



31/10/2011

To all Ontario Beekeepers:

Changes to the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program

The Thunder Bay Beekeepers Association at their September 13th meeting passed a unanimous motion objecting to recent changes to the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program which was implemented on July 1, 2011.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has recently narrowed the eligibility for claiming damages from a bear or other specified animal attack on honeybee colonies.

The changes are as follows:

- The beekeeper must have a valid Farm Business Registration Number (FRN).
- To qualify for a FRN the beekeeper must have a minimum of \$7,000 in annual farm sales.

At a stroke of the pen, the 90% of Ontario beekeepers who are hobbyists are eliminated from consideration.

The Thunder Bay Beekeeper membership believes this is an ill-considered decision which ignores the key role of honey bee pollination. There are more than eighty local beekeepers in Thunder Bay, yet only a handful operates as a registered farm. Bees fly an average of four kilometres to collect pollen/ nectar, which means all crops in their flight path potentially benefit whether the bees are flying from a hobbyist's apiary or a registered farm's apiary.

Here in the North, bear sightings and signs around apiaries are very common occurrences. A failed electric fence can wipe out a small apiary in a matter of minutes, resulting in a huge financial loss to a beekeeper.

We are asking for all Ontario beekeepers and their Associations to support equal eligibility from the Wildlife Damage Compensation Program for all registered beekeepers. Your Association can send a letter of support to the Thunder Bay Beekeepers Association copying the Minister of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. You can also access -Comments to the minister on the OMAFRA website and request all beekeepers be included in this program.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours Sincerely,

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