

Ontario Regional Office  
RR #2, Godfrey,  
Ontario K0H 1T0  
Tel (613) 273-5545  
Fax (613) 273-6290  
[nfuo@rideau.net](mailto:nfuo@rideau.net)  
[www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca)



**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**An open letter to the Honourable Leona Dombrowsky, Ontario Minister of  
Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs**

**The NFU in Ontario is opposed to any increase in Farm Business Registration  
(FBR) fees**

September 2, 2009

Dear Minister Dombrowsky:

The National Farmers Union in Ontario does not support the drive to increase the fees farmers pay under the Farm Business Registration (FBR) program. We have consistently said that while we would not stand in the way of other organizations' internal decisions to increase fees, the NFU has no mandate to support a fee increase at this time. Because the NFU sees the drive for a fee increase as an internal matter for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO), we have refrained from making any public statements critical of their desires. We have consistently delivered our position to OMAFRA, OFA and CFFO.

OFA President, Ms. Bette Jean Crews, has penned an open letter to you in which she implies the NFU is supporting their drive to increase farmers' cost of joining a general farm organization by some 30 per cent. This inference is incorrect, and violates an understanding the NFU had in not participating publicly in this debate. We cannot allow our views to be publicly misrepresented.

Ms. Crews states that the OFA has been "working with our counterparts in the CFFO and NFUO on a needed change to our Farm Business Registration Fee." This statement leaves the impression that the NFU is in support of the OFA drive. Nothing could be further from the truth. As was outlined to you in a letter from our Ontario Coordinator of 20 May, 2009, no resolution came from the floor of our spring convention supporting a fee increase as would be our normal policy creation route. The following motions were passed at that meeting regarding FBR fees:

*"that the National Farmers Union lobby the Ontario government to charge the administration fee for the FBR program directly to farmers seeking an FBR # in addition to the fee directed to the GFOs so as to be more in line with the original intent of the legislation. The fee paid by farmers would then be \$150 plus Agricorp's processing fee plus taxes."*

And further that:

*“the National Farmers Union request of the government that the processing charge that Agricorp charges farmers be open, justified and based solely on the cost of administering the FBR program on an annual basis with clear reasoning provided to farmers with their FBR form.”*

Many farmers are not aware that all three GFOs must pay a fee of \$8.90 to Agricorp, which reduces the amount farm organizations receive from the \$150 fee mandated in the act. This fee takes approximately \$400,000+ from Ontario’s general farm organizations. The NFU feels that the reduction of the \$150 amount prescribed in legislation by this Agricorp fee violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the Act. The NFU also believes that greater transparency is important for farmers to understand exactly what their fee goes towards. It is our understanding that Agricorp and the OFA have objected to this greater transparency.

Also of concern to the NFU is our understanding that the new HST will increase the upfront costs to farmers of the FBR program by requiring them to pay an extra 8% when the HST is implemented. With the proposed OFA fee increase and the HST, increase farmers could be paying at least 38% more at time of registration. With such a public mischaracterization of our position, the NFU can no longer treat this matter as an internal issue for individual GFOs. Our message to farmers is -- market signals are sending a message to GFOs about what farmers want in terms of a farm organization representing them on the provincial level. It simply is not right to expect all farmers to pay for the loss of membership one organization is experiencing. If farmers want to stop a 30 % fee increase, the best way to do so is to join the NFU.

Finally, Minister, the NFU does recognize that some changes may need to take place to the fee setting mechanism so that the process is open and transparent. The NFU continues to believe that the best approach to this issue is to set up an independent body that would examine the justification for any fee increases and where farmers or groups of farmers could come and express their views on a fee increase.

Sincerely,

Ontario Regional Council

National Farmers Union

*(Media may contact the Ontario NFU Coordinator at 1-866-953-4041 for comments)*