



COMMENTARY

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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I Want Education Tax Off My Property

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Quality education is a universal right of every child in this province and a core provincial responsibility. All Manitobans benefit from strong education programs; so all Manitobans should contribute equitably. The increasing burden placed on the backs of property owners – including farmers - is unfair, and needs to change.

In agriculture, the education property tax system has not kept up with the way our farms operate. Instead of a homestead on every quarter-section, today's farms have a much larger land base, and the burden of property taxes is much higher. The assessed value of farmland and production buildings does not necessarily reflect a farmer's ability to pay. For farmers, land is a requirement to do business and they have little control over the prices they receive from the marketplace for the commodities they grow and raise.

Farmers can now apply for a 60% rebate on the education taxes they pay on farmland, but not on production buildings such as livestock barns or storage sheds. Until the rebate was put in place, farmers were paying up to eight times more in education taxes as their non-farming neighbours and shouldering far more than their fair share. Clearly, the rebate program doesn't solve the problem because it could be eliminated at any time by government and creates unnecessary additional cost through administration and promotion. It's also possible that farmers in a difficult financial situation – those that need the rebate most – may not be able to access it because they have to pay the tax bill in full before becoming eligible.

For all of these reasons, farmers want government to remove education taxes from **all** property, including farmland and production buildings. Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) continues to work with a broad coalition that represents over 200,000 Manitobans to push for a complete shift of education taxes off of property. This week, we're launching a new web site at www.letsplayfair.com to get more information out to all Manitobans. The site also has an e-letter for anyone concerned about the current education finance structure to send to the Premier and their MLA to push for change.

The current system still does not reflect a farmer's ability to pay. The reliance on property taxes to fund education has a negative impact on Manitoba. Seniors, young families, business owners, and farmers all struggle to keep education adequately funded

at the expense of their properties and businesses because, in many cases, they are being taxed on debt.

Adequate, fair and equitable funding is needed for a strong education system in this province. It is now time for the Manitoba government to show leadership, find a way to shift education taxes off of property, and put a solid plan in place so that we can all pay fair.

To find out more about education funding and the negative impact that the current system has on all Manitobans, and to send your support for change, visit www.letsplayfair.com.

Public education is everyone's responsibility, so let's all pay by the same rules.