 18, 2005 – meeting with Brian Wilfert (Federal Liberal MP)

October 18, 2005 – Meeting with Mervin C. Tweed (Federal Conservative MP, Western Economic Diversification Critic)

October 18, 2005 – Meeting with Ed Komarnicky (Federal Conservative MP)

October 18, 2005 – Meeting with Réal Ménard (Federal Bloc Québécois MP and Health Critic)

October 19, 2005 – Meeting with:

- Joe Preston (Federal Conservative MP)
- Christine Bakke, Legislative Assistant to Diane Finley (Federal Conservative MP)
- John Nieuwenhuis, Executive Assistant to Diane Finley (Federal Conservative MP)
- Emma Welford, Assistant to Ted Menzies (Federal Conservative MP)

October 19, 2005 – Meeting with George Young (Chief of Staff to the Hon. Tony Ianno, Federal Liberal MP and Minister of State for Families and Caregivers)

October 20, 2005 – Meeting with Pierre Paquette (Federal Bloc Québécois MP) and Québec Tobacco Board

October 21, 2005 – Meeting with the Hon. Steve Peters (Ontario Minister of Labour / former Minister of Agriculture)

November 3, 2005 – Meeting with:

- Suzie Miller (Acting Deputy Minister, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada)
- Shane Campbell (Senior Policy Advisor Agriculture and Agri-food Canada)
- Tom Shenstone (Executive Director, Policy Coordination and Cabinet Affairs - Agriculture and Agri-food Canada)

November 8, 2005 – Meeting with Toby Barrett (Ontario Conservative MPP)

November 15, 2005 – Meeting with Toby Barrett (Ontario Conservative MPP)

November 16, 2005 – Meeting with John Yakabuski (Ontario Conservative MPP) and Mary-Frances Dulny (Executive Assistant)

November 16, 2005 – Meeting with Alan Sakach (Director of the Ontario PC Research & Services)

November 23, 2005 – Meeting with Québec Tobacco Board

November 24, 2005 – Meeting with Mark Eyking (Federal Liberal MP and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of International Trade)

December 7, 2005 – Meeting with Garry Proven (President, National Farmers Union)

December 8, 2005 – Meeting with Diane Finley (Federal Conservative MP / Agriculture Critic).

January 9, 2006 – Meeting with Elizabeth Witmer (Ontario Progressive Conservative Party-Deputy Leader, Official Opposition, Health Critic)

January 10, 2006 – Meeting with Jim Brownell (Ontario Liberal Party-Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health)

January 11, 2006 – Meeting with Shelley Martel (Ontario New Democratic Party-Critic, Health and Long-Term Care)

Our government affairs activities have focused on securing a “Forum for Discussion” among both provincial and federal governments; across all relevant departments (e.g. Agriculture, Health, Finance, and Revenue) – to include the meaningful participation of actual tobacco farmers and other legitimate stakeholders to this public forum.

In February, Canadian officials and health groups will participate in initial discussions resulting from the ratification of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. TFIC will press to ensure that the international commitments expressed in this treaty reflect our government's domestic commitment to tobacco growers for a forum for discussions.

We will continue in this approach to ensure that Government Tobacco Control Policy recognizes that a full and comprehensive exit program is needed for farmers

Media Affairs



Mark Bannister, TFIC Vice-Chair

Maintaining our organization's presence in the media remains an integral part of our approach. The plight of the Canadian tobacco farm family must be reiterated and voiced at every turn, to ensure that the general public and the decision makers across Canada recognize the legitimacy and urgency of the economic crisis before us.

