

Canadian Farmers With Disabilities (CFWDR)

Business Plan and Budget

April 1, 2005 - March 31, 2008

The Organization and its Mission

“To organize, educate, and encourage people in every province to promote farm safety and support families affected by severe accidents.”

The Canadian Farmers With Disabilities Registry (CFWDR) has been in place as an organization since 1997, and previous to this there were many individual provincial bodies actively assisting disabled farmers. The main mission for this group is to cultivate support and encourage independence for farmers with disabling injuries. The Registry has adopted the Canadian Code for Volunteer Involvement and in 2002 has qualified for registration as a charitable organization with the Government of Canada.

Approximately 200 disabled farmers are now members of the organization.

The Canadian Farmers with Disabilities organization depends on a group of volunteer farmers with disabilities to provide practical information, including peer counseling, to other injured farmers, advice on adaptations of machinery to accommodate the disability, advocacy and liaison with governments and other agencies, as well as promotion of farm safety. This is a monumental task for a small band of volunteers.

The major agricultural companies do not offer many modifications that allow access to their equipment by farmers with disabilities, therefore, the redesign and development of equipment to meet these special needs continues to be a major component of this organizations future work.

Services are provided to all Canadian farmers, and are carried out through provincial organizations where feasible. At present there is not a provincial organization in British Columbia or the Territories, however, farmers in these areas are serviced by the national organization to the best of our ability.

Volunteers - the pillars of our Registry

The volunteer efforts of farmers who have already suffered crippling disabilities is amazing in light of the fact that it takes many of these people so much extra effort simply to move from one location to another. Their efforts deserve to be supplemented by programs which will enable them to provide more concrete and direct assistance to those farmers who are in need of modifications in order to be able to continue to earn a living from their chosen profession - farming.

A “buddy” system will be utilized by the organization to ensure that volunteers do not feel that they are struggling on their own. This system is envisaged as providing the support and rapport that individuals require in order to do the best job possible in providing a service to the public.

Our Vision

“Every family in all rural communities is farm-accident free and provides ongoing compassion and support to anyone affected by an accident.”

The Farmers with Disabilities network has identified the following individuals and/or groups as needing guidance from this organization:

1) **The Disabled Farmer and Family** - Family groups are often in need of encouragement to recognize that the injured person can continue to function as a productive member of society; they need help to

source information on modifications or new equipment that may be necessary; and it is a benefit to show how someone who has already been through a harrowing situation has survived and gone on to re-create a meaningful life again.

2) **Health Professionals** - There is a need for the organization to inform doctors, occupational therapists, social workers, etc. of the possibilities which exist so that a severely injured person can be given hope of returning to the farm rather than an outright statement that they will never farm again.

3) **Government** - Information must be presented to Government bodies who can respond to the needs of farm families with funding and programs that can recognize the problems created by farm accidents and respond to meet the needs.

4) **Rural Residents** - Farm safety needs to be promoted to anyone who is visiting or working around farms. Farm safety needs to be promoted in rural schools and at agriculture related events, conferences and the media. Who better to deliver this message than someone who has already encountered a disability and can share experiences and stress the need for accident prevention.

Our vision involves reaching out to people and helping them understand. For this we need to use modern technologies as well as the age old method of individual communication. **Those in charge of developing programs must have input from farmers or there may be the danger that programs will be delivered that are not relevant to the situation.**

Impact on Farm Finances

The new Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) identifies the fact that there are many circumstances that negatively impact on farmers and that help is needed if farmers are to continue to be active contributors to the economy in the long term. This is the basis of the Risk Management and Renewal Pillars in the APF.

It is imperative that the human disasters in risk management in agriculture be recognized and assisted so that these farmers are able to return to become contributors to our industry and economy after recuperation from their accident or illness. This proposed program is envisaged as a basic necessity under any agricultural policy being designed to provide long term stability to the farming industry.

Challenges Faced

It has been a real challenge for existing organizations to ensure that there is a consistent and coordinated program for approaching farmers who have been injured and seeing that they receive as much assistance as possible. The Registry function needs to be expanded in this area and more documentation kept on services and information provided so that determinations can be made as to which programs or areas are most effective and valuable to disabled farmers.

Another challenge faced has been in the area of accessing long term funding for the work of the CFWDR. In the past the CFWDR has existed largely due to support provided by other groups such as the Canadian Agricultural Safety Program (CASP) and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association (CASA) and each year the organization has been faced with submitting a proposal on an annual basis and competing for limited funding. The CFWDR has developed to the point where it should be recognized as an organization with a mission that is worthy of existing on its own merits.

