

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis

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UPDATE

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



The last few months have been challenging to say the least. While our membership development activities have been successful, we remain committed to working towards getting all tobacco producers on side. In the end, a strong show of confidence sends a clear message to governments, the media and the general public as to what farmers expect. As importantly, it makes it clear to our politicians as to who is speaking on behalf of tobacco farm families. In a brief encounter with Minister Steve Peters at Queen's Park last week, he was quick to suggest that the Board and TFIC should be working together. We indicated to him our attempts at establishing such a working relationship. Minister Peters further suggested a need to lobby all Canadian governments on this issue of a viable exit strategy, which TFIC was quick to inform him that we had already begun our lobbying campaign aimed at every member of federal Parliament, every member of Ontario's legislature and every Premier and key ministers in every other province throughout our country (Agriculture, Health, Finance, Solicitor General). As things stand, TFIC is the only organization with a viable action plan and proposal for governments, which addresses both the current economic crisis faced by tobacco farmers and the health concerns of governments and the national health community. More than this, TFIC is out there actively engaging all levels of government on these issues and the need for swift remedial action.

Recognizing that tobacco farmers would best be served if our marketing board would come on side, we will continue trying to secure their involvement in our activities. That being said, the mandate we have since received from our membership demands that we stay the course as to our planned and aggressive lobbying efforts. It's imperative that tobacco farmers unite on the issue of a more comprehensive and equitable exit strategy and that we no longer remain complacent with political promises or satisfied with riding in the back seat. Enough already

with the professional lobbyists, the decision-makers and the anti-tobacco groups telling us what's fair....and what's in our best interest.

TFIC's proposal effectively puts tobacco producers in the driver's seat – and that's where we must stay. Our proposal recognizes the issues before governments and the health community in Canada - and addresses these proactively. TFIC's proposal, developed by farmers for farmers, builds on Canada's tobacco control agenda in securing a U.S. level exit strategy for Canadian producers.

As we continue our lobbying activities, we would ask that you consider encouraging those who have yet to sign up...to do so now. We would also ask that you consider contacting your Director on the Marketing Board and asking them to make a motion that TFIC's proposal be supported. We already have something on the table that works and which is supported by an aggressive action plan. Let's not waste any more money re-inventing the wheel.

OUR ACTIVITIES

Government Affairs

In mid-April, we were finally able to follow through on the first phase of our (lobbying) educational campaign. More than 450 letters were sent to every member of federal parliament, every member of the Ontario legislature and every Premier and key minister in every other province throughout Canada. This four-page letter, introduced TFIC, its membership and its mandate – while identifying both the economic crisis before us and what needs to be done to address this matter. Our letter further explained the wider public health and social ramifications in support of protecting our domestic



market place until such a time as when a comprehensive, equitable and orderly exit strategy could be developed and delivered. Our initial mail-out has so far resulted in several meetings scheduled for the coming weeks. A second mail-out is planned for May 18th, to include the subsequent distribution of government kits. It's important to remember that much of the work that is needed to support tobacco farmers and secure their rights to fair compensation has largely never been done. This makes our challenge all the more difficult. Still, we plan to persevere and effectively set the stage for our proposal to succeed. This means not only getting meetings with decision-makers, but also educating them as to what the problem is and what can be done to solve it. TFIC continually stresses to the media and government official that the group brings more to the table than simply a problem for governments. TFIC also commits itself to bringing to the table viable alternatives or solutions to this problem and the necessary inter-departmental and inter-governmental support for its proposal.

In April, TFIC also met with a senior official of the Tobacco Control Programme at Health Canada, with the objective of bringing the federal department to the table as both a supporter and promoter of our proposed exit strategy. Bringing health departments throughout Canada on side will be a crucial component to our success. Further to this very important aspect of our planned activities, a specific mail-out to all Health Ministers and key health department officials throughout our country will take place in the coming week.

TFIC was also the first group to make a presentation before the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, reviewing Bill 164 (Smoke-Free Ontario Act). Our April 21,2005 presentation was a tremendous success and was followed by a more formal written submission to the Committee the following week.

Additional government meetings which TFIC has since or will soon undertake:

- Dec. 13,14,15, 2004 – Queen's Park (Toby Barrett and others)

- Jan. 5, 2005 – Meeting with Diane Finley (MP – Ag. Critic)
- Jan. 14, 2005 – Meeting with Lloyd St-Amand (MP Brant)
- Feb 22,2005-Meeting with Ernie Hardeman MP, Dave Levac MPP and Ted McMeekin MPP in T.O.
- March 10, 2005 - meeting with Ian Faris and Suzie Miller, staff of federal Minister of Agriculture with OFCTGMB in Ottawa
- March 17, 2005- meeting with OFVGMB in Guelph
- April 7, 2005 -Meeting with Quebec tobacco growers and their Board of Directors
- April 9,2005- Informal meeting with Minister Ken Dryden Minister of Social Development at Hagersville
- April 15, 2005 – meeting with Wayne Easter Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in Ottawa
- April 15, 2005 – Meeting with Dr. Murray Kaiserman, Tobacco Control Programme, Health Canada. In Ottawa
- April 21, 2005- Presentation to Bill 164 hearings in Toronto at legislature to Parliamentary Committee
- April 25, 2005, meeting with Diane Finley, federal AG Critic.
- April 27, 2005- Informal meeting with Minister of Agriculture Steve Peters in T.O.
- May 3, 2005- Meeting in T.O. with MPP Laurie Scott
- May 11,2005- Meeting in Ottawa with MP Brian Masse(NDP critic Industry ,Trade and Commerce), MP Merv Tweed(Cons. critic Western Economic Diversification) , Liberal Brant MP Lloyd St Amand and Brian Klunder of Health Canada.
- May 12, 2005- Meeting in Ottawa with Roger Shier of FCC, MP Diane Finley regarding ACC deadline for tobacco.

