

COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TAX ON HORSE FARMS

Update Jan. 27, 2004

We met with the Ministry of Finance office Wednesday Jan 26th. In attendance were the Assistant Deputy Minister and the Director, Property Tax Policy Branch, along with Marcia Barrett and Al Patterson from OEF, Jim and myself (Leslie).

It was a very productive meeting. They were extremely appreciative of the information and they said they received a very good understanding of the issues for horse farms and affected parties. They will be meeting with the Minister of Finance, MPAC and others. They said they will be getting back to us in 2 weeks. This is extremely fast for government. We are cautiously optimistic!

It is important for everyone to stay united on this issue. I am hearing that people are very scared and some may want to organize a formal protest or worse. Please be concerned but do not panic. Please stay professional, informed, ask others to check the OEF website www.horse.on.ca for updates, help others take part in the letter writing campaign, contact MPP's, and media if you want and suggest they can also contact us or ARE/OEF and then wait. I know this is very difficult. Please be patient. We are very hopeful.

We are getting cooperation from all government offices – they need time to process this. They are actually moving very fast! They are even calling the committee back together to discuss the, 'Definition of a Farm', and we are asked to participate. We also discussed issues with ROMA (Rural Ontario Municipal Association) and asked for their support. This is all good!

Call ARE, OEF or myself if you have been reassessed. If you are reassessed, it can take months before you get the assessment notice and then months before you get a tax bill. If re-assessed, you have time to go through the appeal process – pay attention to deadlines. It is worth it. We saved \$1000's. Taxes are still high but much better. You probably will have significant changes, depending on how accurate the original assessment was and your particular operation. Most have lots of room to negotiate. We can give you tips on this. If you owe increased tax due to this issue, talk to your municipality – they are usually very understanding – explain what is going on with the Committee that is addressing the commercial classification with horse farms.

If you have been getting nowhere in the appeal discussions with your local MPAC office, call MPAC in Pickering or us.

The media has been picking this up all over the province. This is great. This is how horse people and others are finding out about this! Please contact your local papers. You could pass them the 1 page summary or press release from the OEF web site.

Finance said they have lots of letters! Many from little girls! Keep them coming in! The letters are definitely making a difference!

See www.horse.on.ca for updates and the letter writing campaign. There is a detailed summary on the OEF site also that could be very helpful for anyone needing all the details. Call us if you have more questions.