

I WANT SCHOOL TAX OFF MY PROPERTY

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letspayfair.com

Coalition ramps up education tax campaign

For Immediate Release

Monday, August 29 – East Selkirk, Manitoba - Farmers, REALTORS®, business leaders, cottage owners and homeowners stood shoulder to shoulder today in a Manitoba farm yard as they each picked up one of hundreds of lawn signs that call on Manitoba politicians to get education tax off the property tax bill.

The members of the Manitoba Education Financing Coalition were handing out the “I want school tax off my property” lawn signs at the farmyard of Doug Chorney, President of Keystone Agricultural Producers at the launch of the **letspayfair.com 2011** campaign.

“If the candidates think that the small changes we’ve seen in education tax since the last election answer the call from Manitobans to pay fairly, they are wrong,” said Chorney.

“Over the last few years the Province has played with removing “*this education levy*” and increasing “*that education credit*” in a complicated game to fund education from property taxes. Let’s make this simple and get education taxes off property,” Chorney added.

In Manitoba, one-third of education funding comes from property taxes taken from residential, business and farmland. And if you live in Winnipeg school taxes represent 54 percent of all property taxes collected on homes and business. Lorne Weiss, President of the Manitoba Real Estate Association and Chair of the Coalition said each of the political parties needs to commit to funding education much differently.

“We know the province is trying to reduce education tax, but right now it’s still only funding 65 percent of the cost of operating our schools, the rest is coming from property owners. The province would tell you they are close to 80 percent. But to get to that figure the province has bundled several things together like the costs for building schools, contributing to teacher pension funds and tax credits. Today we’re calling on all the political parties to commit to a real 80/20 formula in this next term of government with a goal to fund 100 per cent of education from general revenues and Manitoba Hydro reserves in the long term,” Weiss says.

In addition to putting up lawn signs, voters can also send an electronic letter to their local politicians from the **letspayfair.com** website. During the last provincial election almost 2,000 Manitobans took advantage of the electronic letter that allowed them to easily express their concerns. As a result every political party took notice and had a position on education tax in their platforms.

Also present at the launch of **letspayfair.com 2011** were, Dave Crabb, President of the Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners (MACO), Peter Squire, Director of Public Affairs, of Winnipeg REALTORS® Association and Ken Jones, Vice-Chair of the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

*The Manitoba Education Financing Coalition, a group of 40 organizations representing 250,000 Manitobans, support **letspayfair.com**. In calling on the Province of Manitoba to reduce its reliance on property tax to fund education, the coalition recommends that education be supported through the province's general revenues, that way Manitobans can all pay a fair share to support the education of the next generation.*

Coalition Chair:

Lorne Weiss, President Manitoba Real Estate Association MREA, Office. 204.772.0405 / lorne@lorneweiss.com

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Chuck Davidson, Vice-President, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce 204.942.3011, ext 210 / cdavidson@winnipeg-chamber.com

For still photos of the event contact: themediabank@shaw.ca

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who is behind letspayfair.com?

The Manitoba Education Financing Coalition, a group of 40 organizations representing 250,000 Manitobans support **letspayfair.com**.

2. What is the campaign doing?

The Coalition is calling on all politicians running in the 2011 provincial election to commit to reducing the Manitoba Government's reliance on property tax to fund education and propose a strategy to do that. The Coalition knows that education benefits everyone and should be supported through the province's general revenues and Manitoba Hydro reserves. In that way Manitobans can all pay a fair share to support education the way we support other core services. In other words lets pay fair.

3. Why lower and eventually remove education tax from property?

The reliance on property taxes to fund education;

- dates back to the days when a person who owned land was considered wealthy and most able to pay. That's no longer true.
- means seniors, young families, farmers and business owners struggle to keep education adequately funded at the expense of maintaining their homes or growing their businesses.
- is often based on people's debt, not their income, not their ability to pay or their consumption.
- is determined differently by each of the 38 school divisions. Homes across the street from each other can be taxed differently if the school division boundary runs down the middle of the street.
- is doubly unfair to cottage owners who pay school taxes on their cottage but can't vote for the school trustee who is setting their tax rate. It's taxation without representation.
- isn't equitable nor fair.

Other provinces are making significant changes to get education tax off property, so it can be done.

4. Where will the money come from to pay for education if not property taxes?

The Manitoba Education Financing Coalition expects education to be funded properly from general revenues and Manitoba Hydro reserves. In fact the Manitoba government struck a task force in 2002 called "The Minister's Working Group on Education Finance," which came up with several recommendations. There are lots of ideas on how to properly fund education.

5. Didn't the Manitoba Government already lower education tax?

Over the last few years the Province has played with removing "this education levy" and increasing "that education credit" in a complicated game. But in fact, the Manitoba Government's Frame Report 2010/11 Budget document (which tracks all education funding) shows that in the 2010/2011 fiscal year, the operating expenses for Manitoba's education system were budgeted to be \$1.88 billion and the direct provincial contribution was to be \$1.23 billion or 65.4 percent, not 80 percent. See for yourself on page (i) of the Frame Report at http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/finance/frame_report/2010-11_frame_budget.pdf

See **letspayfair.com** for more answers to your questions.

Spokespersons for letspayfair.com

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GET SCHOOL TAX OFF MY PROPERTY TAX BILL

The Hon. Greg Selinger – Premier
Room 204 - Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Premier Selinger, as a resident of Manitoba I am very concerned about how education is funded in our province. Property owners are not taxed on ability to pay or on consumption, like other fairer taxes. In fact in some cases we are taxed on homeowner debt.

Cottage owners, as well as others who own properties that are not their principal residences, pay school taxes twice, but do not get to vote for the school trustee who imposes the education tax on their cottage or other property.

Education tax has not kept up with the way today's farms operate, either. Instead of a homestead on every parcel of land, today's farms have a lot more land, and the burden of property taxes is much higher.

Over the last few years the Province has played with removing this "levy" and increasing that "credit" in a complicated game to fund education from property taxes. Let's make this simple and get education taxes off my property.

I believe that quality education is a universal right of every child in this province and a core provincial responsibility. All Manitobans benefit from strong education programs; therefore all Manitobans should contribute fairly just like we all contribute for other high priority social programs. Let's pay fair.

The reliance on property taxes to fund education has a negative impact on Manitoba. Seniors, young families, farmers and business owners struggle to keep education adequately funded at the expense of their properties and businesses because in many cases they are taxed on debt.

Manitoba needs fair and equitable funding for a strong education system in this province. I look to you and to your government to show leadership and commit to finding a way to shift education taxes off property so we can all pay fair.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.
LET'S ALL PAY BY THE SAME RULES.**

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,