



HMGGA News

The newsletter of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association - Volume 7 - May 2010

Board objectives for the upcoming year . . .

This issue will deal with what we, as an association, would like to see completed by the end of 2010. At the same time, we would like to work with the Bradford and District Co-op on what your priorities, as farmers, are for the upcoming season. This will be conducted by both a questionnaire and the decision to hold quarterly meetings for interested farmers beginning in June. There is much to do, and we want your opinion, your suggestions, your input, and your support to continue to act as your voice.

But as way of an explanation, it is felt that our farmers need to understand why there seems to be so much effort put forward for tow-motor courses, first-aid courses, updates on water-taking permits, and a slew of other items. The simple reason: over the next five to seven years, there will be a number of ministries visiting the Holland Marsh and area due to the reconstruction project now beginning in June. What that means for you – added personal driving throughout the marsh for one reason but possibly getting “distracted” along the way, and your farm could very well be the distraction. There is a vast amount of legislation (we are working with other stakeholders over the next few months to begin a review of it, by the way), but in the meantime, the association is trying to prevent problems from arising with these various ministry personal as they “visit” the Holland Marsh and area on other duties. There are no assurances, no guarantees, that they won't stop which is why we are working as diligently as possible to get all of our ducks lined up. The differing legislation allows for, of course, differing guidelines as to what each ministry staff member is allowed to do but other areas of the province have seen a crackdown on what would be normally considered best management practices in farming.

We do not like it any more than you folks do – but, we will try to keep you all out of harm's way.

- That being said, another tow-motor course is planned for May. It is full and scheduled for May 20th at Holland Acres Farms (Doug Van Luyk's farm). We wanted to get a second course in April – but were unable to do so because of the exceptionally nice weather we've enjoyed and the early start to the season. We are planning to add another course in May, near the end, and at this time, it is tentatively scheduled for May 27th (after the May 24 weekend). If you would like to get involved in this course, contact Jamie Reaume (905-251-6786/jreaume@rogers.com). As well, if you wanted to get on a waiting list for the May 20th course (just in case of a drop-out), contact Jamie. Again, the tow-motor course is there for you – and we are again attempting to get the costs down even further if possible. We will let you know.
- We are again planning first-aid courses and would like to know if June is an appropriate time for our farmers. We will await your input on this decision but we can hold possibly two in June and July to cover off employees as well. Again, we will let you know once we get more responses from you, the farmers.



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- Water-taking documents, for those not able to attend the courses are available at Gro-Pak (Alex Makarenko's shop) for pick-up – the documents, contact info, and the required letter. Thanks to all of those who were able to attend the sessions we held over the winter. This is an important component in getting the single permit from the ministry for the entire Holland Marsh and area and will mean that farmers will avoid the scrutiny of ministry staff this year – and for years to come. As well, we continue to work on getting its length (72 pages) reduced for farmers. We'll let you know how things go.
- We have undertaken meetings (and will continue to do so) with federal MPs and their staff, bringing attention to the deficits faced in our chemical marketplace, particularly for telone (a Canadian competitiveness disadvantage at this point and narrowing the pricing gap for our product versus competitors; in fact, working with Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario (FVGO) on research and chemical issues. In addition, the association is working on an energy program that could be hugely beneficial to farmers, should our efforts prove fruitful.
- Clean-up program for the marsh has been written and submitted to the Lake Simcoe Clean-up fund; also in discussions with several others organizations. Discussions surrounding the idea of parts of the marsh becoming an agri-tourism destination and seeking funding for those farmers wanting to do so – but again, this is all preliminary but did arise from input at our AGM and from board discussions. We are responding as we should – and we'll see how our proposals are considered.
- Participating in a 10-year strategic plan on improving farming and food within the golden horseshoe and Holland Marsh – which is garnering support because it is about providing solutions and mandates in time for the upcoming provincial election. If you would like to see the HMGGA position for the provincial government and its upcoming municipal document, contact Jamie (same contact info). A federal document is in the works and will be available by the end of the month. The municipal document is an education piece about the importance of the Holland Marsh – and area, and involves five municipalities, one Region, one County, two conservation authorities (and their respective boards) and will be used to help make the importance of the farming community more known.
- Finally (thank heavens), the HMGGA has been involved in distributing on-farm food safety program booklets because this is the direction that the retailers, packers, consumers, and government are heading – and the area might as well get out in front of this rather than play catch up. We have put in a request for a special training/information day be held in the area for our farmers by the Ontario government so that we can qualify for the next round of food safety funding, but are still awaiting word. We will keep you abreast of this as it proceeds over the summer. Booklets, for all the crops grown in the marsh, can also be found at Alex Makarenko's shop (on Canal Road).

