

January 13, 2009

A welcome check on marked fuel use

EDMONTON – The Alberta Chambers of Commerce (ACC) is pleased the province has launched a program that will verify only eligible producers tap into the subsidy that provides them with tax-exempt and lower-cost marked fuel.

Our federation of 127 chambers, representing 22,000 Alberta businesses, has for a number of years been asking the government to create a mechanism that ensures only farmers who qualify under specific income criteria receive breaks on the price of fuel.

ACC had been concerned because the eligibility of participants in the Alberta Farm Fuel Benefit Program and the Alberta Farm Fuel Allowance had not been checked for 10 years, and their numbers kept climbing even though our province has seen a reduction in farms.

The lack of scrutiny for the \$100-million-a-year fuel subsidy was an issue for ACC's members because using outdated and invalid registration numbers siphoned off tax dollars.

Because of these longstanding concerns, ACC was pleased when Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development launched the continuous three-year Alberta Farm Fuel Benefit Program Renewal to confirm only active producers who meet eligibility criteria can participate in the program.

The Agricultural Financial Services Corporation, which is administering the renewal program, now requires one-third of farmers to update their registration every year. The annual program began in December 2008.

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