



COMMENTARY

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Letter to the Editor on Education Taxes

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By Ian Wishart, KAP Vice President

Sent to the *Portage Daily Graphic*

Dear Editor:

As a farmer and a parent, I felt that I had to write in response to your recent article about increasing funding for schools by raising taxes on farmers (*Teachers propose raising taxes*, January 11, 2008).

It's true that farmers are receiving an education tax rebate on their farmland. The grand total - about \$40 million across the province - is not actually taken out of the education system but replaced by an increased payment from the Manitoba government. Before we start thinking that it's okay to increase taxes on farmers locally because they're getting a rebate provincially, let's stop and remember why the rebate was put in place.

Before the rebate, farmers were paying about eight times more in education taxes than their non-farming neighbour. The rebate puts us a bit more in line but there's still a way to go, particularly for livestock or vegetable farmers who aren't eligible to get the rebate on their production buildings like barns or storages.

Education is a top priority, and no one would dispute that it needs access to adequate funding to meet the needs of our children. But the ongoing scramble to meet the bottom line and the rebates that are offered to homeowners and farmers are only a symptom of a bigger problem. The way that we fund education just doesn't work any more.

In the long run, it makes more sense to give the entire education finance system an overhaul and get it off of property altogether. Let's put more of the funding responsibility back to the provincial government, so that all Manitobans can invest fairly in quality education.

To learn more about why education taxes should be taken off of property, visit www.letspayfair.com.