Disabled farmers need more than awareness of the causes of accidents and how to be safe on the farm. They have taken the next step into a more defined role. Disabled farmers have a continuing need for research and rehabilitation programs to ensure that the loss of productivity is minimized and that disabled farmers can get back to farming in a reasonable time period. The Canadian Farmers with Disabilities Registry is emerging in its role as a national coordinator and facilitator of programs for disabled farmers and their families. There is a need to develop a strategy and action plan that would help the members across Canada through their networks to move forward as they have in the

United States and elsewhere in managing risk of loss of productivity.

Current Canadian Situation

Many urban dwellers imagine farming and rural life as tranquil and idyllic, but, the modern day version is very different. Smaller family farm operations have come under increasing financial pressures during the past decade. World financial conditions greatly influence the farms ability to turn a profit and the uncertainty of markets is reflected in many of the current prices for our farm commodities. In addition weather conditions are another uncertainty that can make or break the farm. With the pressure on to perform when the weather is right and due to the fact that todays farmers must handle many more acres of land, it is no wonder that farming safely does not receive the priority that it should.

Farm life is often described as the perfect, healthy life style with the farmer working in the fresh air and sunshine. But statistics point out a very different story - just look at the following:
Farmers are five times more likely to be killed while working than people in any other industry.
Farming has the highest rate of disabling injuries of all industries in Canada.
Half of all farmers over the age of 20 have lost 50 per cent of their hearing.
Farmers have a 40 per cent higher occurrence of bronchitis.
Farmers experience a high incidence of cancers, such as lymphomas, multiple myeloma, skin cancer, malignant melanoma and cancer of the prostate.
Suicide among farmers is more than twice the national average.

Accidents cause pain and suffering, financial expense and family stress - all things that we can help others avoid if we can find a way to establish a more effective farm safety program.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada currently provides programs to farmers to minimize the risk of loss due to natural disasters and forces of nature such as drought and flood and price fluctuations in the marketplace, but, there are no programs to minimize the losses due to serious injury or fatality. There is a real need for a program that assists farmers to mitigate against further loss to income after a farm accident occurs.

Industry Consensus

The Board of Directors of the Farmers With Disabilities have authorized the development of a program proposal to address the needs of disabled farmers and their families.

Program dollars will enable CFWDR to offer a more specific set of services and will enable the organization to branch out in areas where it has previously been unable to reach because of funding restraints. It is important that sustainability be addressed in the long term best interests of farmers to ensure that needed services will be available if and when an accident occurs. This project is the first step to adding value and building on what the CFWDR has already developed to ensure that disabled farmers become productive again and remain on the farm.

Administration

The CFWDR will form an Advisory Committee which will be responsible for handling the drafting of project outlines for consultants to be employed for various tasks and to oversee the handling and disbursement of funds. Flexibility will be the key to running a successful program across Canada as several factors must be taken into account in distribution of limited program dollars:

- The differences in farm numbers per province
- Some areas do not have a provincial organization in place
- The differences in farm accident numbers per province and the seriousness of the accidents.

The details of the Business Plan Time-Line will be compiled by the Advisory Committee once it is in place. Their schedule will in part be determined by the amount and timing of funding that is made available.

Key Elements

The delivery of the Business Plan for the Canadian Farmers With Disabilities Registry in the 2005/2008 year will include the following elements:

- Work with the Advisory Committee to oversee and direct activities
- Part-time manager to work with the Advisory Committee and handle program details
- Continual update and improvements to the CFWDR web-site
- Preparation and delivery of media promotional packages
- Delivery of counseling training to those working with the disabled
- Provision of expense reimbursement to volunteers providing counseling
- Development of a program to provide financial assistance for modifications to farm equipment used by recently disabled farmers
- Development of promotional materials in two languages
- Sponsorship of a facilitated planning session for future years programs
- Hosting an annual meeting/conference for educational purposes
- Enabling representation at national or international meetings in regard to services for disabled farmers
- Solicitation of major businesses to become partners in the delivery of services
- Applications for funding for various project opportunities, and
- Any other projects or opportunities which might benefit disabled farmers.

Acknowledgement and Promotion

The results of this project will be made known to Canadian farmers by providing information to provincial farm safety associations and by preparing press releases and other promotional material for circulation in farm newspapers, commodity newsletters, etc. The availability of these materials will also be made known to major health centres where disabled farmers could be receiving treatment.

The CFWDR and the NSFA will ensure that credit is given to all major funding organizations and businesses. There will be many opportunities for this promotion: 1) printed brochures and other materials, 2) conference information, 3) web site, and 4) in all promotional reports provided to farm newspapers, commodity newsletters, etc.

Long Term Impact

It is imperative that the human disasters in risk management in agriculture be recognized and assisted so that these farmers are able to return to become contributors to our industry and economy after recuperation from their accident or illness. This proposed program is envisaged as a basic necessity under any agricultural policy which is being designed to provide long term stability to the farming industry.

