

Tobacco Farmers in Crisis

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UPDATE

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT



Mark Bannister, Vice-Chair & Brian Edwards, President of TFIC lobby in Ottawa, July 2005.

It is with great enthusiasm that I follow-up our first newsletter to members (May 2005) with very encouraging updates. Following our mass meeting in June, we have had several important meetings and continued correspondence with members of Federal Parliament, the Ontario Legislature, key ministers in other Canadian provinces, departmental officials, the national health community and the media.

Mark, Hank, Luc and I have left no stone unturned in TFIC's aggressive pursuit of fair and equitable treatment for all Canadian tobacco farm families, past and present, who have been hard-hit by the economic crisis before us. Know that your commitment to Tobacco Farmers in Crisis has not been in vain and your voice is finally being heard at all levels of government – loud and clear. To those who support us behind the scenes and/or on the sidelines, thank you for your trust and encouragement.

TFIC recognized early on that for our message to have credibility and influence, our group would need to first develop the forum for meaningful discussion. Secondly, any government meetings we would

secure would need to be done so on matters of *substance*, not *access*. In this sense, what we *had to say* needed to be as important as *who we were*. Finally, we needed to be able to do more than just shed some light on our problem. We needed to offer up a viable solution to governments and an unwavering commitment to providing all of the necessary resources and support required by our elected officials. All of our work and efforts would lead to our "Blueprint for Action". This document, outlining our organizational background and mandate, the problem at hand and the solution before us has since been forwarded to every Federal member of Parliament, every member of the Ontario Legislature, every key minister in every other Canadian province, the national health community and key media outlets throughout Canada. The Blueprint for Action was developed with all necessary stakeholders to the file - in mind. It is a blank enough canvas from which all Canadian governments, health groups and the private sector can work from and build upon. Through this very important mechanism, meaningful consultation and public accountability, can finally occur. For TFIC, this has always been about getting the tobacco farming community an actual seat at the policy-making table, and more precisely helping to effectively guide – not lament - public policies on tobacco.

Our activities to date, to say the least, have proven quite rewarding. We are getting the meetings we need and are hearing back from government officials that we are doing all of the right things. TFIC is being well received in government, our credibility is now firmly established and recognized, and our proposal is finding interest among the broadest base of stakeholders. Further to this positive feedback, TFIC is committed to "staying the course" and not relenting at any time or in any manner.

In the end, this is about giving governments, the general public and the media something they can truly champion and rally behind on behalf of all Canadians.

That being said, our fight continues to be an uphill battle. We still have a lot of work to do and many more people to meet. As things progress, TFIC will also be called upon to become more vigilant and strategic in its efforts. Speaking on behalf of TFIC, the challenge at hand will be met aggressively, unyieldingly and head-on. Please read the Blueprint for Action that is included in the mail out package.

Sincerely,

Brian Edwards, President

OUR ACTIVITIES

Government Affairs

Over the summer, TFIC has continued to lobby government officials at the federal and provincial levels. Fine-tuning our message along the way, our lobby team was kept very busy in both Ottawa and Toronto. The culmination of these meetings led to our Blueprint for Action – a document which has since been placed on every politician’s desk in Canada.



From left to right: Curtis Botscheller, Brian Edwards, Mark Bannister and Hank Chromczak – Lobbying in Toronto, July 2005.

Government officials have since confirmed to TFIC that (1) we are covering all of the bases and (2) that our proposal is palatable to politicians.

Government officials are responding positively to our message by:

- Committing themselves to initiating follow-up contacts with colleagues;
- Helping to secure a non-partisan working group on this matter;
- Proactively engaging other departments on these issues; and
- Continuing to work with Canadian tobacco farm families through TFIC.

TFIC meetings and other related activities over the summer have included:

June 8, 2005 – Meeting with Will Adams, Policy Advisor to the Federal Minister of Finance, the Hon. Ralph Goodale.

June 16, 2005 – TFIC Mass meeting in Delhi (speakers included Toby Barrett and John Wehrstein from Diane Finley’s Office).

June 19, 2005 – 3rd mail-out to federal MPs.

June 20, 2005 – Meeting with Larry Bagnell, Liberal MP for Yukon; Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; and Member of the Queen’s Privy Council.

June 20, 2005 – Meeting with Pierre Paquette, Bloc Québécois MP for Joliette. His constituents include Québec tobacco producers who recently exited the industry.

June 22, 2005 – Letter to all Canadian Health Ministers – requesting their position on the social and health related issues raised by TFIC.

July 6, 2005 – Meeting in Toronto with MPP Jim Brownell, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-term Care, the Hon. George Smitherman.

July 19, 2005 – Meeting in Toronto with Sean Mullin, Advisor to the Ontario Minister of Finance, the Hon. Greg Sorbara.