Since our last update, the following media-related activities have been undertaken:

- Sept 16 Canadian Press(Brian)
- Sept18 CBC Radio Vancouver Sterling Faux show(Brian & Mark)
- Sept 19 Kitchener Radio(Mark)
- Sept 21 Marion Gruner & Bill Barrett-International Documentary on Tobacco farming with taped segments from Brazil, Africa, China, India, Us and Canada
- Oct 21 Simcoe Reformer(Brian)
- Oct 21 Kitchener Radio(Mark)
- London Free Press(Mark)
- Oct 24 CBC Radio Ottawa(Mark)
- Oct 26 Havard Gould CBC Venture interview of Brian and TFIC Board Meeting

- Oct 26 Tillsonburg News (Brian)
- Delhi News Record(Brian)
- Oct 28 Tillsonburg News(Brian)
- Simcoe Reformer(Mark)
- Oct 31 Tillsonburg News(Mark)
- Dec 2 Simcoe Reformer(Peter)
- Dec 5 Tillsonburg News(Peter)
- Dec 13 Simcoe Reformer(Brian)
- Dec 14 Tillsonburg News(Brian)
- Simcoe Reformer(Brian)
- Dec 15 Delhi News Record(Brian)

In keeping with the latest emerging issues, TFIC will be aggressively pursuing media opportunities at the provincial, national and international levels.

Securing media interest will be key in how tobacco farmers in Canada will ultimately be treated by government

EMERGING ISSUES & ACTIVITIES

Hank Chromczak, TFIC Chair



Throughout this past year, a number of new and significantly relevant issues have emerged.

Most notably:

- Since last August, TFIC has also had on-going discussions with stakeholders within the health community. **We have been told by politicians that the support of the health community will prove an important element to government buy-in.**
- In October, TFIC ensured that its proposal and newsletters were translated into French – in keeping with our new Québec members and in response to Francophone MPs who had since expressed an interest in working with us.
- As a Canadian entity, and in support of our government / media lobbying activities throughout the country – all key TFIC

documents and its website are now accessible in both official languages.

- In October, Imperial Tobacco announced their move to Mexico and the subsequent closing of plants in Guelph and Aylmer.
- In December, TFIC completed a report of key articles on foreign tobacco production issues. This document was prepared in support of our proposal, our lobbying activities and requests received for additional information from key stakeholders within government. We will continue to actively promote this resource within media and government venues.
- Throughout January and February, we will continue our lobbying activities with health organizations and the anti tobacco groups so that no opportunities are lost, that we remain front and centre on the political landscape and that our voice...*your voice*, continues to be heard in government – loud and clear.
- In December, Imperial Tobacco Canada also publicly presented their thoughts on an exit strategy for tobacco growers.
- In December, the OFCTGMB presented a framework for a fair and equitable exit program for tobacco farmers to all growers. The Marketing Board's proposal is similar in principle to our Blueprint for Action.
- **Throughout the past year TFIC has lobbied all Federal MPs and Ont MPPs, every Premier and key Cabinet Minister in every other province, anti smoking groups and Health organizations to gain support for a comprehensive exit program that recognizes the needs of farmers and fulfils Canada's Tobacco Control Agenda and commitments under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.**

- **TFIC, The OFCTGMB, Federal and Provincial Governments and health organizations need to work together to achieve a full comprehensive exit program.**

MEMBERSHIP & SUPPORT



We are pleased to announce that, since our last update to members, many more tobacco farmers from Ontario and Québec have since officially joined TFIC **sending a very clear message to all governments as to what farmers want.**

For those TFIC members who will have since paid their membership in full – thank you. For those who have yet to finalize their contribution – please remember that your financial commitment is key to TFIC's ultimate success.

Regarding those tobacco farmers who have yet to join – we would ask for your help in communicating to them the importance of TFIC's activities and its mandate.

TFIC DIRECTORS

TFIC is a non-profit farm organization working for the fair and equitable treatment of tobacco farmers being forced out of a legal profession and livelihood in Canada.

All enquiries can be forwarded to:

T.F.I.C.

P.O. Box 99, Simcoe, Ontario N3Y 4K8

Tel: (519) 426-3701

Fax: (519) 426-8053

Our website: www.tobaccofarmersincrisis.org