Other meetings TFIC undertook since its inception include:

- Feb. 4, 2005 – Meeting with former U.S. Commission member
- December 21, 2004 – Meeting with Québec tobacco board

- Jan. 5 & Feb. 3, 2005 – Meeting with OFCTGMB
- Feb. 3, 2005 - Meeting with Cdn. Fed. of Ind. Business
- Feb 23,2005 – Meeting with OFCTGMB
- April 27, 2005- Press conference in Toronto by TFIC re Tobacco Control and outsourcing of tobacco by domestic companies
- April 27 and 28, 2005- contacted by Neil Collishaw of Physicians For A Smoke Free Canada and held informal discussions about their proposal and our proposal for Tobacco growers buyout at US level compensation.
- May 5, 2005- Meeting with Art McGahee and Jim Pickard of FCC

Media Affairs



Maintaining a presence in the media is an important part of our work. As you know, tobacco has a very bad reputation within the mainstream media and this has undermined our community's ability over

the years of getting support and consideration for our situation. This is why our action plan in support of our proposal targets sustainable media activities.

Our media activities to date include:

- February 2005 - Article on the plight of tobacco farmers and TFIC in the Tobacco Reporter. Published in the U.S., this magazine is distributed in over 150 countries worldwide and read by Canadian government officials working on tobacco.
- April 2005 - Exclusive interview with TFIC in Tobacco Journal International. Published in Germany, this magazine is distributed worldwide and also by Canadian government officials working on tobacco.
- February 4, 2005 – press Release re: Prescott rally.
- March 2 and 9, 2005 – Press Releases re: Queen's Park rally.
- April 21, 2005 – Press release re: TFIC's presentation on Bill 164.
- April 21, 22, 23, 24 and 25th – Canadian Press article, further to TFIC's presentation on Bill 164, appeared prominently in several

newspapers and media outlets throughout Canada (TFIC's presentation made the front page of the Simcoe Reformer). The nationwide press was very positive.

- May 2,2005- Interview with David Hawkins of Studio 2, TV Ontario
- May 6, 2005 - Press Release on TFIC and its activities/proposal (supporting health issues)

EMERGING ISSUES

The Federal Reverse auction results of \$1.05 plus the Provincial top up to about \$1.7199 will allow 150 farm families to exit tobacco growing this spring. We have been told that 700 bids were submitted by farm families for this under funded program. We did not advise our members to bid because we felt that this was a very private and heart wrenching decision for those who had to decide what to bid. We are pleased that the 85 cent minimum was broken for those who are in financial situations where the money is desperately needed. **Where would have the reverse auction clearing price ended up if the program had been fully funded?** We have said all along that we as farmers were not satisfied with the treatment or program that was implemented. With 700 bids the message is clear that a long-term exit strategy is needed in tobacco. We have that program and will continue to aggressively lobby to get reasonable and equitable compensation. When a program is implemented then those who have just left along with those sharegrowers who received nothing need to be brought up to that US level compensation.

The possibility of a federal election may provide both challenges and opportunities for our organization. We will continue to monitor the political environment and fine-tune our strategy accordingly to ensure that we maximize every opportunity to promote and secure our rights.

MEMBERSHIP

TFIC currently represents the vast majority of tobacco producers. That being said, there are still some who seem quite satisfied with sitting on the sidelines and letting others pay their way. If you know of farmers who

have yet to involve themselves on this issue, please take the time to educate them as to what TFIC is all about. Again, our ability to bring to the table **all tobacco producers** will disarm those decision-makers currently quite satisfied with the dissension within our own ranks. Let's not give anyone reason to dismiss our legitimacy as a group and our strength as an effective voice in government.

THANK YOU

As we move forward with our efforts to secure equitable compensation for tobacco farmers, we are pleased to find many outstanding individuals who have since not hesitated in supporting us during our time of need. That tobacco is so negatively received within the media, the public and governments, makes their support all that more relevant and deserving of recognition:

- Toby Barrett MPP and his assistants Rob Willett and Bobbi Ann Dwornikiewicz
- Diane Finley MP and assistants John Wehrstein and John Nieuwenhuis
- Lloyd St Amand MP
- Dave Levac MPP
- David Greene CFIB
- All our members for their words of encouragement and financial support

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.

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