

## **KSD Responds to Inaccurate Remarks**

In early September the Town of The Pas held two public meetings with the objective of explaining its revised special tax plan for policing services. The Kelsey School Division Board of Trustees was pleased to see that school buildings were removed from this revised plan as town councillors now understand the double taxation impact it would have had on ratepayers.

At the September 5 noon meeting, however, statements were made by the Mayor and a councillor that were inaccurate. During the session the discussion strayed away from the meeting's intended purpose when a councillor stated that the School Division "education taxes" control 50% of a property owner's tax bill. This statement was wrong. A typical 2018 Town tax statement for a house and property assessed at about \$168,000 shows that the School Division portion (once the provincial education tax credit is applied) amounts to less than 20% of the tax bill. Even without the automatic \$700 tax credit applied to reduce the education special levy, the total education portion is only about 40% of the total.

In addition, the Mayor suggested people should attend the school division budget public meetings (something the School Division also encourages every year) in order to compare the Kelsey School Division expenditures to those of other school divisions, adding that the Town has the highest school taxes in the province. This statement was also wrong.

At its public budget meetings for more than ten years KSD has presented comparisons with other school jurisdictions from Swan Valley to Mystery Lake in Thompson. As the audited Department of Education data which is presented shows, KSD has the lowest per pupil costs in every category of expenditure except one. Our special needs category is higher as it reflects the nature of student issues our schools must deal with. In addition, there has been no increase to the education special levy for two years as the School Division trustees responded to the goal in the short term of limiting costs wherever possible.

Further, the portion of education cost borne by the town ratepayers overall is less than 17%, among the lowest in the province. Other communities such as Swan River pay more than 25% of the education costs. The local municipal portion is low because of the KSD efficiencies, support received via Manitoba Education special grants, and the solicitation of private funds by the KSD grant writer (raising \$200,000 in some years).

Of course, over the last ten years, operational costs and taxes have risen. During this period the KSD special levy of a typical house and property has increased 48%, while the municipal tax has increased 68%, and assessment has increased 98%. The School Division and the Town of The Pas are beset by the same common issue - low property assessment, which is at the heart of revenue generation. That is the real problem.

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