

TFIC

UPDATE TO MEMBERS SUMMER 2006

Lobby efforts continue with MPs of all parties, with a just completed mail out outlining the need for a buyout for growers who wish to exit. Meetings are being held with Provincial MPPs to continue to press for Ontario government participation in the process. At the OFCTGMB annual meeting, it was announced that the Federal and Provincial Government officials-Tom Shenstone (Federal Government) and Don Taylor (TAC) would be meeting the Tobacco Companies and Government bureaucrats to get their positions. Their report was to be given on August 2, 2006. The Federal Government representative did not attend this meeting that had been scheduled for a month. The next scheduled meeting is for Aug 28 or thereabouts. Unfortunately, this is the same time period as many key bureaucrats' summer vacation, as we have learned. I wonder who will be at this next scheduled meeting?

The time line given to growers last spring has evaporated like so many promises of the past. The next date given for growers expectations for action is Sept 30. Cabinet Minister Diane Finley asked for a moratorium on quota sales. To date, no deadline date has been set for delivery of a buyout program. When will the tobacco growers' stress and fears be addressed? The only thing that is certain is the daily decrease in equity as interest payments on debt keep adding up day after day.

Illegal cigarette sales, imports of cheap foreign tobacco to make even cheaper cigarettes for sale continue to go on and on. Where are the Tobacco Control people now? Where is the outrage? Where are the voices that destroyed the domestic marketplace for Canadian producers? Where are the voices decrying cheap smokes for sale, with cheap tobacco from another country, with who knows what was used to grow it? Why isn't the Government of Canada living up to the WHO Framework Convention Tobacco Control Treaty's promises to tobacco farmers? It is awfully quiet on the Tobacco Control front, isn't it? Where are they now?

Somewhere between 20 to 30 % of cigarettes are now being consumed outside of the legal marketplace. That is a short fall of up to \$2 Billion dollars of uncollected taxes. But nary a word from the Governments Federally or Provincially. We hear that Excise Canada is threatening to visit farmers and their farms to conduct audits. Why should the low man on the totem pole get the police treatment? Those who sell cigarettes outside the tax realm collect millions of dollars illegally. There are no Millions at the farm gate. Sorry, once again the wrong target!

At best, the bureaucrats are not very receptive to tobacco farmers' request for a fair exit program. It seems that the protected environment of government and a sure fire pension at the end, leaves our situation far from the spotlight. The rural Agricultural Vote, including our tobacco ridings, was integral in the election of the Conservative Government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper. When will the Conservative Government act on the tobacco farmer's crisis and live up to the election promises that were made?

(OVER)

In letters to TFIC, Minister Diane Finley and Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl have indicated that the Minister of Agriculture will participate in “**an industry led forum**” to discuss an exit strategy. Health Minister Tony Clement stated on Aug 22, 2006 that he regards tobacco manufacturers as merchants of death. How can tobacco growers be grouped with manufacturers as industry? How can we leave our fate in industry hands after the treatment of growers and the broken promises since 2002? Where is the responsibility of Governments who have used social engineering through taxation to destroy our livelihoods?

When will tobacco be on the short list? When can farmers expect results? When will the moratorium on quota sales get results? How can farmers participate in the upcoming 2006 tobacco market not knowing what the future is for them? The companies said this was an interim contract only. Will farmers be forced to accept whatever price is offered for their tobacco? When will we get answers to these important questions?

Please contact your MP and MPP and ask for answers to these questions.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper	613-992-4211	
Hon. Chuck Strahl	613-759-1059	
Hon. Tony Clement	613-992-4524	
Hon. Jim Flaherty	613-996-7861	
Hon. Diane Finley	613-996-4974	519-429-3400
Dave MacKenzie	613-995-4432	519-421-7161
Joe Preston	613-990-7769	519-637-2255
Bev Shipley	613-947-4581	519-245-6561
Dave Van Kesteren	613-992-2612	519-358-7555
Lloyd St. Amand	613-992-3118	519-754-4300
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	416-325-1941	
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky	416-326-3074	
Hon. Steve Peters	416-326-7600	519-631-0666
Hon. George Smitherman	416-327-4300	
Hon. Jim Watson	416-326-8500	
Ernie Hardeman	416-325-1239	519-537-5222
Toby Barrett	416-325-8404	519-428-0446
Dave Levac	416-325-6261	519-759-0361
Maria Van Bommel	416-326-3064	519-245-8696
Pat Hoy	416-325-9099	519-351-0510

EVERYONE NEEDS TO PHONE THESE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.