



## Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board

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### **Notice of Annual Meetings**

The annual meetings of tender fruit growers will be held on March 29, 30 and 31, 2010. Notice attached.

### **Strategic Plan for Tree Fruit Industry Released**

The Strategic Plan for the Ontario Tree Fruit Industry has now been released. This project, funded by the Governments of Canada and Ontario, is part of the overall \$24 Million Orchards & Vineyards Transition Program. The project lead was Vineland Research & Innovation Centre (VRIC).

The purpose of the plan was to provide direction to the Ontario tree fruit industry (tender fruit, fresh grapes and apples). Some of the recommendations are targeted at the production side while others are targeted at the packing and marketing sides of the industry.

Tender fruit growers and marketers are invited to participate in the launch of the Strategic Plan which will take place in conjunction with the Niagara annual meeting. There will be opportunities for grower feedback which will be used to develop an action plan to implement the strategy.

Time:            3:00 p.m. – Presentation of the Strategic Plan  
                     5:30 p.m. – Dinner – Confirm attendance with Sylvana  
                     6:30 p.m. – Registration for the Annual Meeting  
                     7:00 p.m. – Annual Meeting  
Date:            Wednesday, March 31, 2010  
Place:            Hernder Estates Winery, St. Catharines.

### **Minimum Wage Set to Increase – March 31, 2010**

The McGuinty government has announced that the minimum wage in Ontario will increase to \$10.25 per hour effective March 31, 2010. This is the seventh increase since 2004 and is part of the **“Breaking the Cycle - Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy”** which they say will reduce the numbers of children living in poverty by 25% over 5 years – lifting 90,000 kids out of poverty – by boosting benefits for low-income families and enhance publicly-funded education. What they don’t say is how growers can pass on this increase to consumers or how they can expect to compete with producers outside of Ontario. Ontario is now the highest wage cost jurisdiction in Canada – well above B.C. where the minimum wage is \$2.25 below that of Ontario. This is blatantly a social program put onto the backs of producers with absolutely no offsets.

## **Agri-Flexibility Proposal Rejected**

Some months ago, the Board presented a proposal to the Agri-Flexibility Program to represent tender fruit producers in an industry application for infrastructure improvements. When the Agri-Flex Program was announced, this was the way we were advised to proceed. They have changed their minds and further they have changed the funding mechanism. Here's what we have heard:

1. Growers are advised to apply directly to the Agri-Flex Program (not through their boards).
2. For profit companies (including cooperatives) can not apply for grant funding but can apply for repayable interest free loans. Projects could be up to \$500,000 funded 50/50 (loan \$250,000). Growers would have up to 8 years to repay with no payment expected in the first year.
3. To be eligible, the applicant must demonstrate how the project provides benefits to the sector not just to the individual grower. This will be the key hurdle.
4. Marketing Boards may apply for a grant of up to \$100,000 (50% funding) for a project that provides benefits to their sector.
5. Marketing Boards can provide letters of support for grower applications and explain how grower projects respond to the OVTP Strategic Plan.
6. More information is available on their website [.agr.gc.ca/](http://agr.gc.ca/) .

## **Niagara Crop Report (Code-a-Phone) – Grower Survey**

The Board and the NPFVGA have for several years sponsored the Niagara Crop Report issued by KCMS (Kevin Ker). The NPFVGA has decided not to participate in 2010 and have suggested a cost recovery from those growers who use the service. The total projected cost for 2010 is \$10,600. In 2008, there were about 5,000 calls from growers. Based on this, we estimate that each grower would be assessed between \$100 and \$200 per year. If you wish to continue with this service, you are asked to call in by March 26, 2010 to Sylvana or Morag and indicate your interest. The Board's decision will be based on the level of response. If the level of interest is sufficient, the Board will continue the service and invoice you for your share of the cost and issue you an access number.

## **Food Safety & Traceability Initiative – No Longer Accepting Applications**

We have been advised that the FSTI Program, which started to accept applications on March was already oversubscribed by the end of the day. They are no longer accepting applications for this round but invite growers who missed out to reapply next year.

## **Export Development Strategic Plan Underway**

The tender fruit industry is included in the development of a Strategic Export Development Project, coordinated by the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) with funding provided through the Agri-Marketing Program. The project includes representatives from the tender fruit, fresh grape and apple industries across Canada. The goal is to determine the commodities, the players and the target markets and develop strategies as to how to proceed. With the increased production of fresh peaches as a result of the closing of the CanGro fruit canning plant and expanded production of Coronation grapes, Ontario must develop alternate markets or risk added pressure on our domestic markets. The project is expected to be finalized this spring.

## **ProGibb Now Registered for Sweet and Sour Cherries (Wayne Roberts)**

ProGibb® 40SG – A plant growth regulator manufactured by Valent, Canada has now been registered for sweet and sour cherries. This registration has been a long time coming. ProGibb is an easier to use formulation of gibberellic acid. It has superior dissolution and dispersal properties compared with the older tablet formulations. ProGibb will assist growers in managing and extending their harvest

schedule. ProGibb 40SG delays fruit ripening as much as four to five days to help lengthen the harvest window. It is proven to increase fruit size, firmness and resistance to post harvest disorders.

In sour cherries, ProGibb maintains and extends sour cherry fruiting capacity by promoting spur formation and reducing the occurrence of blind nodes. This application will help in the management of cherry yellow virus on sour cherries.

ProGibb will be available for the 2010 growing season for both sweet and sour cherry growers. For more details refer to the product label.

Yours truly,



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Manager



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New Project Coordinator