July 19, 2005 – Meeting in Toronto with Karli Farrow, Director of Policy and Research to the Ontario Premier, the Hon. Dalton McGuinty.

July 22, 2005 – Meeting with Lloyd St-Amand, Liberal MP for Brant.

July 26, 2005 – Meeting with Joe Preston, MP Elgin-Middlesex-London

July 27, 2005 – Meeting with Robert Robitaille Division Head, Supply Chain of Imperial Tobacco.

July 28, 2005 – Meeting with Tyler Flemming, Advisor to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Hon. Leona Dombrowsky. The Ministry has since been added to the Cabinet's Priorities and Planning Committee.

July 29, 2005 – Access to information requests filed with the federal government to identify upcoming policy direction and TFIC influence within government.

August 4, 2005 – Meeting with PEI Premier Pat Binns and Minister of Agriculture Kevin McAdam, Minister of Health Chester Gillian and Minister of Finance Mitch Murphy.

August 4, 2005 – Meeting with the Hon. Wayne Easter, Liberal MP for Malpeque (PEI) and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

August 10, 2005 - Meeting with MPP Donna Cansfield, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Energy, the Hon. Dwight Duncan.

August 15, 2005 - Meeting with Larry Phillips of Simcoe Leaf.

August 20, 2005 – Finalized TFIC's Blueprint for Action. TFIC's general outline of the problem before us and the win-win solution at hand provides for a framework from which all stakeholders can contribute.

August 23, 2005 – Meeting with national health groups in Ottawa to educate them on the issues and explore common ground.

August 24, 2005 – 4th mail-out to all federal MPs, all members of the Ontario Legislature and all key ministers in every other province. This mail-out contained TFIC's Blueprint for Action.

August 26, 2005 – Meeting with Dave Levac, Liberal MPP for Brant and Chief Government Whip.

August 30, 2005 – Meeting with Carol Mitchell, Liberal MPP for Huron–Bruce; Parliamentary Assistant to the Ontario Minister of Agriculture and Food and Member of the Standing Committee on Finance and economic Affairs.

August 31, 2005 – Meeting with Earl Provost, Parliamentary Affairs Director for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Hon. Joseph Volpe.

September 1, 2005 – meeting with Ontario Flue – Cured Tobacco Growers' Marketing Board official.

Media Affairs

Luc Martial



Media affairs continues to be a crucial element to TFIC's agenda. Proactively working with both the print and electronic media throughout Canada, is essential to garnering the public support politicians will eventually need to move forward. As importantly, TFIC's media activities are tactically positioning Canadian tobacco farm families as the principal source of information on their own industry. TFIC is becoming well known among journalists in Canada – allowing Canadian tobacco producers to finally have a sustainable and guiding voice in the media.

Media activities over the summer included:

May 31, 2005 – Issued a TFIC Press release (on the eve of World No Tobacco Day).

June 24, 2005 – Issued a TFIC Press release (on the heels of the 4th National Conference on Tobacco or Health (Ottawa)).

July 6, 2005 – Meeting with Tara Brautigam, Canadian Press.

September 1, 2005 – Follow-up with Canadian Press.

September 2, 2005 – Letters to key print and electronic media outlets throughout Canada, requesting editorial board meetings.

EMERGING ISSUES

Hank Chromczak, Chair



While the threat of a Federal election still looms, TFIC remains confident that its lobbying efforts and strategy will survive any potential change in guard. Ours has always been and will always be a message that transcends all political partisanship. This is about a Canadian problem in need of a Canadian solution, pure and simple.

Included in the mail out package is a mailbox sign so you can show all the politicians that **we all** call for a **Fair and Equitable Tobacco Control Policy** - that includes a compensation package for tobacco farmers who chose to exit.

TFIC will continue to work towards securing the Tobacco Marketing Board's support, knowing full well that this is preferred but not mandatory to our agenda

Our membership continues to grow with new memberships from Ontario and Québec tobacco farmers.

MEMBERSHIP & SUPPORT

Membership and private/public sector support remains an integral component to our activities. Our ability to bring to the table the broadest-base of

stakeholders is key to the farming community's success at the political level

In terms of public sector support, TFIC has been maintaining an open dialogue with members of the national health community and other para-public groups. We believe that there is enough common ground to leverage eventual support for our agenda.

In terms of private sector support, TFIC is currently preparing for a broader mail-out campaign throughout the local community. We will report on these activities in our next newsletter to members.

THANK YOU



We would like to take this opportunity to thank Curtis Botscheller for all of his hard work over the summer at our head office in Simcoe. Curtis manned the front lines for us, managing the day to day correspondence, developing our website, supporting our membership activities and monitoring the media in support of our agenda. On co-op status from the University of Windsor, where he returns this fall, Curtis hopefully benefited from his work and those Ontario government meetings he did attend with our lobby team in June. Thank you Curtis for everything and know that we all wish you much success in your future academic endeavours.

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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