

## New Farmers...A Time-Honoured Profession: Exploring Your New Farm Dream

Ever thought about farming? Don't know where to begin? The Exploring Your New Farm Dream course is being offered in Peterborough, beginning February 2011 by Farms at Work, a regional project whose mission is to keep farmlands active and healthy.

The "Explorer Course", developed by the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI), is aimed at those who are thinking about starting a farm business. It guides participants through an in-depth self-assessment process to identify the specific aptitudes, interests, skills and resources needed to farm successfully.

Ontario farmers are the amazing people who produce food right here in Ontario. They produce beef, lamb, pork, poultry, eggs, fruits and vegetables, flowers, grains, field crops, maple syrup and honey. Farming is an ancient and time-honoured profession that requires a lot of skill. Farmers have to understand crops, soils, livestock, the weather, and they have to understand business. In Canada, many of us have a connection with farming—our parents or grandparents farmed, either here or elsewhere. However within two generations, the number of farmers who grow our food has shrunk to about 2% of the population.

New farmers are a vital human resource in this region, as the average age of farmers in central Ontario is 54 years, one of the highest in the country. Large numbers of farmers will be retiring over the next 15 years, and there are not enough young farmers to replace them. At the same time, a growing number of people of all ages and backgrounds are becoming interested in agriculture – and especially in taking on the challenge of maintaining Ontario's ability to grow its own food.

Participants in the Explorer Course will work with an experienced facilitator, have the opportunity to interview career farmers and connect with new farmers in the region. Farms at Work is looking for about 15 enthusiastic individuals - of any age and background - for this five-session program which is being held on February 12, 19, and March 5, 12, and 19. The cost of the program is \$300/person or \$400/2 people from the same farm. For more information go to <http://www.farmstart.ca/explorer/> or contact Monika Korzun: [monika@farmstart.ca](mailto:monika@farmstart.ca) or call (519) 836-7046 x 110.

Farms at Work is a regional non-profit project of Tides Canada. It is the central Ontario partner in the FarmON Alliance, with funding from the Trillium Foundation Future Fund through FarmStart. •

## Tax Info You Need • By Gwyneth James

The financial media tends to spend most of its time on tax saving strategies for the well-healed and I understand the attraction, but once in a while it is important to remember that not all people are so fortunate. This month's column will address two of the payments available to low income families: the Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

The WITB is a federal refundable tax credit which was introduced in 2007. Unlike the majority of tax credits, the WITB is "refundable" so it results in a payment even if there is no income tax owing. The amount of the payment depends on your income and number of dependents, but to be eligible you must have at least \$3,000 in "working income" – employment or business income or income from scholarships and research grants. The maximum amount you can receive in WITB is \$931/year for a single individual or \$1,690/year for a family (19+ years old with either an eligible dependent or eligible spouse). If you are eligible for the WITB **and** the disability amount, you may also be able to claim a disability supplement of up to \$465 for 2010.

After you file your annual tax return, you can apply to receive advance WITB payments during the next year. These are paid quarterly and provide a more regular cash flow than waiting to receive a lump sum after your taxes are filed. More information on WITB is available from CRA ([www.cra-arc.gc.ca](http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca)).

GIS is available to recipients of Old Age Security who fall under the following income thresholds: \$15,888 for single, widowed or divorced pensioners and \$20,976 for married or common-law partners who both receive OAS. For example, a single pensioner with no income except OAS would receive GIS of \$661.69/month. More information can be obtained from Service Canada ([www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca)).

Once should never plan to be poor, but it is comforting to know that some safety nets are available to us if our life takes an unfortunate turn for the worse.

Gwyneth James MBA CGA is the owner of TCP Accounting & Tax Services which has been providing accounting services for over 20 years to individuals and small businesses throughout Peterborough City and County. (705) 876-6011.




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