A Thank You to King Township . . .

for working with the Holland Marsh Growers' Association to keep the Miller Sideroad facility open over the late winter to allow for farmers to get rid of waste from their farms. The co-operative nature was greatly appreciated particularly in light of the difficult season that was 2009.

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One More Party . . .

As many of you are now aware, the HMGA participated in a television show called The Fresh Life. There was a pre-show cast party at Avia Eek's in March – and now, comes word that another party, with more of the crew and the television personalities, will be held on Tuesday, May 11.

Time: 6 p.m.

Where: St. Lawrence Market (Front and Jarvis Street)
Second Floor – The Market Kitchen

What: Wine, cheese, treats from the show, live music
Prize give-aways and a screening of a new
Episode of The Fresh Life

Please RSVP to kaveshoman@yahoo.com by May 6

Certainly, we encourage anyone who participated in the show or who is interested in future plans or just wants to have a little free fun to attend.

The Fresh Life, by the way, appears on SunTV on Sundays at 1:30 p.m.

One More Party – Part II . . .

By now, many are likely aware that the federal Liberal leader, Michael Ignatieff, announced his party's rural/farming strategy in the Holland Marsh. (Proof below)



This brought a significant amount of attention to the area and the HMGA would like to thank Doug Van Luyk for being able to host the event on Monday, April 26. Garnering attention on the editorial page of the Globe and Mail is a bonus – because it brings farmers to the attention of many, providing ideas to resolve challenges and issues. Our thanks go out as well to all in attendance for making the event, in the opinion of many, a big success. Regardless of the colour – the message is getting out there about the importance of this area, and that is another way the association is working for you.

Marketing opportunities . . .

This information is being passed on as a courtesy of what other groups would like and need from the farmers of the Holland Marsh.

These local food organizations are on the prowl for local farmers with local food – and would like to develop a contact list for use throughout the season and beyond.

The 100-Mile Market
John Stolp 1-877-741-0895

The 100km Foods Inc.
Paul Sawtell/Grace Mandarano
1-416-203-2164

As more of these folks, including institutions and hospitals and school boards continue sourcing food from the Holland Marsh and area, we will pass on as much information as possible to you, our farmers.

Did We Miss Something . . .

Then by all means, let us know. Go to our website at www.hollandmarshgold.com, find a board member you know – and give them a call. Or contact Jamie at 905-251-6786 and let him know what you need the association to do for you.



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Workplace Safety – head's up . . .

The safety of young and new workers will be the focus of a four-month enforcement blitz across Ontario beginning in May 2010.

Health and safety inspectors at the Ministry of Labour will check to ensure young and new workers:

- Are properly oriented, trained and supervised on jobs.
- Meet minimum age requirements.
- Are protected by safety measures to prevent injuries.

Particular attention will be focused on workplaces where many young and new workers are employed, including stores, wholesalers, restaurants and vehicle sales.

The blitz is part of the Ontario government's *Safe At Work Ontario* strategy. Keeping more workers safe means increased productivity for Ontario's economy and less strain on the health care system.

This is for your information. The same “head's up” came from the Drainage Board as well, as a reminder that there are many ministries visiting because of the canal reconstruction project.

Finally (t.g.) . . .

The HMGA wants your feedback on this suggestion: would you like to see an auction held for the Holland Marsh and Area within the next couple of months (prior to June) for equipment, farm items, etc.?

We need to know whether or not there is interest before proceeding. Again, it is just a suggestion – and we want your feedback. Please contact a board member or Jamie and let them know if this would be something you'd like to see.